RE-EXAMINING UNITED STATES ANTI-COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA:
HOW US ANTI-COMMUNISM IMPACTED THE US AND THE GROWTH OF
COMMUNISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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Abstract

As time and distance from the Cold War have grown, more information has become available concerning what happened during the Cold War. As many in the US begin to openly speak of communism based on real and perceived inequality, and many others speak loudly of anti-communism, it may be time to re-examine the history of anti-communism in the US. While there can be no doubt that the Bolshevik Revolution, the spread of Marxism and Marxist derived systems of thought, along with Soviet expansionist Communism all posed threats, the threats they posed, in retrospect, look very different.

US anti-communism took many forms, both domestically and in foreign policy. US anti-communism had effects on other nations, especially in Central America. Domestically, US anti-communism had significant effects politically and societally. However, given the distance from the Cold War, and the impetus that remains in US society to identify things and people as Communist, it is likely a reasonable time to re-examine the need the US had for anti-communism and the effects of that anti-communism.

While there is much literature concerning whether or not anti-communism was motivated by communism or other factors, this thesis attempts to advance an understanding of whether anti-communism was a necessary component of anti-communist policies, whether anti-communism reduced the likelihood that communism spread, and whether anti-communism provided benefits or negatives for the US. These
answers should inform the use of anti-communist policies and frame anti-communist rhetoric in the future.

By examining and comparing cases of anti-communism in foreign policy and domestically, and then examining the impact of those policies (in the foreign policy realm), the author will draw conclusions concerning US anti-communism. The thesis will conclude that US anti-communism, especially in certain countries in Central America, did not require communism as a motivator, did not scale to the actual communist threat, increased the probability that communism would spread, and negatively impacted the nations of Central America and the US, in the short and long runs. This thesis may help to inform policymakers going forward, and citizens looking to understand what anti-communism, historically, has done for and to the US.

Primary Reader: Dr. Ken Masugi
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“Mr. Stevenson has a degree alright—a PhD from the Acheson College of Cowardly Communist Containment.” Vice President Richard Nixon, 1952, on Democratic Presidential Candidate Adlai Stevenson¹

Introduction

The above quote demonstrates what has been a staple of United States (US) politics since at least the Bolshevik Revolution during World War I (WWI). Communism, and its companions, Socialism and generic Marxism, have been anathema to US politics since the Russian dictatorship was first overthrown by a popular movement in 1917. Calling someone a Communist, in US domestic politics, has been a strong epithet that could kill entire policies - and calling someone a Communist, in US foreign policy, often meant US troops would soon follow. Whether it was a policy to ensure health care for all Americans in the 1950s,² or a liberal government in Guatemala, the title “Communist” seemed to guarantee defeat.

At times in US history, expecting virulent anti-communism seems easy to make sense of. When Soviet expansionist Communism was at its height, and the world seemed on the brink of nuclear extinction, it is easy to see a US that fought communism at every turn, in foreign policy and domestically. At other times, however, such as at the end of WWI, it is a bit harder to understand virulent US anti-communism, as the threat was much more remote. What, then, are we to make of the relative constancy of US anti-communism from at least the Bolshevik revolution right up to the present?

¹ Brinkley, Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953-71, 263.
Distance from the Cold War, along with the declassification of documents from all sides of the Cold War may allow us to get a better perspective on how and why the US intervened where it did, along with the impacts of those interventions. With the existential threat of a US-Soviet interaction mostly faded in the minds of average Americans, we may be able to re-examine US anti-communism. While, throughout the Cold War, there were debates concerning the lengths to which anti-communism should go in the US, there was not a serious debate about the overarching question - Was anti-communism the right answer for the US? With the murderous Soviet Union looming, foreign policy was rarely seriously questioned, and, even when it was (towards the end of the Cold War), Presidents generally just disregarded Congressional “interference.” With the Soviet Union and China murdering their own people, US Communists were not only marginalized, they were, at times, expelled from society and even physically attacked.

This paper aims to re-examine US anti-communism, domestically, and with respect to foreign policy in Central America. Perhaps, given the distance we now have from the Cold War, it is time to re-examine some truths accepted as fundamental during the Cold War. Perhaps it is even time to consider anti-communist policies made sense at all. The fundamental question this paper asks is: “Should the US have pursued ideologically anti-communist policies?” This paper will conclude that US anti-communism, in the end, produced long term negative outcomes for the US with respect to some Central American neighbors. It will do this by asking three distinct questions concerning US anti-communism. First, the author will ask: “Were US anti-communist interventions in Central America, during the Cold War, fundamentally different than
previous US interventions in the region?” Second, the author will ask a similar question with respect to US domestic anti-communism, asking, “Did US domestic anti-communism during the Cold War differ from previous US domestic anti-communism?” Finally, the author will ask: “Did US anti-communist interventions in Central America during the Cold War provide a net benefit to the US?”

From these questions, the author will conclude that, generally, anti-communist ideology in the US has not been beneficial to the US, with respect to specific Central American nations and their impact on the US. The first two chapters will demonstrate that anti-communist interventions, and anti-communist domestic policies were not actually responsive to the threats they proclaimed to be fighting. In the first chapter, when the author explores US interventions in Central America, the author will conclude that despite the anti-communist rhetoric surrounding these interventions, the interventions very closely resemble US interventions in Central America during the century preceding the Cold War. In the second chapter, the author will conclude that US domestic anti-communism during the Cold War very closely resembled US domestic anti-communism prior to the Cold War; a proposition that should not be true given the existential threat the Cold War posed. The third chapter will demonstrate that the anti-communist interventions in Central American during the Cold War actually increased the threat of communism in the region, and ended with negative consequences for the US.

Taken together, then, the author will draw the conclusion that policies and practices driven by anti-communist ideology should be scrutinized much more heavily, as they may not benefit the US. The first chapter demonstrates that anti-communist policies closely resembled previous policies in Central America - meaning that the anti-
communist rhetoric surrounding them was superfluous, and potentially only existed to stifle debate. The second chapter demonstrates that, despite the significantly increased threat of communism, domestic anti-communism changed very little - meaning that anti-communist policies were not really scaled to (or perhaps even about) the actual threat communism posed. The third chapter demonstrates, that, even if one was to ignore the conclusions from the first two chapters and focus solely on effects, the policies had negative short and long term effects on the US - meaning that even if one believed that fighting communism was always the best answer, the policies implemented to fight that threat were policies that only increased the threat.

Chapter One: The Cold War Changed Everything in Central America

Chapter One begins with a review of the literature concerning the previous writing on US interventions in Central America. In reviewing this literature, the author found three main lines of thought. These generally center on the reasons the US intervened in Central America. Those that discuss the reasons for US intervention tend to argue that the US intervened for either (1) US security interests, (2) US economic interests, or (3) US domestic politics. Many authors choose one of those reasons and argue that it was the overriding interest. Some authors, however, argue that various interests had greater power at different times, and some simply argue that all interventions were a mix of these interests.

The one line of thought that pervades all of the literature, is that the Cold War fundamentally changed US interests in the region. This is a large portion of what drove the author’s research. The idea that the Cold War so fundamentally “changed the
game” for the US was so widely held to be true, almost without a negative argument, that this author decided to test that hypothesis in Chapter One. As mentioned above, this author believes that the distance from the Cold War might allow us to re-examine some truths accepted as fundamental. While many policies pursued during the Cold War, there remain some truths that were simply never challenged - the idea that the Cold War “changed everything” is one of those truths.

In Chapter One, the author examines US interventions in Central America between 1900 and the 1980's. The chapter will examine three US interventions prior to the Cold War - one in Colombia (now Panama), one in Nicaragua, and one in Guatemala. The chapter will then examine three Cold War interventions - one in Guatemala, one in El Salvador, and one in Nicaragua. These interventions span the century, from 1903 through 1983, and provide some continuity. The interventions in Guatemala, for instance, represent the two largest US interventions in the region close to the Cold War - both in Guatemala, they represent the US support for the regime that took power in the 1930s, and the US overthrow of the liberal regime that took power shortly after World War II (WWII). These interventions also represent continuity in that they represent an early intervention in Nicaragua (1909) and a late intervention in Nicaragua (1983). They also cross the spectrum of military (covert and overt) interventions, and provide some purely diplomatic interventions.

In this respect, they provide the breadth and depth necessary to compare interventions before and after the Cold War. Finally, the analysis in Chapter One closes by examining two counter arguments - that the author’s conclusion simply rests on an overbroad interpretation of terms that would support any argument, and that whether or
not the US changed, Soviet expansion so significantly influenced the US government
that the Soviet government can be credited for the changes in US policy.

In sum, Chapter One concludes that US interventions during the Cold War in
Central America closely resembled US interventions in the region prior to the Cold War.
This leads the author to conclude that, even if those interventions were actually about
stopping the spread of communism, it was an ancillary, and therefore unnecessary,
factor. If the Cold War did not really change much about US interventions in Central
America, perhaps there is a US domestic corollary to this argument. That is the
proposition the author explores next.

Chapter Two: The Cold War Changed Everything inside of the US

Chapter Two will examine the domestic aspects of US anti-communism.
Specifically, it will describe US domestic anti-communism before and during the Cold
War. As a corollary to Chapter One, Chapter Two will attempt to describe similarities
and differences in US domestic anti-communism before and during the Cold War. One
should expect to see differences in US domestic anti-communism, as the threat of
Soviet expansionist Communism during the Cold War actually represented an
existential threat to the US, unlike the Bolshevik revolution during WWI. Chapter Two
will describe and then analyze the two “Red Scare” periods in US history - one just after
WWI, and the other shortly after WWII. It will describe their similarities and differences,
and then address some counterarguments.

Chapter Two begins with a review of the literature surrounding US domestic anti-
communism. This literature tends to surround whether or not domestic anti-communist
actions were appropriate. Those debates tend to descend into a number of other debates that support the conclusion that either these activities were appropriate, or not. These debates tend to surround the actual size and activities of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA), and whether or not US Communists had any serious influence. These debates also focus on whether or not anti-communist rhetoric was sincere, or simply political, and whether the CPUSA really worked for the Soviet Union. Some even argue that all actions against Communists were justified because their ideology was so antithetical to the US’s ideological underpinning.

Much like Chapter One, however, the literature widely holds that the Cold War saw a significant shift in US domestic anti-communism, because of the threat of Soviet expansionist Communism. Like Chapter One, this idea is almost taken for granted in the literature. And, much like in Chapter One, the author challenges that baseline assumption. A deeper examination of periods before the Cold War and after is required to prove the hypothesis that the Cold War did really have a significant impact on US domestic anti-communist activities.

Chapter Two, after describing the historical context, and history of both “Red Scares,” will demonstrate that these two periods looked very similar. In some cases, quotes and actions from one period, without names, would be confused with quotes and actions from the other period. Whether at the federal government level, the state government level, or actions of the general populace, the chapter will demonstrate that these two periods were extremely similar. However, given the difference in threats between the two time periods - one a distant threat, the other an existential threat, one should expect significant differences. This chapter will also describe the transition out
of the “Red Scares,” in the hopes that the reader will be able to look past the similarities between the “Red Scares” and today.

Chapter Two also addresses the natural counter argument, that is, comparing two “Red Scare” periods naturally leads to the conclusion that they are very similar, since they are both “Red Scares.” While this is a natural thought, the author simply asks the reader to remember that these periods grew out of very different threats - one existential, and one that threatened political violence and political upheaval. The second “Red Scare” happened during a time when the Soviet Union was expanding and the threat of nuclear annihilation was very real. The first “Red Scare” occurred during a time when communism was expanding, but the real threat came from political violence perpetrated by a number of groups, including anarchists. That knowledge will likely get the reader through Chapter Two until the author’s full response to that counter argument is presented late in Chapter Two.

While not the direct focus of these chapters, these two chapters also take the time to point out the ways in which the more general changes in the US might be better able to describe the differences between these historical periods than the differences in international communism. This will be further addressed in the concluding chapter, as an area for further research. Rather than focus on anti-communist ideology, simply focusing on the changes in the US might be a better way to describe US behavior, which displays remarkable continuity over time, as the arguments in these chapters bear out. Trends inside of the US, to include the growth of the national security state, the imperial presidency, and the rise of the mass media (to now include social media)
might be more responsible for the differences in time period, rather than the oft used justification of the spread of communism.

Chapter Three: Cold War Policies Ensured Their Own Failure

Following chapters one and two, chapter three will delve into a slightly different aspect of US anti-communist policy. While chapters one and two address the idea that US policy might not have needed an anti-communist ideology because it either was not different from previous policy or it did not represent the actual threat, chapter three addresses the idea that this policy was ineffective, and, in the long and short run, detrimental to US interests. Even if the conclusions in chapters one and two are accurate, if the policies were effective, or good for the US, then they were perhaps still good policies.

Chapter Three explores this idea by revisiting US anti-communist foreign policy in Central America during the Cold War. This chapter will address the nations from Chapter One (with the exception of Panama) in greater detail - Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. It begins by describing in more detail the entire Cold War history of each nation, and then describing the totality of US involvement in those nations during the Cold War. In each case, the chapter demonstrates that the US involvement likely led to greater spread of communism, more extreme “leftist” policies, and more bad outcomes for the US in the long term.

Because Chapter Three is focused on the historical outcomes of policy, Chapter Three does not include a review of the literature. Most of the literature surrounding these policies simply argues that either (1) the policies were appropriate or (2) the
policies had positive outcomes. However, these arguments closely resemble many of the arguments made in the reviews of literature that are contained in Chapters One and Two. Literature that argues the policies were appropriate, for instance, tend to argue that US security interests were at stake, an argument covered in the Chapter One literature review. Arguments that the policies had positive outcomes, likewise, contain the argument that the threats were real - and stopped, arguments contained in the Chapters One and Two literature reviews. For those reasons, the author proceeds directly to historical descriptions in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three demonstrates that, besides supporting totalitarian regimes that murdered tens of thousands, the US policies in Central America during the Cold War not only ensured that the conditions that led to communism spread, but that more extreme versions of communism would take root. These policies also ensured that, when these nations fell to communism, those Communists had no ability to actually fix the conditions that drove the nations to communism in the first place. In this sense, it is easy to see a tautology in the US position - first ensuring the conditions that made the people want communism, then driving people to more extreme versions of communism by ensuring that those Communists had no ability to improve conditions in their nations.

This chapter also demonstrates that the US positions allowed (and sometimes encouraged) the flow of drugs through these nations, sometimes through explicit support, and sometimes simply by ensuring these nations had weak institutions. Problems that many US politicians worry about today, including drugs and immigrations, were made worse by US policies that were ostensibly to fight communism. In the end, this chapter demonstrates that these policies not only failed, but actually increased the
likelihood that communism would take hold - and then produced long term negative effects for the US.

What Might This Tell Us?

In the concluding section of this thesis, in addition to suggesting areas for further research, the author will focus on the overarching question posed here: “Should the US have pursued ideologically anti-communist policies in Central America?” If the conclusions the author outlines above, and argues for in this thesis, are correct, then this question yields a resounding, “No.” If these policies (1) did not need an anti-communist mantle because they were the same policies the US had previously pursued, (2) did not scale to or represent the actual threat they claimed to, or (3) actually increased the threat they intended to eliminate while bringing short and long term harm to the US, then one might more generally conclude that US anti-communist policies are policies that the US should have avoided. The concluding section will also address the most significant counterargument – that because the Soviet threat was so significant, and the US eventually won the Cold War, the benefits of these policies significantly outweigh any negative impacts.

This section opened with a quote from Richard Nixon using anti-communist ideology against another politically. This section will close with a US Senator using that same anti-communist ideology against another politically - almost 70 years later. In both cases, a sober assessment of the person the epithet was aimed at would demonstrate that neither supports truly communist policies. If we draw a line through
history between the two, we may find that anti-communist ideology today looks very similar to what it has looked like in the past. If that is true, then a re-examination of how that anti-communist ideology has benefited, or not, the US, may be helpful going forward. If anti-communist ideology today looks similar to historical anti-communism in the US, and that historical anti-communism did not benefit the US, this may suggest that the US should change its tack - or at least more heavily scrutinize the use of anti-communist ideology in politics and policy.

If, after reading this paper, the reader is convinced that anti-communist ideology, domestically and in Central America, has not necessarily benefited the US, the reader may be ready to abandon reflexive anti-communism, and chart a different way forward when they hear this ideology. The reader might even, today, hear arguments being made that are eerily similar to the anti-communist arguments made in the past - and might be prompted to decide that current debates are framed in a way that will end poorly for the US.

"She supports communist policies & a communist should not be our Comptroller of the Currency." -Senator Marco Rubio, on Comptroller Nominee Saule Omarova, 2021

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3 Clark, “Biden’s Nominee for Bank Regulator Backs out after Bipartisan Opposition.”
“It will be impossible to produce evidence clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow...the decision must be a political one and based on our deep conviction that such a tie must exist.”

- John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State

Chapter One: The More Things Change.....

In 1903, US troops landed in Panama to ensure the government changed hands. In 1911, the US did all it could to ensure that Nicaraguan president Zelaya lost control of the government, and he did.

When Secretary of State Dulles spoke the above words to the Brazilian ambassador to the United States (US), he was preparing to support a covert operation to overthrow the Guatemalan government. His words reflect the common refrain from the US National Security Enterprise at the time - that communism was spreading, and fighting its spread should be a primary focus of the US government. It is easy enough to accept the idea that US foreign policy was now completely different because of the Cold War - every decision was about stopping the spread of Soviet Communism.

Anti-communist rhetoric wrapped US interventions in Central America during the Cold War, both overt and covert. Many have asked the question, “Were those nations actually communist?” Authors come to varying conclusions on that point. What few have discussed, or analyzed, is “Were those interventions actually different in character because of the Cold War?”

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The Cold War is often described as something that changed everything about the way the world thought. In this paper, the author will investigate that question - Did the Cold War actually change US foreign policy towards Central America? Or was it simply more of the same wrapped in different cloth? While the idea that Soviet Communism and the Cold War fundamentally changed the way the US interacted with the World is a common one, between the time that has passed since the end of the Cold War and the documents declassified since that time period, it is likely worth re-evaluating some fundamental assumptions that remain about the Cold War.

While some have tried to demonstrate that the US was “right” or “wrong” to see Soviet Communism spreading everywhere, a direct comparison between cases of intervention in Central America may demonstrate a fundamentally different idea - that the US simply did, during the Cold War, what it always did in Central America.

First, the author reviews the literature surrounding various interventions in Central America between the early 20th century and the end of the Cold War. Three major themes emerge in the literature concerning the overarching reasons for US interventions in Central America, which include US security interests, US economic interests, and domestic politics.

Then, case studies are used to compare and contrast interventions across time to evaluate this point. From the pre-Cold War era, the US’s interventions in Panama (Colombia, at the time), Nicaragua, and Guatemala are considered. From the Cold War era, the cases of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua are considered. The

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Guatemala cases provide a direct comparison, in the same country, between interventions just prior to the Cold War and immediately as the Cold War began. The Nicaragua cases provide perspective in the same nation across the span of the 20th century. The cases of Panama and El Salvador provide comparisons and contrasts not just across time, but also across the region. These cases also span the method of intervention - from political support through direct military action, from strictly covert and unacknowledged (at the time) through overt.

Finally, analysis of the similarities and differences between these interventions is used to draw conclusions concerning the impact of the Cold War on US foreign policy in Central America. Despite the power of the narrative of Soviet Communism, and the common narrative that the Cold War fundamentally altered US foreign policy, the author concludes that the US’s policies and actions in Central America during the Cold War closely resembled the US’s pre-Cold War policies and actions in Central America. Therefore, the author concludes that Soviet Communism and the Cold War did not fundamentally change the US’s foreign policy in Central America. However, the larger changes that occurred in the US, such as the growth of the national security state, the imperial presidency, and the growth of mass media resulted in the US government’s relationship with US economic interests shifting slightly.

Literature Review

Many scholars, pundits, historians, and politicians have weighed in on the reasons the US has chosen to intervene in Central America. The growth of the national security apparatus in the US along with laws concerning declassification timelines have
increased the amount of available information concerning what the US actually did in Central America, and, in some cases, clarified the situation. Three main lines of thought pervade the literature concerning why the US intervened in Central America. These three generic lines of thought are US security interests, US economic interests, and domestic politics. The second line, US economic interests, tends to divide along two schools of thought - generic US economic imperialism, and personal economic interests of US persons involved. While few argue that one factor alone drives intervention, most argue that one of those three lines holds a predominant position with respect to intervention. However, virtually all of the descriptions accept the general conclusion that the Cold War fundamentally changed the way the US interacts with Central America.

The easiest argument to make is that US interventions in Central America were based upon ensuring US security. It is difficult to find an intervention that was not described in security terms, in some manner, by US leaders. Munro, writing in the 1960s, made this argument stronger than most. Munro assessed the US interventions in Central America in the early 1900’s, and concluded that security interests ultimately drove those interventions. Munro argues, in strong terms, that the US involvement in separating Panama from Colombia in order to build the Panama Canal was not based on economic ties of US leaders, but based on the strategic significance of the canal.7

Munro also argues that disorder in Central America posed a threat to the US,8 and, therefore, other interventions (such as the removal of Nicaraguan President

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7 Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921, chap 2.
8 Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921, vii.
Zelaya) were primarily about US security in that they were primarily about establishing or maintaining order. Tulchin makes a similar argument, arguing that, especially in the cases of the Panama Canal interventions, security concerns were paramount. Tulchin also argues, “...the United States came to believe that bad government and fiscal irresponsibility...led to instability, and that it was instability that created the conditions for external intervention that would threaten the security of the United States.”

A variation on this theme is embodied by Immerman, who argues that while the US did act in their security interest, they did so only because they confused nationalism with communism. Moye makes a similar argument, arguing that US leadership’s “strong anti-Communist sentiment” led to the US perceiving Guatemala as a “Soviet beachhead.” She argues that while Guatemala was not really a threat to the US in terms of the spread of Soviet Communism, the US misperceived it to be, driving their intervention.

McPherson’s history of US interventions in Latin America similarly argues that interventions were primarily focused on strategic issues, but also had economic motivations - and that some interventions had only economic interests at heart. He argues, “...the most prominent cause of interventions...was the goal of political stability,” and “Interventions also had economic motivations, and these were, in some instances, the dominant impetuses.”

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10 Immerman, The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention, chap 3.
12 McPherson, A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4.
Some critics, such as Gismondi and Mouat, respond directly to Munro, arguing that business actors in Nicaragua played a significant role in US policy towards Nicaragua, especially in the early 1900s. They do not go as far as saying these personal economic interests drove policy, but rather that “...American business interests defined order and stability to mean protecting concessions, defending contracts...and...guaranteeing the transnational flow of resources” and “...these interests framed the US State Department’s perceptions of the region...” The authors, in fact, take care to be specific when they say of the claim that a Secretary of State had a personal economic interest in an intervention “Research undertaken for this paper did not uncover evidence substantiating or refuting this claim...”\(^\text{13}\)

These arguments are not as far removed from each other as they may seem. Munro, like Schoultz after him, acknowledges that there were economic ties between leaders in the US government and business interests in the region. Munro, in fact, acknowledges that the State Department received most of its information from businesses on the ground during this period. Schoultz also acknowledges these ties, but argues that security interests were paramount.

One of the most heavily researched works on the US-backed overthrow of the Guatemalan government in the 1950s, by Pierre Gleijeses, similarly argues that, despite economic concerns and ties, the US would have overthrown the government regardless of those ties. His book produced the oft-cited remark “They would have overthrown us even if we had no bananas.”\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{13}\) Gismondi and Mouat, “Merchants, Mining, and Concessions on Nicaragua’s Mosquito Coast: Reassessing the American Presence, 1893–1912,” 877.

While those arguments are not that far apart, some take the economic argument even further. Kinzer, for instance, argues not just that economic influences existed, but that personal economic considerations of the US leadership involved drove their decision-making. He writes, “The figure who most perfectly embodied this merging of political and economic interests was John Foster Dulles...A year later he ordered another coup, in Guatemala, where a nationalist government had challenged the power of United Fruit, a company his old law firm represented.”15 With respect to the overthrow of the Guatemalan government in the mid-1950’s, Kinzer lists nine connections at the Undersecretary level or higher between the US government and the United Fruit Company, including some who held substantial stock in the company and some who would later join the board.16

Despite writing some 40 years earlier, Munro might have been responding directly to Kinzer, writing, “These objectives...were neither sinister nor sordid...Many critics of the United States’ policy, however, maintained that there was a fourth purpose: to forward the selfish interests of American businessmen and bankers.”17

Kinzer takes a slightly less aggressive tack in Bitter Fruit (co-authored by Schlesinger), in arguing that while the US Government did have other interests in Guatemala that led to the US overthrowing the Guatemalan government, the lobbying by the United Fruit Company and their economic ties to US leadership were likely the decisive factor.18

17 Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921*, 535.
The third major thread that runs through these analyses is that of domestic politics. While Schoultz argues that security concerns trumped economic interests, he also argues that domestic politics always drove intervention (or lack thereof). He says, for instance, “While security concerns ebb and flow, domestic US politics have been central to the explanation of nearly every important issue of US-Latin American relations…”\textsuperscript{19} and “If there is domestic political capital to be made by doing something for or to Latin America, then the two century history of US-Latin American relations demonstrates conclusively that someone will do it.”\textsuperscript{20}

Schoultz argues, for instance, that the US intervention to separate Panama from Colombia only happened because the canal route through Panama became viable after some Senators saw domestic political gain from opposing the Nicaraguan route. Yoon provides some support for this idea, in the form of a quantitative analysis that demonstrates that domestic political concerns play a significant role in US decisions to intervene in third world internal wars.\textsuperscript{21}

Whitehead likewise argues that domestic politics play the major role in US involvement in Central America. His focus is on Cold War interventions, though he addresses previous interventions. He addresses the security argument as well as the economic argument, but finds them both lacking. He argues, “As far as the USA is concerned, the real significance of Central America is as a focus for the re-enactment of

unresolved internal disputes about the nature of American society, and the purpose of American power.”

Streeter provides an interesting perspective, that the security versus economic interest debate is simply a reflection of the views of realists versus revisionists. Realists, he argues, simply want to put things in terms of power politics, and focus on the state versus state interests. Revisionists, however, emphasize the impetus of the US government to “expand overseas markets and promote foreign investment.”

Streeter focuses on the 1950’s overthrow of the Guatemalan government, and he points to the holes in many of the analyses of that intervention. With respect to the realists, Streeter points out that Guatemala was not nearly the threat to US security it was described as - but also notes that US officials focused on the growing threat, not the absolute threat, despite some realists claims that it was an immediate threat. With respect to revisionists, Streeter points out that the administration at the time was more concerned with the effect of land reform on the people than United Fruit, damaging the economic imperialism argument.

These debates, and holes in arguments, exist throughout the literature. Those making the argument that interventions were primarily security based tend to acknowledge the economic connections and then simply dismiss them. While in some cases they directly address them, they also tend to ignore the possibility that economic actors (such as businesspeople and business leaders) were the dominant forces on the

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ground at times, and therefore drove US leadership’s perceptions of the facts and security interests on the ground.

When Schoultz argues that domestic politics drive decisions, he focuses on interactions in Congress, while the decisions to intervene came from the Executive branch. Certainly, there is evidence that US leaders considered domestic politics when they considered interventions, and there is direct evidence that leaders delayed actions based on domestic political schedules. However, the Executive branch took action on a number of occasions despite the possibility of domestic political loss. Whitehead’s argument concerning the lack of support for the security and economic theories ignores the evidence that communists were, in fact, making some ground, and that US companies did have interests in the region.

Those making the economic imperialism argument tend to argue that nations were not the threat they were described as, though they ignore the idea that those in power in the US may have believed them to be that strong of a threat. They also tend to narrowly define security, and point to economic ties as evidence enough of an economic motivation. They generally do not accept the idea that economic power and influence are security interests of the US, an idea that does have some merit.

What is consistent through the literature, however, is that the idea - or at least the narrative - of Soviet Communism fundamentally reshaped the way the US interacted with the world. Munro, writing during the Cold War, notes that his entire study is devoted to the idea that Soviet Communism is a greater threat than anything that has come before. In the preface alone, he writes, “A study of this experience should be of some value at a time when we face a far more dangerous situation in the Caribbean
than we did in 1900. We are acutely aware today of the importance of promoting stable, democratic government and improving living conditions in the region in order to check the further advance of communism.”

Schoultz, similarly, notes, “An intimidating anti-communism had already been tightening its grip on the federal government, especially the Department of State.” Schoultz goes on to note that this idea of anti-communism, and the aggressively anti-communist nature of the federal government had a self-reinforcing effect, ensuring that those in power who feared communism saw it everywhere. After a civil servant in the State Department, Laurence Duggan committed suicide following accusations of spying for the Soviets (which were later confirmed), Schoultz writes, “For Duggan’s surviving colleagues, extreme caution and militant anticommunism became the twin lodestones of the Cold War Foreign Service.” He argues that this created an environment where Cold War Foreign Service members were much more likely to exaggerate communism where it perhaps was nascent or describe it where it was non-existent.

Schoultz’s argument that domestic politics plays the major role in interventions is not left out of this argument that the Cold War changed everything, however. He describes politicians, even if only focused internally, as being so virulently anti-communist that it was the dominant force in domestic politics, and therefore drove foreign policy and intervention. Whitehead, who agreed with Schoultz concerning the

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24 Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921*, vii-viii.
domestic politics argument, also notes that a fear of Moscow drove policy and intervention. 27

Those who drive the economic argument the hardest make the same argument concerning anti-communism and its effect on policy. Kinzer, one of the strongest advocates of the economic argument, says that during the Cold War “The main fact of international political life was the spread of Communism.”28 Morales similarly argues “Enactment of the 1947 National Security Act and the Truman Doctrine elevated anticommunism to the new national security doctrine of the Cold War era and globalised an interventionary foreign policy in the form of the defence of national survival, democracy and the North American way of life against the threat of totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regimes.”29

McPherson, who argued that interventions had various causes, similarly notes that the Cold War, once it started, was the driving factor for US intervention. “…the extra-hemispheric context was the Cold War...US policymakers increasingly saw Latin American socialists and communists...as puppets of the Soviets.”30 Tulchin, who generally sees security as driving intervention, agrees, saying, “During the decade following the end of World War II, the US gradually came to define its national security requirements in terms of the bipolar competition, and the nuclear confrontation, with the USSR.”31

28 Kinzer, Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq, 116.
30 McPherson, A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, 147.
31 Tulchin, “The United States and Latin America in the 1960s,” 8.
This thread, which exists throughout the literature, drives the author to question the idea that the Cold War did change everything for US foreign policy in Central America. The difficulty of finding a dissenting view, and the fact that so many concur with this point might lead one to wonder if a dissenting view can be presented. If, for instance, the US acted fundamentally the same way towards Central America, one might ask what the Cold War did change with respect to US policy towards Central America.

While many of the authors above debate what US leaders really meant based on what they said and who influenced them, a case study comparison across pre-Cold War and Cold War interventions in Central America might shed light on whether or not the US’s actions changed based on the perception or narrative of the spread of Soviet Communism.

**Case Analyses and Comparisons**

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Table 1: Selected Cases
Case 1: Colombia (Panama), 1903

“I took the Isthmus” - Theodore Roosevelt

The idea of a trans-isthmian canal existed long before Panama declared independence from Colombia in 1903. Most assumed that the canal would be built through Nicaragua, and multiple attempts at building the canal failed, sometimes for physical reasons, and sometimes for political reasons. Colombia (which modern day Panama was a part of) had long sought to move the canal idea from Nicaragua to Panama, but previous US agreements stopped that. With respect to Panama, the US had, on multiple occasions, ensured that Panama remained a part of Colombia.

Once Congress and the President were convinced that the Colombian route was the preferred route, however, negotiations quickly reached an agreement between the US and Colombia. The Colombian legislature, however, rejected that agreement, which led US President Theodore Roosevelt to decide that Panamanian independence was his best shot at completing the canal he desired.

While there is some debate about what former President Theodore Roosevelt said in the speech that contains the above, oft-quoted line, it is clear now that the United States played a significant role in Panama’s successful revolution, gaining independence from Colombia. Panamanian independence occurred just after Colombia failed to ratify a treaty that had been agreed upon, which would have allowed the US to build a canal across what is now Panama, and given the US control of that canal.

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In his autobiography, Roosevelt goes to great lengths to explain that he did not directly incite a revolution, while also making a number of arguments that heavily imply that Colombia was simply not fit to rule Panama. However, Roosevelt also makes it clear that the US controlling the canal was a vital imperative, for both economic and security purposes.\textsuperscript{33} While the US had previously supported Colombia when Colombia decided to put down revolutions on the Isthmus, in this case, US troops ensured that Colombian troops could not do so, effectively guaranteeing the revolution would succeed.

While there remains some disagreement about the role the US played, at the time US Senator Edward Carmack said, derisively, “There never was any real insurrection in Panama...To all intents and purposes there was but one man in that insurrection, and that man was the President of the United States.”\textsuperscript{34} While the US forces that landed in Panama proclaimed neutrality, their “neutrality” and the immediate recognition of Panama afterwards guaranteed a successful revolution. In addition, Bunau-Varilla, a key figure in a company advocating building the canal, played a large role in ensuring the US would choose Panama over Nicaragua to build the canal. He spent most of October meeting with high-level US government officials, bringing with him a Panamanian rebel leader. Just three days before the revolution, a secret cable was sent to a US Naval vessel, ordering it to the shores of Panama, and a cable from Bunau-Varilla to the Panamanian rebels listed the time until the US ship would arrive.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} Roosevelt, \textit{The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt}, chap. XIV.
\textsuperscript{34} Schoultz, \textit{Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America}, 2348.
Despite Congressional belief that the US was behind this insurrection, President Roosevelt would repeatedly deny that the US Government was involved in Panamanian independence. There were some Senators, however, who did agree that the US government should take by force whatever was necessary to build the canal. President Roosevelt also argued repeatedly that it was not acceptable for any other nation to control the Panama Canal - that it threatened hemispheric security.\(^{36}\)

Prior to this revolution, which occurred just three months after Colombia rejected a treaty to give the US control of the canal, Colombia had controlled Panama through multiple revolutions, with the help of US soldiers. In this case, the US officially declared that the landing of Colombian troops in Panama would be prevented by the US, effectively eliminating Colombia’s ability to put down the Panamanian revolution.\(^{37}\)

On balance, then, it seems likely that US support was the deciding factor in both the starting of this particular revolution, and the inability of the Colombians to suppress it. In this case, the US decided to build a canal through Panama, for military and economic reasons, with significant influence from an economically interested party. Once that decision was made, and it was clear the government of Colombia would not accede to the treaty desired by the US; the US supported, in a clandestine manner, a revolution to create a new government in the desired geographical location.


\(^{37}\) Hay, “Mr. Hay to Mr. Beuapre.”
Case 2: Nicaragua 1894-1912

"This morning I practically took command of the Government Army of about 4,000 men."  
-Major General Smedley Butler, US Marine Corps

Nicaragua became part of the Mexican empire in 1821, effectively ending their time as a Spanish colony. It joined the United Provinces of Central America in 1823, and became an independent republic in 1838. In 1856, a US American, William Walker, declared himself President of Nicaragua, though he was driven out by other Central American nations a year later. This period began the rule of the conservatives in Nicaragua, which lasted until 1893. In 1893, Jose Santos Zelaya, a liberal, took power, and accelerated attempts to build a canal across Nicaragua.

In the 1880s, with a French company working on a canal in Panama, US President Chester Arthur signed a treaty with Nicaragua for the building of a canal through Nicaragua. While the Senate did not ratify the treaty, it remained the common wisdom that the canal the US desired would run through Nicaragua. The US only decided Panama was the “correct” route for the Panama Canal in 1902, after heavy lobbying by a French firm that had previously failed to build a canal.

This shift in US belief was helped along by Nicaraguan President Zelaya’s unwillingness to accede to certain demands of the US. Eight years prior, in 1894, however, Zelaya committed an action that should have been anathema to US leadership - he annexed the Moskito Coast, which had effectively operated as a commercial enclave run by US businesses, and remained extremely friendly to US commerce. This annexation reduced the power of US business in the region, as well as

their profits. The US government, however, supported Zelaya’s annexation of this region, likely because it gave Zelaya control over land from coast to coast, ensuring the entire canal could be built in Nicaragua.  

Once the US decided, following the Panamanian revolution, to build the canal through Panama, the strategic value of Zelaya’s Nicaragua disappeared. Zelaya then courted other nations to attempt to build a canal through Nicaragua, no longer gave US businesses preferential treatment, supported an invasion of Guatemala, and even invaded Honduras. This would lead, in 1909, the US to support a rebellion against Zelaya, who, only 15 years earlier, provoked no US reaction when he annexed a US commercial enclave.

Zelaya abdicated, only to have his successor overthrown a year later - again with the support of US warships, who claimed to be protecting commercial interests and US persons. The US would maintain troops in Nicaragua for 13 years, supporting the conservative government, because conservative officials accepted loans from US banks, and accepted Wall Street financiers as Nicaraguan governmental advisors.

Part of the concern the US had for Nicaragua was that US leadership felt US money should be the only significant financier in Central America, to ensure that foreign influence in the region remained at a minimum.

In Nicaragua, despite an official policy of neutrality by US forces, there is evidence that US forces encouraged revolution, based on an understanding that the

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42 Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921, chap. 5.
US Government did want Zelaya out, out of concerns for hemispheric security, which included economic ties that had influence in the government. When the revolution appeared to be ending in favor of a liberal faction, US Marines, supported by the US Navy, ensured a conservative faction remained in power. The “success” of the revolution led the US to leave troops in place for 13 years, supporting a Conservative government that guaranteed the dominance of US economic hegemony in Nicaragua.

Case 3: Guatemala, 1930-1931

“Therefore, with a view to avoiding bloodshed and disorder I am permitting General Ubico to have asylum in the American Legation.”
-William McCafferty, American Chargé in Guatemala

The US first established diplomatic relations with Guatemala in 1844, after Guatemala spent 21 years in the Federation fo American States. Beyond that, the US’s role in Guatemala was mostly limited to attempting to negotiate the claims of US commercial interests in the region and attempting to ensure general stability in the region. US commercial interests had a significant presence in the region, and exercised significant influence with the conservative oligarchal landowners who wielded most of the power in Guatemala. Especially in the areas of fruit and coffee, Guatemalan exports played a large role in the power structure of Guatemala. The American owned company International Railways of Central America built and maintained railroads throughout Guatemala, giving them significant power as well.

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45 McCafferty, “Revolution in Guatemala.”
The nation was quite segregated, with the native Indian population forced to work for little pay, while the fruits of their labor supported US Americans and the Guatemalan elite. Guatemala was a democracy from the early 1900s though 1931, though this did not have any impact on the native population’s oppression. In 1931, however, Jorge Ubico took power and started a dictatorship that would last 13 years, brought about by a combination of US support and Guatemalan oligarchs’ fears of peasant uprisings.

The case of US involvement in the rise of Jorge Ubico, who ruled Guatemala from 1931 through 1944, presents a different set of circumstances than the previous two interventions described. While there was a new US administration and a new policy (officially, non-intervention), it is important to remember that the above interventions were both characterized as neutral, and military force was often characterized as only about preserving American lives and property.

In this case, when Guatemalan President Chacon suffered a paralyzing medical condition, a military coup installed a new leader, General Orellana. However, the US diplomatic corps, and specifically, Minister to Guatemala Whitehouse, refused to acknowledge the regime, which they saw as destabilizing to the region. US lack of recognition, combined, likely, with the history of the US in the region, led Orellana to agree to a provisional government of which he was not a part, and a transitional government.

The US also demanded that no one involved in the coup be a part of the elections, and that the elections be held as fast as possible. While there is debate about how deliberate this action was on the part of the US, this ensured that General Jorge Ubico would take power. The US saw Guatemala, at the time, as a powder keg,
and desired stability. General Ubico had a reputation among US personnel in Guatemala, including the US Minister and Senior US defense official, as someone who commanded the respect of the people, and someone who could restore order.

While there is debate about whether the US knew it was tacitly supporting Ubico, and, in effect, guaranteeing his victory by the conditions the US set, there is ample evidence that the US did, in fact, know what it was doing - to include, for instance, protecting Ubico in the aftermath of Chacon’s paralysis and the resulting coup. No other senior Guatemalan leaders were so protected, and, in fact, the US ensured that other Guatemalan leaders could not take power.  

It is possible that Ubico simply played the US better than others did, by seeking asylum early in the process, and then working with the US to posit conditions that made Ubico confident he would be the only viable candidate when elections were held. However, given how positively US leadership spoke of Ubico, even before the coup, it seems quite likely that the US, though officially neutral, effectively chose General Ubico under the guise of a free and fair election - an election in which Jorge Ubico was the only candidate running.

This case differs somewhat from the previous cases, in that the US government refused military intervention, as it could perceive no American lives at stake. That did not stop the US from ensuring its preferred candidate took power in Guatemala, under the guise of a moral policy opposing military coups. This position, however, would not...
push the US to do anything when the US-friendly Ubico amended the constitution to give himself power for life.

Ubico’s presidency marked a turning point in Guatemala. Ubico openly called anyone who opposed him a communist, and outlawed all things he called communist - to include trade unions, and, in some cases, wage increases. He fought to ensure that intellectuals could not be exposed to communism, by banning books on the subject.48 Near the end of World War II, however, as the Guatemalan people saw a Salvadoran dictator fall, and the people read of Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms, the idea that they could restore a constitutional government grew. While it is not entirely clear why Ubico abdicated in 1944, it was certainly in some measure due to the massive protests against his suspension of constitutional guarantees. He retained neither the support of the oligarchs in Guatemala nor the middle class.

The US took no interest in keeping Ubico in power, nor in the general that succeeded him. Perhaps too focused on the growing Soviet threat in Europe, the US paid virtually no attention to these changes. This would lead to the election of Juan Jose Arevalo as president, and begin the process where, 10 years later, the US would once again intervene to force a change in government in Guatemala.

Case 4: Guatemala, 1954

"It will be impossible to produce evidence clearly tying the Guatemalan government to Moscow; the decision must be a political one and based on our deep conviction that such a tie must exist."
- US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles

Juan Jose Arevalo, becoming President of Guatemala in 1944, allowed some liberalizing reforms, but did not go as far as, for instance, allowing the right to strike. During his presidency, loyal Army units stopped one attempted coup. After Arevalo’s successor, Jacobo Arbenz, won the presidency in 1950, Castillo Armas made a brief attempt to overthrow the government, but was quickly jailed. Arbenz had communist leanings, but not serious interactions with the Soviets. He did, however, implement a land reform program, which certainly caught the US’s attention.

In 1952, after this land reform program was enacted, buying land from oligarchs and the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and giving it to the poor, the US’s tone towards Arbenz changed, with the urging of UFCO. The US previously saw Arbenz as “...essentially an opportunist...” by the US government. As late as October of 1952, just months before the Eisenhower administration took power in the US, official US government estimates saw no real communist threat in Guatemala, and even cast Arbenz’s reforms as more like the US New Deal than the Soviet Five Year Plans.

As the Eisenhower administration came to power in the US, national intelligence estimates took a much dimmer view of the Arbenz administration, and indicated that US interests (to include UFCO) would be adversely affected by Arbenz’s policies. During

52 Central Intelligence Agency, “Personal Political Orientation of President Arbenz/Possibility of a Left-Wing Coup.”
this period, the US saw outsized communist influence everywhere, to include Guatemala.

This led to President Eisenhower authorizing Operation PBSUCCESS, a covert CIA action to overthrow Arbenz, using the previously jailed Castillo Armas. Echoing the US’s previous judgment allowing Nicaragua to annex the US commercial enclave on the Moskito Coast, the National Security Council argued that US businesses should be willing to make some concessions in Guatemala. The CIA worked covertly with Castillo Armas, supporting his revolution directly and indirectly. US military power ensured that, just 11 days after Castillo Armas entered Guatemala, Arbenz abdicated, and a US-friendly government would persist in Guatemala for decades.

Just as in Panama in 1903, the US secretly supported a revolution to ensure that outside influence could not take hold in Central America, and US military power ensured that a US-friendly government would exist to ensure the security of Central America. While in this case the threat was different - Soviet influence versus British or French influence, the intent was the same. Where no Soviet ties could be proven, they were assumed. Just as in Nicaragua in 1912, US military power ensured the preferred government was in power.

The US would openly and publicly claim, just as in Panama in 1903 and Guatemala in 1930, that it was neutral and would not intervene in Guatemala. The State Department’s claim of non-intervention could have come out of Theodore Roosevelt’s mouth 50 years earlier. The methods the US used had been updated only

by the technology of the time, but the US used the same power to ensure the same outcome. Just as in Panama in 1903, those with commercial interests in the region influenced the US, with business leaders in and around the highest levels of government.

Case 5: El Salvador, 1981

“We do not overlook the sins of the left.”
-Óscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador

El Salvador declared its independence from Spain in 1821, but was a part of the United Provinces of Central America. El Salvador was recognized by the US as an independent nation in 1849, after this union broke apart. El Salvador joined Honduras and Nicaragua in creating the Greater Republic of Central America in 1896, which only lasted until 1898. In 1931, a revolution in El Salvador brought a revolutionary government to power, which went unrecognized by the US for three years. El Salvador would be ruled by a series of military dictatorships until a revolution in 1980 brought an openly communist government to power. The US had limited interaction with El Salvador, other than diplomatically supporting Salvadoran rulers.

In 1981, President Reagan would invoke hemispheric security and the threat of the Soviet Union to declare the importance of El Salvador to the US. Just two years earlier, military officers in El Salvador were convinced that the Carter administration was no longer supportive of then-President Romero, and, based on that idea, overthrew the

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55 Bonner, Weakness and Deceit: America and El Salvador’s Dirty War, 479.
government of El Salvador. The primary concern for the officers was the support of the United States, and that is to what they were committed.

In 1979, when these officers overthrew the government, there existed a set of officers who espoused moderate reformist views, and a group that espoused more hard line views. The Carter administration viewed the reformers with suspicion, which played a large role in their failure to take power. The civil war that ensued saw the Reagan administration support right wing forces against leftist guerillas, in a war where US aid went to government death squads while arguing that the communists posed just as great a threat.

The US would continually claim to be supporting the moderates - a kind of neutrality in a war of the left versus the right that echoes previous claims of neutrality from the US. The Presidential Finding signed by Carter that authorized assistance to the Salvadoran military even labeled itself as assisting moderate elements against Cuban-supported guerillas. Just as in previous interventions, this “neutrality” ensured that the government the US preferred kept power for as long as the US could manage, and the US was well aware of the impact its policies had.

El Salvador had long since understood that labeling enemies as communists would virtually guarantee the US would fight those enemies, and Salvadoran leaders used that narrative to their advantage. In this instance, much like the rise of Jorge Ubico, it is not clear that the US really understood, initially, what they were supporting, though the support was decisive, and later on, the US plainly understood that it was

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57 Carter, “Presidential Finding.”
58 Bonner, Weakness and Deceit: America and El Salvador’s Dirty War, chap. 3.
supporting a regime that, while vicious and oppressive, espoused the ideals of the US. The El Salvador intervention, however, happened against the backdrop of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua.

Case 6: Nicaragua 1979-1990

“Exxon ... has a moral obligation to its stockholders and the people of the United States to support the national interests of this country and our allies and friends in Central America.”

-Sandy Scholte, National Conservative Political Action Committee59

In the years after the US supported the overthrow of Zelaya in Nicaragua, the US continued to support conservative leaders in Nicaragua with US troops stationed there until 1933. In 1926, a civil war in Nicaragua was ended through a combination of US troops and US diplomacy, and ended with the US’s preferred Nicaraguan President remaining in power. However, Nicaraguan General Augusto Sandino did not accept the outcome, and continued the civil war. His guerilla war would end the US troop presence in Nicaragua in 1933, but the US trained National Guard quickly ensured that Sandino was removed from power, and Sandino was assassinated in 1934.

This began the US backed military dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza, and Nicaragua would remain under the rule of the Somoza family until 1979, when the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion National (FSLN), a communist group inside of Nicaragua, was able to overthrow the Somozas and take power.

59 Vesey, “Conservatives Boycott Exxon over Nicaragua.”
Just as President Reagan was declaring El Salvador vital to hemispheric security, he was signing a National Security Finding that authorized covert assistance to governments throughout Central America. This would allow his government to procure arms for the contras, the group fighting against the recently ascended Sandinistas (FSLN) in Nicaragua. The FSLN had, like others throughout Central America, begun modest land reforms, but was also openly associated with communism. This secret war would go as far as the CIA mining Nicaraguan ports.

The Reagan administration also attempted to defeat the FSLN in elections, sending their own candidates to try to win those elections. The FSLN lost power in 1990 through democratic elections, after President Bush took office in the US. Much like the US previously worked to ensure their preferred candidate won in Guatemala in 1930, the US openly and covertly supported their preferred candidates in these elections. However, the US was surprised at the outcome - demonstrating that, just as before, the US was grasping where it could, not really understanding how or why it was controlling the outcome, if it was controlling the outcome.

In an address to a joint session of Congress in 1983, President Reagan focused heavily on the influence of the Soviet Union in Nicaragua, the spread of communism in Central America he blamed on Nicaragua, and the FSLN being a hemispheric threat. He also, however, stated directly that America did not seek the overthrow of the Government of Nicaragua, a patently false statement. He insisted that the FSLN were

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60 Reagan, “National Security Finding 16574.”
just as bad as the autocrats they had overthrown, and that hemispheric security was in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{63}

Reagan’s words, and the Congressional opposition (along with the minority report that supported Reagan’s position),\textsuperscript{64} might well be pulled from the words of Theodore Roosevelt and Senators 80 years earlier. However, this intervention diverges from the previous interventions in an important way. While the other interventions might have been willing to sacrifice some economic interests for security interests, in this case an economic embargo was a part of the intervention, with companies like Exxon and Standard Fruit (now Dole) refusing to export parts or import sugar from Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{65}

This transitioned to a full economic embargo in 1985. In this case, some businesses were so interested in openly opposing communism that they were willing to suspend business, and, presumably, take losses. This differs from past interventions, where business interests at least impacted policy, rather than following policy.

However, it does not appear as though companies were solely focused on the security concerns of the US government. Exxon, for instance, stopped shipping oil to Nicaragua prior to the embargo, but after pipelines and oil storage facilities were blown up - by US Special Forces - causing loss of life. Exxon cited its safety concerns, not concerns about communism, in this decision.\textsuperscript{66} Exxon was also publicly pressured to cut all ties with Nicaragua, though it maintained some gas stations and local employees in Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{67}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{63}Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Central America."
\bibitem{64}“Minority Report of Members of House and Senate Select Committees on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition, November 18, 1987.”
\bibitem{65}Gabriel and Satish, "US Intervention in Nicaragua: A Success or Failure?," 571–72.
\bibitem{66}McCartney, "Exxon Bars Oil Ships To Managua."
\bibitem{67}Vesey, “Conservatives Boycott Exxon over Nicaragua.”
\end{thebibliography}
Standard Fruit also left Nicaragua prior to the embargo - citing concerns about labor issues and the potential nationalization of the banana industry. While those issues were related to communism, Standard Fruit’s decision to leave was about their ability to be profitable. Further, just as in previous cases, Standard Fruit went to great lengths to stop paying previous contracts with Nicaragua - an act reminiscent of United Fruit Company in Central America. In this case, however, though not decided until 1991, US courts did rule in favor of Nicaragua against Standard Fruit.

Standard Fruit and Exxon’s support for a fight against the Nicaraguan government should be expected. However, there is no evidence that, as in previous cases, they lobbied the US government to attempt to overthrow the FSLN. Nevertheless, in this case, we still see businesses focused on their concerns, vice the security concerns of the US government - though the narrative of Soviet Communism did change the way government and political groups pressured businesses, and the rise of mass media gave them a larger voice to apply pressure.

These Cold War interventions bear a striking resemblance to interventions prior to the Cold War. The intentions of the US government, the reasons behind those interventions, the domestic political calculus, even most of the business and security interactions, the feigned neutrality - all lead one to believe that whether or not Soviet Communism was a threat, the US would have acted in exactly the same manner. One may conclude, then, that the Cold War actually changed very little about the US’s policy and actions in Central America.

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68 Egelko, “Standard Fruit Denies Banana Contract.”
One might argue that this is simply an overbroad claim - that if one simply argues that the US acted in its own security interest, the broadness of that definition will necessarily lead one to conclude that nothing ever changes. However, the author sees this point as belied by the stark similarities in the actions and words of the US. It is not simply about the US acting, generically, in its own security interest. It is about the specific ways in which the US acts, and the specific ways the US justified those actions (and, at times, lied to the public and Congress about them). There are, the author believes, simply too many deep similarities to support this argument of an overbroad definition leading to a tautological conclusion.

One might also argue that, even if the actions of the US government were the same, the narrative of Soviet Communism alone changed the US. There is some evidence for this, especially in the economic interest changes mentioned above. If business interests were now willing to sacrifice their profits in order to ensure they could not possibly be associated with Soviet Communism - if virulent anti-communism so infected the national security enterprise that communists would be seen everywhere - then, perhaps, the narrative had such power that nothing could overcome it.

There is certainly plenty of evidence of the power of this narrative, and evidence that business interests would now take less risk to change policy. However, there was still dissent within the national security enterprise, and businesses still focused on their own interests. State department dissent channels were used to express dissatisfaction with US policy\textsuperscript{69}, even when those channels were, at times, expressing tacit support for

\textsuperscript{69} Yost and Christopher, “State Department Dissent Channel Cable and Response.”
communist rebels. Businesses also had always concerned themselves with their public image, and still knew what they had always known - that a government the US supported would give those businesses a better opportunity to come out on top, profitable.

However, businesses remained focused more on their profitability and needs than communism or US security. Their influence waned, not because of Soviet Communism, but because the combination of the rise of the national security state and the imperial presidency reduced their ability to push their devoted Representatives to impact policy. While in 1903 those economic interests could pressure Congress to move the Panama Canal route, in 1980, those interests had significantly less ability to use Congress to apply pressure - but they also would not need to, since the national security enterprise was already trying to damage the FSLN while endangering Exxon employees in Nicaragua.

Conclusion

The generally held belief that the Cold War fundamentally changed the US deserves more thought. In the past few decades, much has been revealed about the US’s actions in Central America throughout US history. These documents have given us great insight into what the US actually did in Central America. Additionally, as time continues to move on and the Cold War moves further and further into the past, we continually re-evaluate and gain perspective on the Cold War, which might allow us to question some fundamental assumptions that previously seemed impenetrable.

There is much scholarship about what “ground truth” is, or was. Whether or not Jacobo Arbenz would actually move Guatemala toward Soviet Communism, and
whether or not the Soviet Union was actually interested in Guatemala, for instance, have been debated at length. However, another fundamental assumption, that the Cold War fundamentally changed the US, and that the Cold War fundamentally changed the way the US operated, is a question that has not been asked in nearly the same depth. It may not be possible to “know” whether the Soviet Union actually wanted a foothold in Guatemala. However, if the US simply did what it always did in Central America, the question of “ground truth” becomes much less relevant.

If the US simply acted as it always had, then it would not have mattered whether Soviet Communism was a threat, or whether or not there was a Cold War. The threat of nuclear annihilation would not actually have mattered. As the cases above describe, the actions of the US government in Central America, and the words of US leadership during Cold War interventions could have been transplanted almost universally to pre-Cold War interventions. The similarities stretch from the strategic to the tactical. The differences through those interventions represent differences in US society, such as the growth of the national security state, the imperial presidency, and the rise of mass media. These factors adjusted the relationship between businesses and the US government, but the Cold War appears to have had little impact on US actions in Central America.

In 1989, US troops landed in Panama to ensure the government changed hands. In 1990, the US did all it could to ensure the Nicaraguan FSLN lost control of the government, and it did.
“American foreign policy was a mirror image of Russian foreign policy: whatever the Russians did, we did in reverse. American domestic policies were conducted under a kind of upside-down Russian veto: no man could be elected to public office unless he was on record as detesting the Russians, and no proposal could be enacted, from a peace plan at one end to a military budget at the other, unless it could be demonstrated that the Russians wouldn't like it.”
— Archibald MacLeish, Poet

Chapter Two: Domestic Anti-Communism

Chapter One explored the idea that the Cold War, and the expansionist Soviet Communism that came with it, fundamentally changed US foreign policy. It explored US foreign policy in Central America, and generally concluded that US foreign policy in Central America was essentially the same before and during the Cold War. Chapter Two will explore a similar question in US domestic politics. A belief that the Cold War changed almost everything about the US exists not just with respect to US foreign policy, but also with respect to domestic action in the US.

US domestic communism, and anti-communism, have been a part of the US culture since shortly after Marx and Engels first proposed their revolutionary ideas. The philosophical debate between communism and capitalism has not changed significantly; however, the debate concerning the appropriate place for communism in the US, and the appropriateness of various actions taken against communists has gone through numerous iterations.

This debate ranges from those who believe that the US should become a communist society to those who believe anyone espousing communist ideals should be expelled from the US, and includes a host of beliefs in-between those extremes. However, just as in foreign policy, the impact of the Cold War looms large, and a belief
that the Cold War fundamentally altered US domestic anti-communism remains. As
time since the Cold War passes, attitudes have changed\textsuperscript{70} - indicating that it is perhaps
time to revisit some items that were historically taken as basic truths about the Cold
War.

Given the distance we now have from the Cold War, and the declassification of
documents since then, it may be time to revisit the proposition that the Cold War, and
Soviet expansionist Communism, fundamentally changed the way the US operated
domestically and internationally. These documents provide light on the early Cold War,
when fear of Soviet expansionism was at its height. This chapter will focus on the
periods just after World War I and the early Cold war, and will explore the question: Did
US domestic use of anti-communist ideology during the early Cold War represent a
divergence from previous use of that ideology in the US? The author will conclude that
the larger changes in society (such as the nationalization of politics and the rise of mass
media) drove changes in US domestic anti-communism much more than Soviet
expansionism.

After a review of the literature surrounding US domestic anti-communism and
communism, the author will provide a brief history and description of the "Red Scares"
that occurred in the US after World War I and during the early Cold War. Then, the
author will compare and contrast those time periods, and draw conclusions concerning
the impact the Cold War had on US domestic anti-communism. Finally, the author will
address a counterargument and then describe the transitions out of these periods.

\textsuperscript{70} Saad, “Socialism as Popular as Capitalism among Young Adults in U.S.”
While “communism” can be painted with a broad brush, the author will focus on the descriptions and items that are closest to the philosophical definition of communism. From the pre-World War II case, the author will focus on attacks on those labeled “Bolsheviks” and “Communists.” From the post-World War II case, the author will focus on attacks on those labeled “Communists” or “Soviets.” The author will generally avoid attacks on schools of thought that are generally “Marxist” in nature, or schools of thought that are Marxist-derived but not communist.

**Literature Review**

The literature surrounding the topic of US domestic anti-communism necessarily includes literature on US domestic communism, and its relation to international communism. While all literature has some level of subjectivity, the political and emotional nature of domestic communism, and domestic anti-communism, ensure that writing on the subject must be carefully evaluated with respect to who is doing the writing, and their purpose. When one adds the Cold War to the mix, and therefore the Soviet Union, the magnitude of the politicization is heightened. The Soviet Union, and the Cold War, so gripped the US and the world that it is incredibly difficult to divorce from the emotions that surround them, and therefore, the idea of communism and anti-communism. Even now, three decades after the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union fell, emotions surrounding communism run high, and a resurgent Russia has not helped that. These ideas mean that the historical record - even the troves of documents that were recently released that should shed light on the subject - will remain subjective pieces of agendas, and will be interpreted in the context of the observer and writer.
However, there remain themes that run through the literature concerning US domestic anti-communism, and US domestic communism. The most significant themes debated in literature tend to revolve around the magnitude of the actual communist threat, and normally involve a discussion of the size and activities of the Communist Party of the USA (CPUSA). Many base their arguments on their view of how large and impactful the threat of the US communist was at the time. This debate tends to spill over into a few other themes. Broadly grouped, these themes include whether or the US response (including governmental, private institutions, and private persons) was appropriate, whether the idea of communism was used insincerely as a political or personal weapon, and whether the CPUSA was actually an appendage of Russia or the Soviet Union. Finally, some focus on the purely philosophical debates between communism and capitalism.

Anti-Communism as Opportunism

The simplest argument made in literature is that the idea of communism was used, by those espousing anti-communists, in an opportunistic way. Human nature being what it is, it is likely not surprising that it is common, and easy, to make the argument that these ideas were used, regardless of their veracity, to help individuals promote themselves and their preferred systems. Brown, for instance, argues that “Some federal officials, including southern congressmen and senators who feared, then despised, the Brown ruling, simply rode the wave and took advantage of it...”\(^7\) and “‘Liberal’ southern senators John Sparkman and Lister Hill realistically recanted New Deal (collectivist) sympathies and espoused both anti-communism and segregation to

Houghton, similarly, says, “From 1950 on, the anti-communism alarms and strategies really got rolling toward winning elections...toward ‘national defense,’ and against ‘Communist aggression.’ ‘Cold War’ and ‘anti-communist’ indoctrination has been overwhelmingly poured out upon our people...”

While Schneider points out that one should expect nothing less from politicians, saying “Though we can not expect those who are engaged in a bitter struggle to cease exploiting the term for their political end,” this opportunism went far beyond politics. In the business world, Henry Ford was openly anti-communist. However, as Goodall notes “At the same time that he [Ford] was attacking communists for leading unemployment demonstrations against his company, fifty to a hundred Soviet engineers were being trained at Highland Plant...to learn skills to take back to communist Russia.”

Goodall also attributes this behavior to opportunism, saying “…such anti-communist reactions had little to do with high politics, less to do with the incipient threat posed by Stalinism or Soviet Russia, and nothing at all to do with the communist espionage networks that were forming in the early 1930s...” Elsewhere, in the film industry, Ceplair says, “A more naive form of opportunistic anti-communism appeared in the person of Walt Disney, whose refusal to recognize the Screen Cartoonists Guild as the bargaining representative of his employees led to a strike...he blamed the strike on Communists.”

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74 Schneider, “Note on a Not-so-Vicious Intellectualism,” 122.
75 Goodall, “The Battle of Detroit and Anti-Communism in the Depression Era,” 465.
76 Goodall, “The Battle of Detroit and Anti-Communism in the Depression Era,” 480.
77 Ceplair, “The Film Industry’s Battle against Left-Wing Influences, from the Russian Revolution to the Blacklist,” 405.
However, the very idea that these principles were used opportunistically requires a subset of ideas which are very much debated in the literature. It required a populace that is at least susceptible to the idea that the threat was significant. That subset of ideas concerns how significant the communist threat in the US really was, which, in and of itself, can have varying definitions. Excepting for the moment the idea that those taking action against communists were wrong, but believed in the threat, if the communist “menace” was not really a threat then opportunism is the only argument for anti-communism. If the threat was real, however, then what some call opportunism quickly turns into a legitimate battle against a threat to the nation. For instance, Johnson says of the communist influence on the Disney strike mentioned above “He [Walt Disney’s biographer] dismisses the theory of Communist involvement as being a plausible one...Most authors do not directly state that this theory of communist infiltration is untrue and some authors even go as far as to agree with this particular theory.” If Ceplair is wrong and the authors who agree with the communist theory are correct, then Walt Disney is not guilty of opportunism, he is simply accurately describing the situation.

Debates on the Significance of the Communist Threat

The next question explored in the literature, therefore, is what threat communism actually represented to the US. The debate about opportunism typically rests on that idea. Inside of that debate, there are debates concerning US communism’s relationship with Russia (and the Soviet Union), debates concerning the size and influence of the CPUSA, and debates concerning how threatening US communists were to the US.

The debate concerning US communism’s relationship with Russian and Soviet Communism extends from a belief that every US communist was beholden to Soviet Communism to the idea that the US communists were not even revolutionary. Draper argues “Politically, they [American communists] were so accustomed to taking orders from the Soviet Union that even espionage would probably...not have deterred them,” and “When we get to the really major decisions, we have to leave the area of the American movement altogether...decisions originated in Moscow, not New York.” Draper goes so far as to call the American communist movement the “American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power.” Ottanelli, on the other hand, argues the CPUSA “has not engaged in revolutionary propaganda for the past eight years, and indeed abandoned the last slight remnant of revolutionary ideology in January, 1944...The only leftist groups that might with some accuracy be termed revolutionary...do little more today than engage in obscure polemics with one another…”

There is middle ground, however. Moore, like Ottanelli, argues that the CPUSA abandoned its revolutionary position, and, for Moore, this fact aligns with a decrease in ties to Moscow - though Moore does argue that prior to that point, the ties were significant. “At the same time that the party was developing from a revolutionary organization into a political pressure group, its direct contacts with the Soviet authorities and with the Communist International were diminishing. It is evident from the party’s behavior in recent years that it does not enjoy the facilities of any ‘pipe line to the

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Kremlin.” Moore does believe, however, that the CPUSA remained an organization that would spread the propaganda of the Soviets.

Ottanelli also argues that the CPUSA’s decisions and policies were a complex function of their influences, “the course of the CPUSA was shaped by a homespun search for policies which would make it an integral part of the country's society as well as by directives from the Communist International.” This debate, however, naturally extends to whether individuals who were in the communist party took direction from Moscow.

Hook, for instance, argues strongly that every member of the CPUSA was not only beholden to Moscow, but was encouraged to deceive others freely in order to advance communist ideals. “Communists are voluntary members of an organization which gives them explicit instructions to indoctrinate, lie, and commit perjury, if necessary, and to act always in the interests of the Soviet Union.” For Hook, membership in the CPUSA is enough to assume these traits in a person. Because of communism’s record abroad, Lowe, similarly believes that “Communism itself is now, quite deservedly, utterly damned in the United States,” while also agreeing with Hook in his description of the Communist Party as one that encourages deception and subservience to Moscow. However, Lowe disagrees with Hook, arguing that not all people in the CPUSA exhibited those traits, and that “…to settle a discussion of Professor X’s fitness to teach, we must look at Professor X, and not rest content with an

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82 Moore, “The Communist Party of the USA; An Analysis of a Social Movement,” 33.
83 Ottanelli, The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War Two, 64.
84 Hook, “Mindless Empiricism,” 92.
argument from the essence of Communism.” Lowe is, however, making a philosophical argument, as he is convinced that every member of the CPUSA will exhibit the traits described above.

At the other end of this debate is Phillips, who simply argues that the above beliefs about the CPUSA and communists are wrong. “I believe that this unfriendliness [to the Communist Party] is based upon misconceptions deliberately cultivated by our major sources of information...I am in a position to know that their beliefs about our party are false.” Those who disagree with Phillips, such as Hook and Lowe above, did construct an impenetrable argument in their writing, however.

Lovejoy, who claims to occupy a middle ground, demonstrates this impenetrability. Standing between Hook and Lowe, Lovejoy does not believe that membership in the CPUSA guarantees a person will exhibit the characteristics described, nor does he believe that those people should be judged solely by their actions. He believes that CPUSA members should simply be asked if they believe in those principles, and answers to those questions will determine their fate. However, for those like Phillips who deny that the CPUSA endorses lying, Lovejoy says, “their denial is conclusive evidence that...they are either declaring a proposition to be false without any serious examination of the clear and copious evidence that shows it to be true...or else that they are themselves engaged in 'evasion and concealment of the truth.'” In this way the writers on this side of the debate have ensured that they cannot lose their argument.

87 Allen et al., “Statements by the President and the Dismissed Professors,” 331.
88 Lovejoy, “On a Supposed Resurgence of Vicious Intellectualism,” 89.
Debates Concerning Actions Taken Against Those Labeled Communist

These arguments flow into the actions taken by anti-communists against communists and others that were suspected of or related to communists, which, in private organizations, typically consisted of firing and ostracizing. The debate surrounding what was acceptable for anti-communists was also very wide ranging. For instance, while Hook thought all communist professors should be fired, Phillips believed that it was inappropriate to fire professors for what he saw as a political belief. While McCarthyism holds the largest specter in the minds of Americans in terms of domestic anti-communism, the debate in the literature concerning what was appropriate is wide ranging, and domestic anti-communism existed in almost every facet of American life.

Many argue that domestic anti-communism was overbroad and based on scant or nonexistent evidence, meaning taking action against individuals was inappropriate. Carleton, for instance, says that there was "...a widespread series of actions by individuals and groups whose intentions were to frighten Americans with false and highly exaggerated charges of Communist subversion." 89 Wald, on the other hand, describing domestic anti-communism in religious organizations, notes that while communists may have been “caricatured and demonized...religious anticommunism reflected a genuine abhorrence rooted in self-interest and political judgment” and “communism did challenge the presumptions of traditionalist religion.” 90 Even if the threat was exaggerated, Wald argues that the institution was actually threatened.

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If Wald is somewhere in the middle of the debate, Hook’s argument that all communists should be expelled from a profession would be exactly in line with the beliefs of longtime FBI director Hoover. Hoover, as Heale writes, engaged in a “crusade against domestic communism” that was “personal.” Gotham describes one of Hoover’s books as designed to exaggerate the communist threat and agitate the American public against communists, in order to ensure his actions against communists would be supported.

Debates Concerning “McCarthyism”

The actions of Senator Joe McCarthy are generally written about as overreaches. The term “McCarthyism” has come to represent just such overreach, and activities like his Congressional hearing (along with similar hearings in the US House of Representatives) did have significant impacts on peoples’ lives, especially in Hollywood. Even some who believe strongly that communism was a grave threat to the nation eschew his tactics. Shtromas, for instance, who wrote “they [communists] are left with only one option, to eliminate the Western system, and the best means to that end at their disposal is communist ideology with its powerful subversive and expansionist potential” and that a world without communism was “...the only real policy assuring...physical survival of mankind” also wrote that “...one has to fight communism in the free world solely by ideological means...”

Others, similarly, write “The federal loyalty program...had its share of abuses from the start...it turned into a heresy hunt, driving patriotic government workers from

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93 Shtromas et al., “TO FIGHT COMMUNISM: WHY AND HOW? [With COMMENTS and REJOINDER],” 24,26,32.
their jobs on the basis of unsupported accusations from unidentified sources. Road-
company McCarthy's sprang up in states and cities across the land, employing guilt by
association, secret informers, loyalty oaths, blacklists, and other forms of intimidation."\(^94\)

However, there are those who still argue that McCarthy was misunderstood, and
that his actions were appropriate - effectively arguing that mere association with
communism, or threats of that association, were enough to end people's careers and
declare them traitors to the country. Evans, for instance, writes "In case after
significant case...McCarthy's targets were driven from the field..." and "It's a remarkable
but generally neglected fact that every major McCarthy investigation in the period 1953-
54 resulted in some significant change in governmental practice...In every instance, the
officials in charge admitted that there had been enormous foul-ups, and moved to take
corrective action."\(^95\) While Evans acknowledges that McCarthy made some mistakes,
he argues that because communism was a legitimate threat, and because McCarthy did
root out some actual spies, all of his actions were, on balance, justified.

A relatively common thread throughout the literature concerning US domestic
anti-communism, however, is the idea that the rise of the Soviet Union, and the Cold
War, drastically changed the US, to include domestic anti-communism. Heale, for
instance, writes "The onset of the Cold War triggered new strains in American political
society, particularly as the course of world events seemed to make a mockery of
American pretensions...In the 1940s red scare tactics came to be used almost routinely

\(^{94}\) Rovere, Senator Joe McCarthy, xiii.
\(^{95}\) Evans, Blacklisted by History, 11680.
for partisan and factional advantage, by moderates and liberals as well as by right-wing groups.\textsuperscript{96}

The author will evaluate this claim - that US domestic anti-communism was significantly affected by the onset of the Cold War. Specifically, the author will compare the Red Scare just after World War I to the Red Scare after World War II (near the height of Cold War tension to evaluate whether the Cold War really changed US domestic anti-communism. These cases will be compared and contrasted to investigate the impact the Cold War had. The literature will be used to support this analysis by describing the actions taken by governments (Federal and State), non-governmental actors, and individuals against communism (which the author generally describes as those identified as communist or accused of associating with communism). As described above, the term Bolshevik is a suitable substitute, as that term was generally used to describe communists shortly after the Bolshevik revolution. However, the author will generally try to avoid using actions specifically directed against marxist derived groups and generic socialism - though those are often conflated in the public eye.

\textsuperscript{96} Heale, American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy within, 1830-1970, 123.
Historical Cases

Red Scare Post WWI

“The strike is the largest and latest manifestation of the working out of the program of the International Communist Party, whose purpose is to capture the political and economic power, to overthrow the government and to establish a dictatorship on the part of what they call the proletariat, and transport to this country the exact chaotic condition that exists in Russia.”

—A. Mitchell Palmer, US Attorney General

Shortly after the end of World War I, what is commonly called the First Red Scare in the US occurred. The World War ended, the Lenin-led Bolshevik revolution took place in Russia, and the communists seemed to be in ascendance. A global pandemic was still taking its toll. Labor strikes and anarchist attacks fueled a belief that Bolsheviks and Communists (often used interchangeably) threatened the government of the US. A newly formed Communist Party in the US that did, at the highest level of the party, advocate overthrow of the US government, certainly did nothing to tamp down that fear. The Espionage Act and the Sedition Act gave the US Federal government widespread authority to arrest (and deport, for aliens) those who spoke against the government - or, crucially, were simply associated with those who did. This Red Scare went far beyond the Federal government.

At the state level, for instance, New York created the Lusk committee (named after its first chairman) to “investigate Bolshevik and other radical activities in the state.” The committee, and warrants issued in their name, authorized hundreds of

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97 “A. Mitchell Palmer Quotes.”
arrests and the raiding of officers of many left-wing organizations. There were some deportations, but, in the end, only a few of those arrested were charged with any crime, and brought to trial. The “guilt by association” principle the committee, and police, acted upon were later deemed significant overreach, but were typical during this Red Scare. Even New York State governor Alfred Smith, who generally viewed the Lusk committee as a danger to civil rights only offered Bolsheviks “education or the nightstick.”\textsuperscript{99} The New York State legislature also refused to seat five legislators that had been legitimately elected - four of which were sitting during World War I.\textsuperscript{100}

In Idaho, Governor Davis “requested Americanization laws that revised public school curricula, made inculcation of patriotic sentiments a major objective, and required compulsory education of persons unable to read, write, or speak English…” and “...asked the legislature to provide a revitalized National Guard.”\textsuperscript{101} State officials called “Reds” and “Bolsheviks” the greatest threat to America, and fear abounded that the “Reds” would come to Idaho from every direction. The Governor went as far as to ask the US Department of labor to refrain from advertising labor shortages in Idaho to ensure that “Reds” would not enter Idaho to gain jobs. Idaho also passed laws that “provided harsh punishment of persons who printed, published, edited, sold, or otherwise circulated documents containing such [Bolshevik] ideas...and...imposed fines and lengthy prison terms upon organizers, members, and ‘voluntarily’ assembled persons associating with organizations that advocated ‘the doctrines of criminal

\textsuperscript{100} Colburn, “Governor Alfred E. Smith and the Red Scare, 1919-20,” 431.
syndicalism.”

102 That “criminal syndicalism” would be used against those on the left, including Bolsheviks.

These activities also spilled over into personal action. For instance, people were tarred and feathered, and even shot, for what some perceived to be anti-American activities, to include speaking in support of Lenin’s policies, and not singing the Star-Spangled Banner. Those guilty of these attacks were often untouched by authorities, and in some cases, those who were attacked were prosecuted.103 In the education realm, teachers were fired for simply associating with the Communist Party, and loyalty oaths were required in various places. Julia Pratt, an educator who was a member of the Communist Party, was not indicted, and was dismissed based on that fact.104

“Civic” groups also took a significant role in anti-communism, especially in the education world. The National Security League, for instance, claimed they had more than one million Americans assisting in an educational campaign to ensure Bolshevism did not spread in the youth of America.105

At the Federal level, the most prominent embodiments of the Red Scare were the Palmer Raids. These raids were named after Attorney General Palmer, who told Congress that radicals were planning on overthrowing the US government shortly,106 and that his department had a list of 60,000 names that were ready to support this revolution.107 These raids, which included illegal wiretaps, warrantless searches, and

107 NYT, “Palmer For Stringent Law.”
abuse of detained persons, led to thousands of arrests, deportations without hearings, and persons being imprisoned without bail.\textsuperscript{108} Some tie these raids directly to an anarchist that detonated a bomb outside the house of Palmer a few months prior to these raids. This bombing was a part of two larger campaigns - the first a set of three dozen bombs mailed to prominent persons in May of 1919 was meant to tie to the Bolshevik revolution, and the second set in June of 1919 was also meant to threaten the political landscape. These bombings played a large role in mobilizing a government response, including, as some argue, directly instigating the Palmer raids.\textsuperscript{109}

Overall, the Red Scare of 1919-1920 was characterized by an intense desire among government and individuals to promote “Americanization,” which manifested itself in the ways described above. Anti-Americanism was the problem, it was argued, and this was embodied in left wing causes, but especially Bolshevism and communism. A desire for “Americanization” led to violations of civil rights, jobs being lost for nothing more than association, and murders left unpunished.

\textbf{Red Scare Post-WWII}

“There are today many Communists in America. They are everywhere—in factories, offices, butcher stores, on street corners, in private businesses. And each carries in himself the germ of death for society.”

—J. Howard McGrath, US Attorney General\textsuperscript{110}

Shortly after the end of World War II, what is commonly called the Second Red Scare took place. The World War ended, China fell to communism, Soviet spies were

\textsuperscript{109} FBI, “Palmer Raids.”
\textsuperscript{110} Fariello, \textit{Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition}, 27.
discovered in the US, and the expansion of Soviet Communism seemed to threaten the world. Based on those fears, Americans took a number of actions that, taken as a whole, would end up being called the Second Red Scare. These actions included enforcing loyalty oaths, limiting the ability of communists to run for office, firing or blacklisting citizens who were associated with communism, and violating the civil rights of citizens.

A general feeling that “Americanism” needed to be restored to fight against communism drove action at the federal and state level, along with driving action in private institutions. At the federal level, loyalty boards established by President Truman would investigate over 10,000 people in over 4,000 hearings. The Subversive Activities Control Board would determine which groups had to register as communist - and label all of the publications as “Communist,” along with being denied renewal of passports. While Senator McCarthy’s Senate Internal Subcommittee and the House Committee on Un-American Activities are the two most prominent examples of domestic anti-communism during this period, action went far beyond the federal level. The Venona papers would add some truth to these worries, as there were around 350 individuals spanning almost every US government organization that were identified as acting covertly for the Soviet Union. While some were named directly, many were not, leaving the fear that Soviet spies could be everywhere, all the time.111

At the State level, for instance, 16 states banned communists from public employment, 17 banned communists from politics, and 10 imposed an outright ban on

111 Haynes and Klehr, “Venona and the Cold War.”
the communist party. While these laws would later be overturned by the Supreme Court, they represent the lengths states went to in order to combat communism. A Los Angeles state investigating committee threatened the entire set of approximately 30,000 educators with invasive loyalty checks, Alabama required its schools to certify that nothing they taught related to communism, and the Texas legislature forced the removal of any material published by the Soviet Union. The State committees that investigated “un-American” activities bled over into the private sector as well.

Perhaps the most famous example of private sector anti-communism is the blacklisting of Hollywood actors, directors, and screenwriters, which included not just those who admitted to being members of the Communist Party, but also to those who were associated with people in the party, and to people who refused to answer questions concerning their membership in the party. These activities went on throughout the nation however, and were not limited to Hollywood. In New York, over 300 teachers were fired by similar purges and university professors in Tennessee were fired for simply “taking the Fifth” when asked about their membership in the Communist Party.

These types of activities were magnified by radio and civic groups, such as radio personality Joe Worthy in Texas and the Minutewomen, a civic organization that numbered approximately 50,000 in Texas. The Minutewomen received information from Senator Joe McCarthy and worked to remove people they perceived as communist

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112 Gibson, “Political Intolerance and Political Repression during the McCarthy Red Scare,” 515.
from their positions, whether those positions be private or public.116 Worthy also attempted to create an organization called the Watchdogs, which was an attempt to place “spies” in schools to root out and report communist teachings.117

Because of its reach, however, the Federal anti-communist actions were the most widespread. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) kept files on hundreds of thousands of Americans, and conducted surveillance, to include illegal searches and wiretaps, on thousands of Americans. Where direct evidence could not be found of illegal activity, information was simply provided to employers which might end up in firing. FBI agents, trained in these tactics, would often cross over and work for the private sector, conducting the same “loyalty checks” on employees.118

The general public also took part in this anti-communist behavior. In Peekskill, New York, in 1949, a concert given by a communist singer was attacked. 145 attendees were hospitalized, and the perpetrators were likened to patriots by local media. At a church meeting Boston meant to protest the attack, a mob gathered and attacked the churchgoers, without police intervention.119 New York State Governor Dewey’s press secretary blamed the violence on communists, and the local district attorney praised the police.120

All told, “...over 11 thousand individuals were fired as a result of government and private loyalty programs...More than 100 people were convicted under the federal Smith Act, and 135 people were cited for contempt by the House Un-American Activities

119 Fariello, Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition, 74.
120 Duberman, Paul Robeson, 493.
Committee.” Violence against suspected or actual communists was not just tolerated, but, in many cases, effectively condoned by the government, and many workers lived in fear that they would be accused of being a communist. The desire to ensure “The Evil Empire” did not spread to the US led to civil rights abuses, physical violence, and the loss of livelihood for thousands of Americans.

Analysis

How, then, do these two “Red Scares” compare? Did the Cold War significantly change domestic US anti-communism? While both came shortly after the end of World Wars, the end of World War II seemingly provided a much greater threat - between nuclear weapons, the overt expansive nature of Soviet Communism, and the fall of China to communists, it is easy to describe why the early Cold War anti-communism might have been much more aggressive than earlier anti-communist efforts. This threat provided a more direct, expansive, and existential threat than the post-WWI threat. While the post-WWI threat was real, in that bombs actually detonated across the country, in reality, those bombings were quite limited in time, space, and scope. Most were even intercepted prior to arriving at their destinations. So, while there was real fear during the first “Red Scare,” the threat during the second “Red Scare” far outpaced the threat during the first.

As described above, the tactics of the two red scares were similar. The government, at the federal and state level, actively sought to find and arrest

121 Gibson, “Political Intolerance and Political Repression during the McCarthy Red Scare,” 514.
communists, or those suspected of being communists - and, further, those who were simply associated with communists. The second red scare did seem to go further in the private sector, in that the private sector actively excommunicated citizens that simply refused to answer questions about communism. In the first Red Scare, however, private citizens were removed from professions based on suspicion of, or actual support of communism. In the public, the similarities are stark, to include violence against those perceived as communists, with state and local officials actively or passively supporting that violence - and in both cases, sometimes blaming the violence on the victims.

Civic groups between the red scares share significant similarities as well. The national security league, for instance, of the first red scare, looked very similar to the Minutewomen of the second red scare. The Minutewomen in Texas, however, had the advantage of living in a time when communication across the country was easier, and therefore were able to give and take information from federal sources\textsuperscript{122} to a greater extent than the national security league. Attorney General Palmer’s raids during the first red scare violated civil liberties in ways similar to FBI Director Hoover’s actions in the second red scare. Loyalty oaths and checks were undertaken during both. Senator McCarthy’s claim to have a list of State Department communists bore a striking resemblance to words from Attorney General Palmer shortly after World War I.\textsuperscript{123} The actions of authorities and citizens during the Peekskill riots resemble the actions of authorities and citizens against those deemed “Bolshevik” during the first Red Scare.

\textsuperscript{122} Carleton, \textit{Red Scare: Right-Wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism, and Their Legacy in Texas}, 147.

\textsuperscript{123} Palmer quoted in NYT, “Palmer For Stringent Law” as having list of 60,000 radicals and McCarthy quoted in Evans as having a list of 205 communists in the state department.
However, the second red scare lasted longer than the first, and is seemingly more widespread. This is perhaps because the Cold War continued long past the Second World War - but the grossest abuses that are considered the second red scare ended in the mid-1950’s - decades before the Cold War ended. Other than size, it seems as though the two red scares were very similar in nature, which may indicate that the expansion of Soviet Communism did not actually change US domestic anti-communism as much as Cold War legend, and the literature, indicated.

What did change, however, between the two World Wars, was the growth of the United States. Technology changed, and mass communication (especially in the form of radio, and then television) grew exponentially. The national security state grew, along with the nationalization of politics. These technological changes, and especially mass communication, led to an easier spread of fear, and personalities like Joe Worthy found livelihoods in spreading that fear - allowing the second red scare to last longer than the first, and for names to be spread (or smeared) more quickly, with less chance for rationality to take hold. It also allowed for, as mentioned above, better and quicker communication between groups and places, so that when the (for instance) Minutewomen of Texas were looking for communists, they could work with the FBI and Senators in Washington, D.C., more easily.

The rise of mass media allowed Congress to more quickly intimidate the population with televised hearings, and the nationalization of politics ensured that people across the country would be listening to figures they might not previously have listened to. The rise of the national security state, just as in foreign policy, gave the government greater power to act - but perhaps more importantly, made government...
officials feel like they could act in defense of national security - and led to wider and more frequent abuses, as documented above.

The second red scare ended much the way the first did, though it took longer. In both cases, the nation, as a whole, moved on, recognizing that the threat was not nearly as great as they had been told. The nation decided to stop exiling people from communities and jobs simply because they may have been associated with communism, and certainly not for refusing to answer questions about it.

In the end, then, it appears as though the expansion of Soviet Communism, and the Cold War, did not affect US domestic anti-communism as much as most would believe. Rather, the other, larger trends in the US took an established methodology and amplified it, so that people could continue to use the same tactics they had previously, but in ways that had greater and more effect. Larger trends in the US, much more than the Cold War, it would seem, drove behavior.

Counter Argument and Response

One might argue that the author has simply created a circular argument - comparing two “Red Scare” periods guarantees, some might say, a conclusion that domestic anti-communism looked almost exactly the same between the two periods. However, the author responds with two points - first, that this only appears true or tautological in hindsight because of the similar names, and, second, that given the historical narrative the author is challenging, these periods should have looked vastly different.
First, the similar naming convention describes a generic similarity, but the periods were focused, generically, on different threats. The first “Red Scare” certainly targeted communists (Bolsheviks), but was also focused on socialism generally, anarchism, and a generic radicalism. While it did come after the Russian Revolution (hence the link to Bolshevism), it also came amidst a wave of anarchist and radical violence, including the assassination that touched off World War I. In the decades preceding the first “Red Scare,” anarchists had conducted bombings across the World, and assassinated a number of leaders across the World. In the US, President William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist. The second “Red Scare,” however, was almost unilaterally focused on communism, and, specifically, Soviet-influenced Communism.

Tables 1 and 2 contain charts generated from the Google “Ngrams” viewer, which displays the prevalence of terms over time in literature, and can be used to compare the relative prevalence of different terms. While not proof of a specific conclusion, they do provide evidence of the relative significance of different terms during different periods. As Table 1 below demonstrates, while Bolshevism certainly became more significant in the late 1910’s, generic radicalism remained much more significant. As Table 2 demonstrates, however, this contrasts sharply with the second “Red Scare” period, where fear of communism, and especially Soviet Communism, overwhelmingly dominated the narrative. For this reason, expecting the two periods to look similar because of their names is a quirk of their historical naming, rather than their actual motivations and targets.
Second, given the relative threats, it is reasonable to accept the historical narrative that the Cold War did have a significant impact on domestic anti-communism. While the general terroristic threat was higher during the pre-World War I era, due to radical and anarchist attacks, the post-World War II Soviet threat was believed to be an existential threat. China had fallen to Soviet style Communism, the Soviet Union had

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124 Tables 1 and 2 are Google Books Ngram Viewer searches for the words listed on each table. https://books.google.com/ngrams
taken Eastern Europe and drawn an iron curtain, South Korea was threatened, the
domino theory dominated political thinking, South American governments were turning
to communism, and the threat of nuclear weapons cast an existential dread over most
of the United States. The idea that this set of circumstances fundamentally changed the
actions inside and outside of the United States is simple one to accept - and, on some
level, one would completely expect them to.

Based on those two ideas, one should reasonably expect a much different
response to US Communists in the 1950s than the response to US Communists (or
Bolsheviks) in the late 1910s. The narrative that the Cold War changed things with
respect to US domestic anti-communism is a powerful one, and a rationally logical one -
but the natural implication of that narrative should be that US domestic anti-communism
in the 1950s looked different than in the late 1910s; and, therefore, one should expect
the two “Red Scare” periods to be significantly different in action and scope.

Transitions out of “Red Scares”

In both cases, of course, the “Red Scares” ended, though US domestic anti-
communism did not end. With respect to the first “Red Scare,” the transition from the
grossest abuses happened in the early 1920s, along with a return to those who openly
asserted the ideas of communism being, at least, palatable. Political leaders, starting in
1920, that were most virulently anti-Bolshevik, such as Palmer (who organized raids to
round up Bolsheviks) were not elevated in party status, and political leadership (such as
President Harding) turned the page after it became obvious that the abuses were too
gross when compared to the threat. As the roaring twenties took over, the domestic
focus shifted to the economy, and the few instances of Communists having influence were short-lived.

By the time the depression came, which certainly overcame any other domestic political issues, the idea that Communists were a serious threat had all but faded. The ability to claim that Communists posed a serious threat to America quickly faded without a major power threatening the US, and domestic issues quickly turned the US away from the Red Scare. As the depression came, the ideas of Marx and communism began to take hold in the US, and while many were opposed to those ideas, the overwhelming depression made it easy to find those who supported the ideas behind Marxism and communism. These generic ideas would live up through World War II, when the Soviet Union was a US ally, making anti-communist ideas politically awkward. As soon as that war ended, however, domestic anti-communism came back in full force. This, as noted above, gave birth to the second “Red Scare,” which the US effectively transitioned out of in the early 1960s.

When Eisenhower did not speak of domestic communism in his farewell address, and Kennedy did not mention domestic communism in his inaugural address, the signal that the mood in the US had changed was sent. House and Senate committees continued to investigate activities they considered Un-American or security threats, but the committees no longer dominated the US political landscape. The Civil Rights movement also began to dominate the US domestic and political landscapes. While domestic anti-communism was weaved into attacks against the Civil Rights movement, it was a minority opinion (though certainly an important one inside of the FBI) that communism was driving the Civil Rights movement. Similarly, the threat of Soviet
expansion, though still significant, had settled into a sort of status quo, especially in Europe, and some “thawing” of the US-Soviet relationship began in the 1960s.

In the non-governmental realm, civic groups continued to try to push the blacklisting of professionals, especially in Hollywood. However, especially after the public spectacles in Congress ended, Hollywood began to accept those previously blacklisted, even as it was still forced to publicly disavow those associated with communism. Public leadership helped the effort to quell the grossest abuses, as figures like President Kennedy openly and publicly watched movies that were protested as supporting communist propaganda.

It slowly became palatable to express differing opinions publicly, to include scholarship that criticized the US’s role in creating and prolonging the Cold War. While there was plenty of academic debate about its merit, authors and scholars were no longer shunned for expressing dissenting viewpoints - to include being openly supportive of communism. It was clear by this point that the Soviet Union’s brand of communism was oppressive, which meant that those in the US who expressed positive views concerning communism were no longer, generally speaking, discussing Soviet Communism. This change, perhaps, added a great deal of weight to the political change in the US that allowed for many to openly express communist views.

The 1960s also saw numerous high profile professors who were openly Marxist - a stark contrast from the 1950s, when those who were Marxist or communist might simply refuse to answer the question, when asked, concerning their political beliefs. Herbert Marcuse, for instance, was a leading academic in the 1960s, and was openly Marxist - though, again, he did not espouse any support for Soviets. In fact, he
provided a strong critique of the Soviet method of implementing Marxism. Beyond that, the 1960s saw many Marxists and would-be Communists turn to the “New Left,” which focused on a set of issues like civil rights, gay rights, and gender roles, leaving the traditional Marxist and communist realm.

As is natural among humans, one reaction in academia to the overreaches of anti-communism was a reflexive “anti-anti-communism,” also known as revisionism, which itself produced a “re-revisionism” academic movement, which argued that US domestic anti-communism was appropriate, as discussed above in the literature review.

In the case of both “Red Scares,” political leadership moved on as the threat of communism could no longer be so strongly asserted, and as the US recognized the overreach of private citizens, civic groups, and the State and Federal governments. Other concerns (e.g. the Civil Rights Movement) took precedence, though US domestic anti-communism simmered on the surface of US life, but it once again became palatable to express communist views - though in the latter case, direct support of the Soviet Union was still seemingly not acceptable. These transitions represent important times in US history, and turning points (though not without reversals) in US domestic anti-communism.

Conclusion

While the argument that the Cold War changed US domestic anti-communism significantly, it appears that, similar to US Foreign Policy in Central America, larger trends inside of the US had a bigger impact on domestic anti-communism than the threat of Soviet expansionist Communism. Comparing the two Red Scare periods, only
one of which contained the threat of Soviet expansionist Communism, demonstrates that US domestic anti-communism in the two periods looked extremely similar. Given that, it is likely time to re-assess the impact that the Cold War had on domestic anti-communism, and look instead at larger trends inside of the US.

There can be no doubt that Soviet expansionist Communism was real, and did a great deal of damage - nor can there be doubt that it was a threat to the US. However, given the similarities between the two periods, one may conclude that US domestic anti-communism was more about the US than the Soviet Union. In each case, the US transitioned out of Red Scares into periods where those expressing communist views were able to do so openly, and, in some cases, even rose to prominence. The next chapter will examine the impact of these anti-communist policies in Central America. While there are plenty of anti-communist policies to analyze, fundamentally one must ask if, even if these policies did not scale to the actual threat, if the policies were effective, then perhaps they had value despite their disproportionate application. The next chapter will present a deeper examination of US anti-communist policies in Central America throughout the Cold War, to attempt to evaluate whether or not those policies achieved their aims or provided benefit to the US.
“...it is no longer possible for us to distinguish between quarreling among political groups and what we now know to be international Communism tactics.” - US Representative Gardner Withrow, 1957

Chapter Three: Where Did the Road End?

Chapters One and Two examined the ideas behind anti-communist efforts in US foreign and domestic policy. They concluded, generally, that while policies and actions were described as anti-communist, they generally resembled previous policies in those areas. With respect to foreign policy in Central America, anti-communist efforts very closely resembled the interventions conducted by the US over the century prior to the rise of Soviet Communism. In the domestic realm, despite the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union, domestic anti-communist efforts very closely resembled previous anti-communism, an outcome that should not be true given the significant increase in the threat of communism associated with Soviet expansionist Communism.

This chapter will focus on the effects of anti-communist foreign policy in Central America. As the literature review in the previous chapters described, one common argument made with respect to policy is that one should focus on the effectiveness of that policy, and disregard the ideological underpinning. If that argument holds, and the conclusions from Chapters One and Two hold, then one may still argue that, regardless of whether the intent of the policy met the rhetoric of the policy, as long as that policy was effective, one should consider the policy effective. This chapter will speak to that question.

In order to evaluate the effects of anti-communist foreign policy, this chapter will focus on the countries that were evaluated in Chapter One. US foreign policy in Central America will be evaluated during the height of the communist threat - the Cold War. Just as Chapter One described, the US intervened in many Latin American nations during the Cold War. However, Chapter One focused on three Cold War interventions - Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Likewise, this chapter will evaluate the effect of US anti-communist foreign policy in these three nations.

First, this chapter will give a more holistic description of US interventions in these nations during the Cold War. It will do this by first describing the overall Cold War history of these nations and then describing the US role in those histories. Chapter One focused on specific interventions, rather than describing the totality of the history and US involvement in those nations. After describing the arc of those Cold War histories and US involvement, this chapter will describe the effects of those interventions in the Central American nations, and then evaluate those effects. Finally, this chapter will evaluate the overall question: Did those interventions provide a net benefit or a net loss? In this chapter, through evaluations of these cases, the author will argue that US anti-communist foreign policy in Central America during the Cold War did not achieve a net benefit for the United States.
Guatemala

“What we’d give to have an Arbenz now.” - US Embassy Official, 1980

History

The description in Chapter One of the US intervention in Guatemala ended with Castillo Armas entering Guatemala with a small army in 1954, and Jacobo Arbenz abdicating. The next dozen days saw many in Guatemala jockeying for power, ending with Castillo Armas as the president of Guatemala. In addition to the coup itself, the CIA was also involved in planning assassinations that would follow the coup. In 1958, Castillo Armas was assassinated, and Ydigoras Fuentes took power, following an election where the Guatemalan Army overturned the results. In 1960, a group of military officers attempted to overthrow the government of Fuentes, but failed. This coup was largely based on anger over Fuentes allowing Guatemala to be used as a base for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. These military officers would reposition to eastern Guatemala and grow MR-13 (Movimiento Revolucionario 13 Noviembre), starting a thirty year Guatemalan Civil War.

MR-13 attacked the Guatemalan offices of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) in 1962, provoking university students sympathetic to the cause of MR-13 to walk out of their classrooms in protest of the oppressive government. Fuentes responded with violence against all who supported or sympathized with MR-13. MR-13 then combined

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126 McPherson, A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, 146.
128 Blakeley, State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South, 92.
130 Peralta and Beverly, “Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala,” 93.
with other leftist organizations to fight against Fuentes throughout Guatemala. The larger group was renamed FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes). Shortly thereafter, Fuentes began full scale counterinsurgency operations, to include the use of aerial bombardment and death squads grown from his security service. These death squads dramatically increased their operations over time, eventually including government sponsored murder of students, along with kidnappings of people suspected of having "leftist sympathies" throughout the country.

Fuentes was overthrown in 1963 by Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia. This coup was largely motivated by the concern from Peralta and his allies that a previous left leaning president, Arevalo, would return to Guatemala and be elected. In 1966, Peralta continued the march toward autocracy, removing personal rights, and the entire country was subject to the methods of the Ministry of Defense, which now had control over police, private security, and, effectively, the entire country. What freedom the press previously had was also eliminated. Abductions, assassinations, and summary executions of anyone suspected of being sympathetic to communism or the left were commonplace. These tactics, along with military counterinsurgency operations, were largely successful at significantly reducing the military resistance of FAR. However, the FAR did stage some high profile acts, including assassinating the US Ambassador in 1968, though some argue this murder was staged by the government to increase pressure on the FAR, and it did increase calls for a tougher counterinsurgency strategy.

132 Grandin, The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War, ch 3.
The FAR also kidnapped the West German Ambassador in 1970, but never received their demands of cash and the release of political prisoners.¹³⁴

While, between Fuentes and 1970 the Guatemalan government was sometimes led by civilians, the government, and country, were completely controlled by the army and the associated security services. In 1970, however, when Colonel Osorio became president, this pretense disappeared, and Guatemalan leadership would be completely dominated by the army until 1986, when Vinicio Cerezo took the Presidency. In that time, groups other than FAR, such as ORPA (Organizacion del Pueblo en Armas), and EGP (Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres), gained membership and momentum based on increasing violence from the government and increasing oppression and inequality. The government’s killing, especially of indigenous people, reached genocidal numbers by 1980. These insurgent groups did also commit murders, including mass murders, though the number of them was dwarfed by the atrocities committed by the government’s forces.¹³⁵

In 1986, President Cerezo did appear to be reducing political violence, while surviving two attempted coups. The next set of elections, in 1990, led to a stable democratic transition of power in 1991. However, the new president, Serrano, attempted to return the nation to autocracy. He failed when the army did not support his return to autocracy. This, at the end of the Cold War, ended the Guatemalan civil war, which, at its end, is estimated to have claimed the lives of 200,000 people, most killed by the government’s forces.

US Involvement

While the US involvement in the overthrow of Arbenz is described in Chapter One, US involvement in Guatemala continued throughout the Cold War, with anti-communist rhetoric at every turn. After Arbenz abdicated the presidency, the US ambassador to Guatemala ensured that Armas would end up in power. At the beginning of Guatemala’s transition into the Cold War, then, it was the US that made the biggest decisions - who would preside over Guatemala, and why.

In the early 1960s, the US would use Guatemala, with a friendly ruler in Fuentes, as a base for training and operations for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Using Guatemala for this invasion, another anti-communist imperative, was a primary driver behind the attempted overthrow of Fuentes, which gave birth to the groups that fought the Guatemalan Civil War for the next three decades.

Though Fuentes survived that coup attempt, he did not survive a later coup by Defense Minister Peralta. When Fuentes appeared to be willing to allow Arevalo (whom the US still viewed as Communist) to participate in elections, the US-backed Peralta arrested Fuentes with powers granted under the state of siege Fuentes recently declared. Fuentes declared that state of siege shortly after returning from a conference attended by US President Kennedy that declared all Central American nations being attacked from outside by Soviet Communism. Fuentes was then given asylum in the

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US, where he would live out his days. The US recognized Peralta’s government within weeks.  

The US trained and equipped the Guatemalan soldiers that killed hundreds of thousands, and did so knowing what the Guatemalan government was doing. At various points in the 1960s and 1970s, the US had over 1,000 personnel in Guatemala, involved in the training and equipping of paramilitary forces and death squads. There is evidence that US embassy personnel had a direct role in creating some of these groups.

During the Carter administration, based on the public release of information demonstrating that the Guatemalan government was committing human rights violations, Guatemala renounced all military aid from the US, and Congress subsequently removed it. However, this did not stop covert aid to Guatemala, along with re-classifying equipment to get around the restrictions. When the Reagan administration took over, it increased the aid to Guatemala, including finding ways to send helicopters and light tanks to Guatemala to aid in counterinsurgency operations.

During this period, Guatemalan Army officers were trained at the School of the Americas, and US Army Special Forces personnel trained these officers on tactics ranging from small arms, to helicopter assaults, to destruction of villages - tactics similar to those the US was using in Vietnam. The US CIA also provided material and training to the Guatemalans. This included communications equipment, bases of operation, and advice concerning how to deal with political enemies. There are reports that US

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personnel participated in the torture of Guatemalans, though there is no conclusive evidence of this.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Impact}

While it is counterfactual to attempt to determine what would have happened if the US hadn’t intervened in a virulently anti-communist way in Guatemala, one can describe the impact of those interventions and evaluate them. At a minimum, history demonstrates that the Guatemalan Civil War, backed by the US, took the lives of around 200,000 Guatemalans. When the US overthrew Arbenz, the US stopped the reforms Arbenz was moving forward, which were an attempt to reduce inequality and foreign corporate influence in Guatemala. One can presume that, had those reforms moved forward, inequality would have been reduced, and some power would have been transferred from the conservative oligarchy to the working class and indigenous people. This alone would have reduced the need for people to seek further communist or socialist solutions.

It is certainly possible that Arbenz would have been overthrown anyway, but the history of the region suggests more generally that if the US supports a regime, that regime is likely to remain in power. Some even argue that the most significant reason the Guatemalan Army was unwilling to fight for Arbenz was that Arbenz was in a “quarrel” with the US - had the US supported his reforms, this “quarrel” would not have existed. Perhaps most importantly, the cycle of illegitimate anti-Democratic regimes might never have started - had the US supported the popularly elected Arbenz government.

\textsuperscript{141} McSherry, “Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor,” 47-56.
Had the US not undertaken the anti-communist Bay of Pigs invasion, or, at a minimum, not used Guatemala as a base of operations for that invasion, the military officers that attempted to overthrow Fuentes would have been denied a significant motivator. Without that motivation, their desire to begin the groups that were willing to fight a 30 years civil war would have been reduced.

In the next iteration of power transfer, when Fuentes was overthrown by Peralta, there was another opportunity for the US to allow a democratic election, and, potentially, the return of Arevalo, who remained quite popular. In this instance, the US’s anti-communist attitude ensured that Arevalo could not return to, perhaps, again attempt to implement liberal reforms. The US’s support for the rest of Guatemala’s civil war gave the government the power, tactics, and equipment it needed to commit genocide—certainly an outcome the US should not support.

The US intervention has long legs, far beyond the end of the Cold War. The instability in Guatemala’s government meant that, outside of guerillas and right wing dictators, there was effectively a power vacuum. Because the state, aside from fighting “communists” was relatively weak, there was room for anyone with the power to move in. This led to the ability of drug traffickers to enter Guatemala, once Guatemala did transition to Democracy without the strength and local structures to stop those drug traffickers. Had the US supported Arbenz from the beginning, perhaps the Guatemalan government could have built the institutions required to actually control its territory.

As Viron Vaky, an ambassador to Guatemala, wrote in 1968: “The [counter-terror] tactics have just deepened and continued the proclivity of Guatemalans to operate outside the law. It says in effect to people that the law, the constitution, the
institutions mean nothing, the fastest gun counts. The whole system has been degraded as a way to mobilize society and handle problems. Our objectives of helping Guatemala modernize are thus being undermined.”

By some estimates, in the latter half of the 2010 decade, some 75% of cocaine trafficked into the US comes through Guatemala. No small part of that trafficking ability is due to the weak governmental structures, allowing cartels to control territory the government cannot. Beyond drug trafficking, migration from Guatemala, both legal and illegal, remains significant. During the Guatemalan civil war, it is estimated that 400,000 Guatemalans immigrated to the US. However, because of further political instability, poverty, and violence (to include from drug trafficking), migration into the US from Guatemala remains significant through 2021.

In Guatemala, then, it appears as though the US’s anti-communist actions through the Cold War had a negative impact on both Guatemala and the US. Had the US fought for a liberal democratic stability in Guatemala, with some reforms that reduced poverty and oligarchy, it is possible that the Guatemalan government would have strong institutions, more equality, and the ability to control its territory. If that had been the case, it is possible that the problems described above would have been reduced, and significant numbers of people might not have been killed.

It is also, of course, possible, that this counterfactual policy would have allowed the Soviet Union a “beachhead.” However, given that the Soviet Union did not even significantly support the leftist guerillas in Guatemala against right wing dictators (and

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142 Vaky, “Memorandum - Guatemala and Counter-Terror.”
143 Martinez, A History of Violence: Living and Dying in Central America, part I.
the United States), it seems unlikely that they would have been able to establish a beachhead in a nation conducting moderate reforms that would also likely have been more aligned with a supportive United States.

Nicaragua

"He is a man of high intelligence and courage and does not pussyfoot when it comes to handling the Communists." -US Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden, speaking about Nicaraguan Dictator Luis Somoza

History

While Chapter One describes the US involvement in active opposition to the government of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional) after they took power from the Somoza dynasty, Nicaraguan history during the Cold War requires more elaboration in order to then describe the American influence on it. The Somoza dynasty had power at the beginning of the Cold War, and, just as it had been during World War II, was closely aligned with the US.

The leftist groups that would later become the FSLN operated actively in Nicaragua as far back as at least the 1950s, though they generally limited their activities to political activism. The Cuban revolution gave some strength to the FSLN, both ideologically and financially. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Somoza family's monopolies greatly increased inequality, and the poor in the nation lived in extreme

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poverty, with work dependent on the Somoza family and a short supply of landed elite.\textsuperscript{145}

The farming and deforesting techniques encouraged or allowed by the Somoza regime led, by the end of the 1970s, to extremely polluted water, the effective death of Lake Managua as a water source, and the virtual elimination of pine forests in sectors of Nicaragua. Somoza’s expansion of cotton farming and cattle ranching, which supported his other businesses such as slaughterhouses and meat packing plants, further pushed peasants off of their historical land.\textsuperscript{146} Some were forcibly relocated by the National Guard.

The turning point for the FSLN came in 1972, when an earthquake destroyed almost all of Managua. Somoza’s response was to refuse to rebuild many areas of Managua, while stealing much of the international aid that was sent to Nicaragua. This drove many Nicaraguans into the arms, literally and figuratively, of the FSLN. It also prompted Cuba and the Soviet Union to provide some support for the FSLN. The FSLN began using more violent tactics, including kidnapping and ransom. In 1975 Somoza would declare martial law, and a Civil War is generally described as beginning in 1978, when around 50,000 people attended the funeral of Pedro Chamorro, a Nicaraguan leader murdered by the Somoza regime.\textsuperscript{147}

By 1979, the FSLN had control of all of Nicaragua, with the exception of Managua. The FSLN established this control despite the Somoza regime actually conducting full scale bombardments of cities controlled by the FSLN. The rest of the

\textsuperscript{146} Pfeiffer, “Nicaragua’s Environmental Problems, Policies, and Programmes.” 137-42.
\textsuperscript{147} Booth, \textit{The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution}, 217-9.
Nicaraguan elites declined to provide support for Somoza, likely, in some capacity, because the Somoza regime had also worked to deplete their wealth in Somoza’s favor.\footnote{Booth, *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution*, 157-60.}

The FSLN worked to increase literacy nationwide, and generally worked to provide liberal reforms, especially in the area of land redistribution. It also worked to improve health care, education, and moved to ensure unions were a force in Nicaragua.\footnote{Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua*, loc 5377.} Being unable to get significant aid from the US, the FSLN turned to Cuba, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union for assistance. The FSLN openly called themselves Marxist-Leninist, and were able to build a large standing army. The Soviet Union provided assistance to the FSLN, in the form of staples and oil that made up for the items lost to the US embargo, and military supplies.\footnote{Leiken, “Fantasies and Facts: The Soviet Union and Nicaragua,” 344.} However, even with that Soviet assistance, the FSLN was still accommodating of US demands, and that Soviet assistance only came after the FSLN requested US assistance.\footnote{Edelman, “SOVIET-NICARAGUAN RELATIONS AND THE CONTRA WAR,” 54.}

The FSLN won elections in 1984 which the international community generally declared were fair elections. This point is debated, however, as the main opposition candidate declined to take part, and some right wing parties claimed they were encouraged to remain out of the elections, either overtly or via the FSLN’s control of the state.\footnote{Williams, “Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective,” 15-20.} As the Contra war (as described in Chapter One) escalated, Nicaragua’s economy sank under the weight of the war and the US embargo. The FSLN did commit some massacres that are documented in their war with the Contras, and also forcibly
relocated some of the indigenous population, after refusing to give them more autonomy. Nicaragua won a victory in the International Court of Justice, which, in 1986, declared that the US was fighting an undeclared war against Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{153} Though the US was ordered to pay USD 12 billion, the US declined to pay. In 1990, when the Cold War was effectively over, and the Contra War ended with the election of a center right candidate in Nicaragua, the most likely estimate is that around 40,000 Nicaraguans were killed in the fight to overthrow Somoza and the following Contra War.

**US Involvement**

While not all US involvement in Nicaragua was so directly anti-communist, the most important US government decisions were. For instance, the poisoning of the Nicaraguan land and water, though it had a significant negative impact upon the country, was not an anti-communist policy. While it does represent significant US involvement - US companies being given favorable deals from the Somoza regime without regard for the consequences, this US involvement more represents the traditional economic imperialism noted in Chapter One. While the author might postulate that, had the US government pushed Somoza to promote policies that harmed US businesses, many in the US would have called that action “communist,” examining only US actions that were openly focused on fighting communism will suffice to demonstrate the argument of this chapter. However, it is significant to note that the

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\textsuperscript{153} International Court of Justice, “Nicaragua v United States of America - Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua - Judgment of 27 June 1986.”
Nicaraguan National Guard, the prime weapon of the Somoza regime, and, later, the leadership of the Contras, was US-trained.

US involvement increased significantly after the Managua earthquake, when the FSLN's power and threat began to increase significantly. Prior to that, however, the US did involve itself in Salvadoran affairs. Through the Ford Administration, while the FSLN gained power and prestige, the US’s position and involvement changed little. The US supported Somoza, and opposed the FSLN, because the Somozas, the US believed, would stop communism. In 1956, for instance, when US efforts to save the senior Somoza from a bullet wound failed, the US supported Somoza’s sons because the US was confident his sons would fight against communists. Though the Ford administration had little direct or open engagement in Nicaragua, when the Carter administration took over, US involvement began to change.

The Carter administration recognized, openly, that Somoza was committing human rights abuses, causing Somoza to refuse further assistance from the US. This drove the Carter administration to begin planning for a transition away from Somoza. However, the fear that drove the Carter administration was of a government dominated by the FSLN. Because of a relative lack of foreign policy experience and differences within his administration, the Carter policy towards Nicaragua vacillated, resulting in confusion. Before aid was completely removed from the Somoza regime, it was stopped, then re-started. At times, Carter wrote letters that some perceived as supporting Somoza’s human rights abuses.

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When it became clear that Somoza would lose, the Carter administration considered many proposals that would end in a moderate government. In the end, however, the administration’s fear of the FSLN’s communism ensured the Carter administration would not work with the FSLN - though the FSLN also mistrusted the US. When the FSLN did eventually take power, however, Carter did agree to provide the FSLN government funding to rebuild the nation. This aid came in the form of USD 75 million over several years. This, however, paled in comparison to the estimated USD 480 million of damage caused by the war, and over half of the aid was meant to strengthen the moderates against the FSLN. This sum was wholly insufficient to execute even modest liberal reforms.

When the Reagan administration took over, it canceled the last USD 15 million of the promised aid, removed all further aid, and began working to overthrow the FSLN via the Contras. Removing aid as Reagan did stopped shipments of food, loans from US institutions to build projects like roads and better water supplies. In comparison to Carter’s USD 75 million (which would become 60), there was over USD 360 million of officially authorized aid to the Contras in the 1980s. Reagan’s support for the Contras, and their war which cost around 40,000 lives, would lead him to defy Congress, and, effectively, lie to the American people. Politically, the Reagan administration also worked to ensure that, regardless of the truth, Nicaraguan elections were able to be called “rigged.” In the 1984 Nicaraguan elections, the Reagan

administration ensured their preferred candidate did not officially participate, in order to make the elections appear unfair.

Impact

The most significant and immediate impact of US policy during the Cold War was the FSLN victory. US support for Somoza drove inequality to the point where a majority of Nicaraguans supported the FSLN. Because Somoza was an ally of the US, and the FSLN was communist, the US supported Somoza until it knew the Somoza regime could no longer survive. The Somoza regime’s corruption and ever increasing poverty and inequality pushed support to the FSLN.

Then, when the FSLN began to amass power, the US continued to support Somoza - even recommending that Somoza continue to bomb cities to prevent the FSLN from gaining power. When it became clear that Somoza would no longer survive, instead of working with the FSLN and other groups, the US simply openly worked to ensure the FSLN could not take power. The end result of US anti-communist policy was a country full of people who were ready to support a communist government, and that government took power. In this respect, it is difficult to describe US anti-communism as anything but a failure. It ensured the conditions necessary for communism to garner support existed, and then it effectively ensured that the communist government did take power alone.

The Carter administration did offer assistance to the FSLN, but it was paltry compared to what Nicaragua asked for, and needed to implement liberal reforms. The FSLN government was openly communist, but also demonstrated commitment to
elections and reforms. The US refusing to give full support to the FSLN ensured that the FSLN had nowhere to turn but Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Perhaps, by this point, it was simply too late for the US. Perhaps, by this point, Central America had simply seen enough of the US and its interventions, and nothing would have kept the communist FSLN away from the Soviet Union. However, at that time, there was nothing stopping the FSLN from asking for aid, and accepting aid, from the US. Had the US provided military assistance to the FSLN, and provided enough funding to move forward social programs, perhaps the FSLN would have built strong institutions and ended in a moderate democratic government.

The FSLN committed its share of atrocities. However, the US had no problem supporting governments committing atrocities. US funding for the liberal reforms the FSLN was proposing might have gone a long way to pushing away Soviet support. As it is, the policies the US did enact ensured that the Soviets supported the FSLN - another policy failure. The final answer from the US was a full economic embargo and support for the Contras. In the end, this did result in the FSLN losing power to a moderate right wing government. Just as the Cold War ended, the FSLN lost power.

US policies also put the US in the awkward position of being one of the only nations in the world to disagree that Nicaraguan elections were free and fair - a damaging position for the US, when the US was driving the unfairness. Just as in Guatemala, however, one must ask how significant the aid from the Soviet Union could have been if an economic embargo and the funding of armed groups was enough to ensure the FSLN failed. Additionally, the FSLN allowed for the elections that swept them from power - they were clearly not interested in a Soviet style totalitarian
communism. This demonstrates that the real impact the US policies had was to convince the people the FSLN couldn’t fix the problems they were aiming to fix - not that US policies turned people to or away from communism. The primary driver of an inability to fix these problems, of course, was the US support for the contras and the economic embargo.

During the Cold War, then, US anti-communist policies in Nicaragua were tautological, and highly contradictory. They demonstrated that communism didn’t work by first establishing the conditions that led people to desire communism. Then, US policies ensured that the problems created couldn’t be fixed by a communist government. Finally, when communists were voted out in free elections - which these supposedly totalitarian, Soviet supported communists allowed - the US claimed victory over communism.

Another impact of these policies was a significant increase in the drug trade through Nicaragua. Throughout the Reagan administration, despite the “war on drugs,” so long as drug traffickers supported the Contras, they were tolerated. Drug traffickers that were sought by Central American governments were protected by the US, at times even flown to the US.¹⁵⁸ This fact was not lost on Central American governments, which were being told to fight drug wars by the US, while being told not to fight drug wars against those who supported anti-communist efforts. Beyond the drug war, just as in Guatemala, the Contra War and drug trafficking drive migration from Nicaragua to the United States.

¹⁵⁸ Scott, “Cocaine, the Contras, and the United States: How the U.S. Government Has Augmented America's Drug Crisis.”
US anti-communist policies in Nicaragua, then, failed to prevent the rise of a communist government, failed to remove conditions that led people to believe in a communist government, maintained a 10 year civil war, undermined the drug war, and increased migration to the United States. The only potential noted benefit to the US is that the Soviets did not take over Nicaragua. However, as mentioned above, the idea that the Soviets would have controlled Nicaragua but allowed their chosen party to hold free elections in 1984 seems a stretch. On balance, it appears as though US anti-communist policy during the Cold War in Nicaragua did not benefit the US.

El Salvador

“Terror is the given of the place. Black-and-white police cars cruise in pairs, each with the barrel of a rifle extruding from an open window. Roadblocks materialize at random, soldiers fanning out from trucks and taking positions, fingers always on triggers, safeties clicking on and off. Aim is taken as if to pass the time.” -Joan Didion, on El Salvador

History

Like most Central American nations, El Salvador supported the US and its allies during World War II. Following World War II, El Salvador saw two coups before the Revolutionary Party came to power in 1950 under Osorio Hernandez. Hernandez did implement some liberal reforms, but was careful not to push the oligarchy too far, avoiding agrarian reform. The following election, in 1956, saw only one candidate run, Lemus Lopez. His only viable opponent was not permitted to run, leading to a landslide victory. Lopez continued some liberal reforms until the Cuban revolution of 1959 led to

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159 Didion, Salvador, 12.
some protests for greater democracy inside of El Salvador. These protests convinced Lopez to limit express and freedom, which resulted in his overthrow in 1960.\textsuperscript{160}

The resulting junta ruled until 1962, when the National Conciliation Party (PCN) took power. Rivera Carballo won the presidency in 1962, and, joining the US Alliance for Progress, did attempt to improve conditions in El Salvador. However, he also established the agency in El Salvador that, for the next several decades, would murder and imprison citizens while ensuring that the “correct” candidates won elections. Carballo’s party would rule until the Salvadoran Civil War near the end of the 1970’s.\textsuperscript{161}

In the 1972 election, the PCN party’s candidate (Barraza) was declared the winner over the Christian Democratic Party’s (PDC) candidate. However, Barraza was only declared the winner after a recount where there were reports of widespread fraud and abuse. This prompted a coup attempt against the PCN government, which managed to capture significant Salvadoran landmarks. The Salvadoran army and air force fought back, eventually capturing those attempting the coup.\textsuperscript{162} Barraza, now President, surrounded the University of El Salvador and closed it in order to ensure that liberal students would not drive another attempt to take over the government. In the 1977 elections, fraud again brought the PNC candidate a win, while government violence increased.\textsuperscript{163}

These events all played out against the backdrop of conflict between Honduras and El Salvador. In the early 1960s, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans migrated to

\textsuperscript{161} Jung, “THE CIVIL WAR IN EL SALVADOR,” 9-12.
\textsuperscript{162} Armstrong and Shenk, \textit{Face of Revolution: El Salvador}, 60-70.
\textsuperscript{163} Jung, “THE CIVIL WAR IN EL SALVADOR,” 9.
Honduras, and this migration caused strife for decades - including Hondurans killing Salvadorans in Honduras in response to almost every significant political and social event. El Salvador eventually went to war with Honduras over this and other issues in the late 1960's, which only ended in refugees fleeing to El Salvador and economic trouble for El Salvador.

When Mena took power in Nicaragua in 1977, the Nicaraguan civil war would follow shortly, which did spread some ideas to El Salvador. Mena proceeded down the authoritarian route, and used government apparatus to silence dissent and protest, and kill when necessary. This produced a backlash, and left-leaning elements in the military overthrew Mena. However, these left leaning elements were quickly usurped by the right-wing hardliners in the military, and the ruling junta quickly turned into another oppressive right-wing dictatorship.¹⁶⁴

The state of siege, assassinations, kidnappings, and oppression typical of these regimes grew the opposition. A group called the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional) grew out of this opposition, and began an insurgency similar to the campaign of the FSLN in Nicaragua. The government’s assassination of Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of El Salvador, also galvanized popular support for the FMLN. While the FMLN sued for peace in 1982, the government continued its campaign of murder of massacre, declining the invitation. This drove the FMLN to increase their insurgent tactics as well.¹⁶⁵ Elections during this period were rigged, ensuring that the “proper” candidate would win. This civil war would not end until the early 1990’s, when

estimates put the dead at over 75,000, with around 20% of the Salvadoran population displaced. Some estimates put civilian noncombatant deaths alone at almost 40,000.

US Involvement

In a similar manner to Nicaragua, US anti-communist involvement in El Salvador did not ramp up until the FMLN started insurgent activities. However, US involvement, and even anti-communist driven policy, goes back much further. As early as the late 1950s, the US was concerned about the spread of “Fidelismo” in El Salvador, and wanted the Salvadoran government to stop that spread.166

When President Lemus was noticeably weakened by protests that were thought to be supported by Cuba, the US goal was for Lemus to stop the protests and the spread of these ideas. The US declared that Lemus had acted too slowly in allowing this movement to grow, but approved of the heavy handed tactics used by the Lemus government to stop this movement. When it became apparent that the Lemus government would not likely survive, the US response was to move aid more quickly to his government, to help the oppression and increase the chances that government would survive.167

The US did attempt to improve El Salvador through the Alliance for Progress, but did not make a significant impact. One initiative, for instance, put televisions in every classroom to try to improve education in El Salvador, an initiative that failed due to its total lack of understanding of the dynamics it was entering.168

166 US Department of State, “307 - U.S. Relations With the Lemus Government.”
167 US Department of State, “307 - U.S. Relations With the Lemus Government.”
While the US did not do much in El Salvador in the intervening years, the US kept a watchful eye on El Salvador as movements throughout the region appeared to be spreading. Through the mid-1970s, the US considered El Salvador an ally, though an uninteresting one. The US did ignore the repressive tactics used by the various Salvadoran leaders, viewing the various governments as mildly reformist. The US effectively ignored the rising tensions within El Salvador, and the US was very slow to realize a civil war was brewing at the end of the 1970’s.

When Mena’s government was finally overthrown, the US responded in a typical manner - by declaring that the popular movements that had just succeeded were extreme left organizations, and declaring the far right “moderate.” This allowed the far right in El Salvador the room it needed to take back power and continue oppression. Carter supported this new oppressive regime, as did Reagan who followed him. Reagan, however, significantly ramped up the aid to El Salvador, and the military assistance used to form death squads and oppress the population. Reagan also hailed elections in El Salvador as free and fair, despite those elections being virtual farces. Just as it did elsewhere, the US supported death squads with training, and by some reports, even had direct involvement with those death squads.

The US, at the highest levels, condemned the death squads - Vice President Bush himself demanded Salvadoran government action against the death squads while in El Salvador. However, those death squads were endorsed by the very government that the US leadership was supporting - resulting in either the Salvadoran government

169 US Department of State, “154. Telegram 37 From the Embassy in El Salvador to the Department of State.”
dismissing these comments as made for US media, or the Salvadoran government simply ignoring them.\textsuperscript{172} Reagan would continue arguing, to the end of his Presidency, that the failure of the government to suppress the FMLN was due to arms flows from the Soviet Union and Congressional opposition to funding the Salvadoran government.\textsuperscript{173} By the time the Salvadoran Civil War ended, the Cold War had ended as well.

Impact

The impact of US anti-communist policy in El Salvador closely resembles that of the impact in Nicaragua. First and foremost, US anti-communist policy failed to end the leftist insurgency, right through the end of the Cold War. One might again argue that the policy did prevent the Soviets from taking El Salvador, but, again, given the limited support the Soviet Union gave to the FMLN, it seems unlikely that, had the FMLN taken power, they would have become a Soviet bulwark.

However, even the insurgency of the FMLN itself owes its roots to the US anti-communist policies. Working all the way back to the 1950s, the US ensured that anything that resembled a communist policy would be opposed violently. Supporting the government of Lemus against moderate reformers ensured that inequality and oppression would grow, fanning the flames that would become the FMLN.

The Nicaraguan revolution itself - likely, as the author argues above, a product of US anti-communist policy - drove the revolution in El Salvador. Without the Nicaraguan revolution, the Salvadoran revolution was less likely to happen. Following that, when

\textsuperscript{172} Sharpe and Diskin, "Facing Facts in El Salvador: Reconciliation or War," 537-8.

\textsuperscript{173} Reagan, "Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for President Jose Napoleon Duarte Fuentes of El Salvador."
the Carter administration failed to acknowledge the moderate reformers in the popular movements that desired to end the Mena regime, they virtually guaranteed that an insurrection would happen, since there were no options left for the FMLN. The US effectively closed the political door on the FMLN, because the US’s anti-communist policies would not allow for moderate reform.

When the Reagan administration took over, the US supported the Salvadoran regime ideologically, internationally, financially and militarily. The US gave credence to falsified elections, and kept the regime afloat. Given that the FMLN was never defeated even with US support for the government, it is likely that without US support, the FMLN would have defeated the right wing government. While that might have led to a more communist government that the FMLN previously desired, it certainly would have significantly reduced the bloodshed.

Just as in the cases of Guatemala and Nicaragua, these US policies, which ensured instability and violence, left El Salvador devastated. That devastation turned into an ability to traffic drugs and people, and drove people from the nation. Those problems of drugs and immigration remain today. The US also must live with the legacy of supporting death squads that murdered thousands of people. The weakness of the government due to the long term instability, combined with the large number of fighters led to a situation that easily grew criminal enterprises, and made El Salvador one of the most dangerous nations on Earth.

While it is possible that these things would have happened without US anti-communist policies, these policies certainly contributed to the conditions that drove El
Salvador to the place it held at the end of the Cold War, and their legacy continues today.

**Conclusion**

Whether or not US anti-communist policies were different from US policies prior to the Cold War, the question of their impact must be addressed. If those policies, overall, had a negative impact, then regardless of their intention, our retrospective on those policies should judge them negatively, and then perhaps help us attempt to discern better ways to make policy. This chapter asked that question: Were US anti-communist foreign policies in Central America a net benefit to the United States? After looking at US foreign policy during the Cold War in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, the author draws the conclusion that these anti-communist foreign policies were a net negative for the US, and, likely, drove more people to support leftist regimes.

When looking at the arc of US foreign policy in Central America during the Cold War, one can almost see the domino theory espoused by many Cold War hardliners. However, one can see the US being a victim of that domino theory, when one bad decision forced the US into more and more bad decisions with negative long term outcomes. The US was unwilling to suffer moderate reforms in Guatemala, and intervened to ensure Arbenz was ousted. Other nations in Central America saw this, and Cuba was sure to turn to communism - against the United States, having watched what the US just did in Guatemala. As conditions that increased poverty and inequality grew, with the US supporting oppressive dictators that increased poverty and inequality, Nicaragua turned to communism. The US, seeing what happened in Guatemala and Cuba, now knew the only answer was to fight all leftist reforms at every turn. When
Nicaragua fell to the communists, the US was convinced El Salvador would do the same - meaning the only option was to fight even harder in El Salvador.

One might imagine a counterfactual scenario where the US supported Arbenz’s reforms, and helped to ensure they took hold. Poverty and inequality were reduced, and Cuba noted the US’s positive involvement. No Bay of Pigs was necessary because the US worked with “communists” in Cuba to support liberal democratic reforms. Without the Bay of Pigs and the Guatemalan civil war, Nicaragua’s reformers are much less virulent, and the US can now support moderate reforms in Nicaragua. Without the Nicaraguan revolution, the Salvadorans lose a spark for their revolution, and the US can push for moderate reforms in El Salvador as well. Even without all of that, the US could have opposed regimes that violently repressed their own people, which might have gained the US some goodwill in the region.

The author certainly paints a rosy picture in this positive falling of the dominoes, and certainly leaders in Central America might have been oppressive with or without US support. However, there is ample evidence that Central American leaders looked to the US to determine who would take power in their country - and always told the US that their enemies were communists. One might also imagine, though, that if outcomes as bleak as actually happened existed, then outcomes as rosy as the author describes must also be possible with a different set of policies.

That, as the author notes, is all counterfactual. What this chapter describes is what the US did to suppress communism in Central America during the Cold War, and the outcomes of those policies. What is clear is that the Soviet Union never seriously threatened to take control of the nations mentioned in this chapter, and that these
nations suffered significantly because of US anti-communist policies. These policies served to push the people of these nations further towards communism by locking in oppression, increasing inequality and poverty, and weakening the institutions necessary to truly govern these nations.

The US called elections free and fair when the US liked the outcome, and worked to ensure that elections with bad outcomes were described as rigged. The US fought a war on drugs with Central American nations, but also protected drug lords that the US considered anti-communist. These policies were deeply ironic, and at many points antithetical to US values. Because the only thing that mattered was fighting communism, the outcomes and methods were sacrificed. And, in the end, the nations affected and the US ended up worse off. US anti-communist efforts in Central America, it seems, not only made those nations and the US worse off, but also increased the likelihood that communism would grow, and spread.
Conclusion: Anti-Communism Failed the US and Central America

“The only enemy is totalitarianism, in any guise: communistic, socialistic, capitalistic or militaristic. Man is unique because he has free will and the capacity to choose. When this is suppressed he is no longer a man but an animal. That is why I say that despite differing points of view, we are none of us enemies.” —Mario Rosenthal, editor of the El Salvador News Gazette, 1982.174

Review

This thesis described domestic US anti-communist policies, and US anti-communist foreign policy in Central America. Generally, the three chapters of this thesis compared US anti-communist foreign policy in Central America to previous US action in Central America, compared domestic anti-communism between periods of vastly differing communist threats, and evaluated the impact of US anti-communist interventions in Central America. These chapters combined support a holistic evaluation of US anti-communism.

Chapter One evaluated US interventions in Central America before and during the Cold War. It first described six specific cases of US intervention, three prior to the Cold War, and three during the Cold War. These interventions spanned almost 80 years, and allowed comparisons inside of countries before and during the Cold War, as well as comparisons between nations in Central America. It described interventions in Colombia (now Panama), Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

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174 Didion, Salvador, 99.
After describing these interventions, Chapter One went on to compare the interventions prior to the Cold War and the interventions during the Cold War. It concluded that these interventions were very similar. In some cases, one could lift quotes and transplant them between the time periods - meaning that, despite the threats that brought about the Cold War and anti-communist rhetoric of the US interventions, Cold War anti-communist interventions very closely resembled previous US actions in the region. If that is true, then anti-communism was either not necessary, or not really a driving force in these interventions. Chapter One suggests the oft recited narrative that “the Cold War changed everything” is not really accurate; Chapter Two would go on to ask if that same idea holds true with respect to US domestic anti-communism.

In Chapter Two, the author described domestic anti-communism from the end of World War I through the “Red Scare” of the 1940s and 1950s, and ended with the transition out of that “Red Scare.” The author focused on the two “Red Scare” periods the US went through, in order to compare the two. The natural hypothesis is that the second “Red Scare” ought to be much more virulently anti-communist, since, during that time period, the threat of Soviet expansionist Communism bordered on existential, compared to a threat after World War I, that, while including some political violence, was very limited in time and scope, and a product of a more distant communist revolution.

However, as the author argues, these two “Red Scare” periods demonstrated remarkable similarity. Just as Chapter One demonstrated in Central America, one could almost transplant people and quotes from one period to another. Despite the difference in the communist threat, the response in domestic anti-communism was virtually the
same. While no doubt both periods drove fear into Americans, and American leadership, responding the same way to both threats seems, at best, odd. While in the first case labor strikes and some political violence (including bombings) drove fear into Americans, that violence was relatively limited in time and scope. While the threat of Marx’s predictions that the proletariat would overthrow the United States government may have been felt by Americans, this threat cannot come close to the existential threat posed by Soviet expansionism and their nuclear weapons.

Similar to Chapter One, then, if the threat communism posed was not actually predictive of the US domestic anti-communist response, then one may argue that the anti-communist nature of those actions was either not necessary, or not really a driving force for those actions.

While not the focus, the author does postulate that the differences in the periods before and during the Cold War might better be explained by the larger changes in American society. The growth of the national security state, the imperial presidency, and the rise of mass media might better explain the differences that did exist between these periods.

Finally, Chapter Three addressed a common theme that exists in the literature, and was described in the literature reviews in Chapters One and Two. That is, many argue that, regardless of their intent, anti-communist policies were effective, and good for the US. This argument rests on the idea that, if these policies had their intended effect, whether or not their ideological underpinnings were aligned is, in the end, irrelevant. To address that strand in the literature, the author evaluated US anti-communist policies during the Cold War in Central America. If these policies prevented
the Soviets from taking Central America - or these policies “contained” the Soviet Union, then these policies should be lauded.

The author, in Chapter Three, described US interventions throughout the Cold War in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. In each case, the author explored the entire Cold War history of those nations, then described the US involvement in that history, and finally described the impact of those interventions. The author’s only positive conclusion with respect to these policies is that the Soviet Union never exercised significant influence on these nations - though it is far from clear that the Soviet Union seriously attempted to.

In these nations, the author concludes, US anti-communist policies not only harmed the US, but were actually counterproductive. US policies increased the conditions that drove people in the region to communism, and therefore made it more likely that communism would spread. US policies even turned nations in the region to more extreme left policies, by failing to allow for moderate liberal reforms. US policies also harmed the US in the short term and the long term by weakening the governments involved, meaning those governments had little long run ability to build the institutions required to successfully govern.

These policies encouraged the drug trade, migration to the US, and ensured governments in the region had weak institutions. US policies that ensured long, protracted wars in the region had a large hand in producing these effects. These policies were also contradictory, encouraging those who took part in the drug trade so long as they were seen to be fighting communism. While it remains true that the Soviet Union did not exercise control over the region, as the author notes in Chapter Three, it
seems extremely unlikely that the Soviet Union ever seriously attempted to exercise control over the region. In the long run, then, Chapter Three concludes that these policies were not only failures, they were self-defeating, and bad for the US.

Counterargument: The Significance of the Threat – and the Defeat of Communism

One natural counterargument concerning the author’s thesis is that the significance of the threat of communism, and the defeat of it, make the short and long run impact of US anti-communism reflexively better than any downsides that resulted from US anti-communism. Communism, or, at a minimum, the regimes it justified, were deservedly opposed. Those regimes were, by many estimates, responsible for millions of deaths. Similarly, those regimes did pose a significant threat to the US. Therefore, in both the realist and liberal schools of foreign policy, in the moral and security realms, the US had a duty to oppose those regimes – and the significance of that threat demonstrates that (because the US won the Cold War) the short run and long run impact of US anti-communism must have been worth any downsides that resulted from that anti-communism. Regardless of the counterfactuals the author draws above, history says that the US won the Cold War and the US was able to free vast portions of the World from totalitarian control and defeat the most significant security threat to the US.

However, the author notes three counterpoints to the above argument. First, one can easily divorce the generic idea of communism from the regimes that claim to implement those ideas. For large portions of this paper, the author used the term “Soviet Communism,” to draw the distinction between the generic idea of communism
and the way regimes that opposed the US implemented it. The author argued above
that had the US been able to draw this distinction, the US might have been able to
produce better outcomes in the Central American nations described. Had the US
divorced communist leanings in Guatemala from Soviet Communism, the US might
have been able to support moderate liberal reforms, perhaps preventing the “reverse
domino effect” the author described in Chapter Three. That that US should have
opposed the Soviet Union does not necessarily require the US to oppose communism
everywhere.

This first counterpoint the author makes here, of course, rests on a
counterfactual. As noted above, the argument that the US did win the Cold War,
generically, relies on historical facts. However, the author’s second counterpoint here is
that the counterargument made here also does rest on an implicit counterfactual – that
implicit counterfactual is that the US would not have won the Cold War with a different
set of policies. That is, the fact that the US did win the Cold War does not necessarily
imply that all of the US’s policies were correct, or appropriate, or even necessarily
supported the US’s efforts to win the Cold War. The fact that the US won the Cold War
does not imply that the US winning the Cold War was inevitable – in fact, it likely rests
upon the belief that the decisions made by the US during the Cold War were what
allowed the US to win the Cold War. Once we accept the idea that history rests upon
the decisions made by actors in history, we must also accept the idea that those
different decisions might have resulted in different outcomes – which means that a
different set of decisions with respect to Central America might have led to better
outcomes there without sacrificing the overall victory.
Finally, the author’s third counterpoint is that while the Soviet Union has ended, its oppression has not (as the recent invasion of Ukraine demonstrates), and communism (along with other Marxist derived political theories) has not ended. The US did defeat the Soviet Union – but not communism. The US extended the Soviet Union to a generic idea concerning communism. Had the US simply focused on oppression, vice a generic “communism,” the US might still have defeated the Soviet Union, without the shorter and longer run negative effects on the Central American nations described, and the negative effects those conditions have had upon the US.

While it is certainly true that the US had moral and security imperatives to oppose the Soviet Union, and defeating the Soviet had significant moral and security benefits for the US, translating those truths into the idea that reflexively anti-communist policies were necessary everywhere may ignore the nuance in policies that might have been pursued by the US – one that might have been able to make a distinction between Soviet Communism, and other, less expansionist (or totalitarian) communist-inspired policies. Given the available evidence, the author thinks it likely that it was possible to both defeat the Soviet Union and to provide a much more positive outcome for the Central American nations in question, which would also have likely relieved pressures that are causing significant fissures in US society today.

Overall Conclusion

Taken together, these Chapters lead the author to conclude that US anti-communist policies were detrimental, especially to the Central American countries described here, but also, in the long run, caused more problems for the US with respect to those nations than US policy solved. At a minimum, these Chapters lead the author
to conclude that the US could have produced a much better outcome with respect to those nations without sacrificing a bulwark against the Soviets. To provide a recent example, the author concludes that, had the US not pursued stridently anti-communist policies in the Central American nations described, Nicaragua might be on the side of the US in the Russian war in Ukraine – rather than endorsing the Russian position.\textsuperscript{175}

The first two chapters tell us that communism was, at best, related in an ancillary way to anti-communist policies. Chapter Three describes that communism was, in many ways, driven by anti-communist policies. Domestically, this is demonstrated by the growth of an existential threat changing very little about domestic anti-communism. In foreign policy, this is demonstrated by US policies responding to the lack of a true Soviet threat in Central America, and the failure to address the true causes driving people to communism.

While the author did not address this in detail (though it will be mentioned again below in areas for further research), the author feels compelled to note here that US domestic communism was far from Soviet style Communism. While a few US Communists argued for complete centralized control of the means of production, more often US Communism was focused on equal rights, civil rights, fighting poverty, health care, and labor rights. This indicates that there is likely a corollary to Chapter Three’s focus in the domestic realm.

The author also recognizes that there is a significant counterfactual aspect to the arguments made in this thesis. While that shows itself most in Chapter Three, where the author posits a positive domino effect in Central America, all policy discussions must

\textsuperscript{175} Lopez, “Nicaragua’s Ortega Defends Russia’s Stance over Ukraine.”
necessarily, in some way, imagine what might have happened with differing policies. It is certainly possible that, without anti-communist rhetoric, Central America would never have developed strong governance, and Central America would have fought the wars it fought anyway. The author rejects this counterfactual, however, based on the demonstrated influence of the US on governments - had the US pushed for good governance, it likely would have come to pass.

The author also recognizes that noting anti-communist policies were counterproductive does not stop the US from supporting murderous regimes with a simple realist foreign policy. That is, the author’s argument might well be used to imply that the US should have simply murderous regimes as long as they could exercise real control over the long term. At a minimum, however, had the debate been in the practical or realist camp, the ideology of anti-communism would not have been around to stifle debate. In the worst case, then, without that ideology, the debate is about what is practically best for the US, rather than couched in ideological terms.

However, the author sees much more in the arguments made in the preceding chapters. Had the US not used anti-communist rhetoric to push its positions in Central America, the US could have instead supported moderate liberal reforms, and moderate liberal governments. Given the US’s history region, the author feels safe concluding that whichever governments the US supported would likely have generally succeeded. Those moderate liberal reforms would not only have stifled the call for extreme left movements, but would have also lifted people out of poverty. Additionally, supporting governments that could have long term stability might have strengthened those governments’ institutions, giving them an ability to fight things like South American drug
While questions concerning the actual influence the US can have on foreign nations exist, the cases in the previous demonstrate the power of US influence, leading the author to conclude that the US could have driven these nations in a different direction, had the US made that choice.

At a minimum, the US position on drugs would have been clear and consistent, vice muddied by anti-communist concerns. Supporting and building stable governments that lift people out of poverty in the region likely would have given them the power and ability to fight the drug trade, and would have removed the largest motivator of migration to the US. Furthermore, it would have taken away one easy argument every actor in the region had - that they were anti-communist and their opponents were communist. Additionally, it might also have built nations in the region that were strong US allies, instead of nations that support US adversaries.

Time and again, as long as those in power (or trying to take power) claimed to be anti-communist, the US gave them support. Their actual positions were irrelevant - they knew what the US wanted to hear, and made sure the US did hear it. Giving governments in the region this “free out” to get US support ensured that the US was told what it wanted to hear, reducing the probability that the US would achieve good short and long term outcomes.

Beyond that, the idea that the US supported murderous regimes was used against the US by enemies - to include the Soviet Union. The US, in order to fight “communism,” supported regimes that completely opposed the US’s stated values. This was used by Communists to demonstrate that communism was a superior ideology - or at least to demonstrate US hypocrisy. While communism had its own murderous intent,
the US did itself no favors in the global debate when it quite obviously supported those murdering their own people. Losing the need to support anyone calling themselves anti-communist would have removed this argument from those fighting the US ideologically. One might also wonder if this same principle applies domestically.

Of course, anti-communism is not the only ideology that allows other governments to simply spout what the US wants to hear. However, practical matters are much easier to measure than “anti-communism.” As such, if the US focused more on practical outcomes, like wealth inequality or land inequality, those governments would have a much tougher time demonstrating they were actually achieving what the US supported. And, if we agree with James Madison that “the most common and durable source of factions, has been the various and unequal distribution of property,” then perhaps we might have seen less division inside of those nations after some moderate liberal reforms - after all, land reform was one of the most typical reforms sought by these nations, and most aggressively opposed by the US.

Overall, then, the author is forced to conclude that, not only were anti-communist policies bad for the US, they were self-destructive and the US had far better options that were overcome by these ideologically driven policies. Of course, the author has limited the scope of this analysis to specific regions and time. There are a number of other areas that might be investigated in order to further this discussion.

Limitations of Research

This research, naturally, has limitations on the scope of the conclusions drawn. In this case, these limitations exist in both the realm of foreign policy and domestic

176 Madison, “The Federalist Number 10."
policy. In foreign policy, the primary limitation consists of the area the analysis is limited to, and in the domestic realm, the conclusions rest heavily on the evaluation of the relative threats.

In the realm of foreign policy, the author's research is focused on US interventions in Central America. While the author is confident in the conclusions based on these Central American interventions, these conclusions rest on that analysis. Therefore, extending conclusions to other regions is likely perilous. Because of that, it is also difficult to draw generic conclusions concerning foreign policy development and implementation. Every region in the World is unique, and foreign policy that works in one region may not work in another. Therefore, the foreign policy conclusions drawn in this paper should not necessarily be applied to other regions, or to foreign policy development in general.

In the domestic realm, the author notes that a significant conclusion in this paper is that the relative threat of communism grew between World War I and World War II. However, one should note the significance of that conclusion. While the author believes this conclusion is well supported by the evidence presented, if that threat is evaluated differently, the conclusion may be different. Even more significantly, however, is that the threat of communism was evaluated in the minds of those in power at the time. Regardless of the threat one might see in hindsight, if those in power at the time perceived the threat differently, these conclusions might not be applicable.

The benefit of hindsight is that it is generally possible to provide a more sober assessment of the threat at the time - but the mindset of those creating policy may matter just as much as the actual threat. If this mindset was significantly different than
the author’s assessment of the actual threats, then the conclusion the author provides might change. While there is some description of this in the literature, especially with regards to opportunism, it is important to note that there are different subsets of conclusions based on the entering assumptions. A discussion of how the people in power perceived the threat lends itself to a discussion of opportunism - if they believed the threat was real, there was no opportunism. If they did not believe the threat was real, then the policy was opportunistic.

However, if political leadership during the first red scare actually believed the threat was the same as political leadership during the second red scare, the author’s conclusion might change - one would then expect the same treatment of Communists between the two periods. The author’s specific conclusion does not depend on this distinction - the author’s purpose, in this paper, is to attempt to evaluate the threat in its historical light and then compare them. If another author were instead to describe the perceived threat, they might be focusing on a different, but equally valid, conclusion. These limitations do suggest some topics for future research.

Further research

The more general idea that is described above is that ideologically driven policies can end up being self-defeating, and that, perhaps, there are better ways to make policy, domestically and in foreign relations. First and foremost, further research might extend Chapter Three’s idea to the domestic realm. Determining the impact of US domestic anti-communism on specific policies might further shed light on what anti-communism has done to the US. If, as mentioned above, US Communists were fighting for things like equal rights, labor rights, and expanded health care, one might easily see
anti-communism opposing those movements. And just as in the foreign case, if domestic anti-communism fought policies that might have increased equality, domestic anti-communism may have increased the probability that communist ideas spread in the US.

This author might specifically suggest other authors investigate the case of Helen Levitt, who was exiled from her work and community for being a “Communist,” despite having no desire for a proletariat revolution or the government control of the means of production. The author might also specifically suggest examining the impact of the “epithet” socialist, and its impact on federal health care initiatives shortly after World War II.

One interesting topic that the author briefly came across was how US anti-communism was used against the US. The author mentions it briefly above, but it might serve as an entire topic of its own. The policies that anti-communism fought, and the policies it supported, were, at times, used by the enemies of the US to negatively affect the US’s image abroad, and to drive factionalism in the US.

In a similar vein, the author suggests that where the US fought communism is an interesting topic to delve into. For instance, the author focuses on Central America, where the US insisted that private money be used to build up nations. On the other hand, the Marshall Plan directed significant amounts of US government money to Western Europe in order to rebuild Western Europe after World War II. This money came with significant strings attached - to include requirements that would certainly be called communist in the US, allowing for price controls and central economic planning,

177 Wikipedia contributors, “Helen Levitt.”
including state ownership of production means. One might ask why the US was willing to stomach these ideas in Western Europe, but not in Central America.

One might also ask why, in Central America, the US was unwilling to heed the warning of columnist Richard Strout when he said, “State Department strategists have now come around—to the point a good many 'visionaries' have been urging all along—that one way of combating communism is to give western Europe a full dinner pail.”

One might ask why George C. Marshall was able to understand that the problems of keeping the peace, feeding, clothing, and sheltering the population were the way to bring people into America’s orbit, but in Central America that idea simply did not apply.

Perhaps most important currently, one might investigate the corollaries between the domestic “Red Scares” and the current debates surrounding topics like Critical Race Theory in schools. While the author has not done deep research, the anecdotal quotes and reading the author has done leads the author to believe that another author would find great parallels between those “Red Scares,” and the way the debate concerning what about American history is appropriate to teach is playing out.

Finally, one might attempt to apply these foreign policy lessons to foreign policy today. Are there areas where ideology drives foreign policy, or stifles debate? It is easy to see ideology driving foreign policy with respect to China - China is not only a great power competitor, but is an autocratic expansionist communist state challenging the US in every arena. Perhaps this paper suggests that the US should actively avoid letting anti-communist ideology drive foreign policy towards China. Perhaps a focus on its

\[\text{\footnotesize 178 De Long and Eichengreen, "THE MARSHALL PLAN: HISTORY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM," 13.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize 179 De Long and Eichengreen, "THE MARSHALL PLAN: HISTORY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM," 1.}\]
autocratic nature, vice its communist nature, should drive policy. China is also expanding in Central America, while Nicaragua is openly supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine. US foreign policy towards both actors might be informed by the preceding chapters.

Moving Forward

In sum, this paper argues that the ideologically driven policies of the US, and specifically, the anti-communist policies the US implemented at home and abroad in the Central American nations described, were detrimental to the US in the short and long run. In the short and long run, they certainly caused significant problems for the Central American nations described. However, they also caused significant long run problems for the US – and American politics today reflects these issues. These policies did not need an anti-communist mantle, as they closely resembled previous US policies and were not scaled to the actual communist threat. They also did nothing to distinguish between the actual threat – Soviet Communism – and other more generic liberalizing policies that were in the communist mold. Further, they were self-defeating in many respects, driving people further toward communism, and gave communist states direct arguments demonstrating the hypocrisy of the US. When one looks back on US anti-communist policies in the US and in the Central American nations described, one might conclude that because these policies were driven by a relentless ideology, leaders could not see the damage they were doing. Hopefully leaders can see these lessons in policy today, and chart a better course. As Oscar Martinez remarked, America “Spat
straight up into the sky,”¹⁸⁰ with predictable results. One can hope America will not do so again.

Perhaps this paper can give the reader some insight that helps respond to activities today. When the reader hears things like “Americanization” (as was used during the Red Scare periods), perhaps the reader should pause to consider if these terms are simply being used to stifle debate. Perhaps when the reader hears a politically nominee referred to as “communist,” the reader might pause to ask if the nominee is actually fighting for centralizing the means of production, or if the nominee is simply being called a name to rouse fear in Americans.

The US is currently feeling the fallout from a pandemic (just as they did after World War I), concerned about a large war (as the Russian invasion of Ukraine is happening), and is listening to ideas like Critical Race Theory and racial justice being called communist, which has some basis in the Marxist roots of Critical Race Theory. US citizens can listen to leaders of the Black Lives Matter calling themselves “Marxist-trained,” and use that idea to ignore the ideas they are promoting - despite no serious call to centralize the means of production or establish a Communist state inside of the US.

The author hopes that, after reading this paper, the reader recognizes how these items have been a part of anti-communist ideology in the past, and recognizes that they don’t need to be in the future. If the reader can pick these items out of current debates, the reader stands a better chance, in the author’s opinion, of proceeding toward good policy, rather than simply being “anti-communist.” The author hopes that, after reading

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this paper, the reader will question any foreign policy labeled anti-communist, based on the history of those foreign policies, rather than simply being reflexively supportive of things called “anti-communist.”

Overall, the author hopes that this paper, in re-examining anti-communism, will help those who read it to make better policy, and to avoid the mistakes that ideologically driven policies have brought to the US. The author has no doubt that many executing those policies had good intentions - or at least thought they were properly balancing the varying forces arrayed inside and outside of the US. However, the benefit of time passing, giving us distance from these decisions, is that we can revisit them, and re-evaluate them. In this case, the author concludes that anti-communist policies, both at home and abroad, were bad for the US - and, therefore, that no policy should be accepted simply because it is “anti-communist.” This author hopes that Americans can, as a whole, take heed of the concept that Theodore Roosevelt described so aptly more than a century ago:

“...we Americans should learn: First, to discard crude thinking; second, to realize that the orthodox or so-called scientific or purely economic or materialistic socialism of the type preached by Marx is an exploded theory; and, third, that many of the men who call themselves Socialists to-day are in reality merely radical social reformers, with whom on many points good citizens can and ought to work in hearty general agreement, and whom in many practical matters of government good citizens well afford to follow.” - Theodore Roosevelt, in his autobiography\(^{181}\)

If we can do that, this author believes that we can learn from the mistakes made in the past, and not simply repeat them when times get tough.
Bibliography


Commander Matthew Collinsworth is a native of Yorktown, Virginia, where the Revolutionary War was won. He earned a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Mathematics and a commission from the United States Naval Academy in May of 2005. He is currently serving as the Chief Staff Officer and International Engagements Officer on the staffs of Commander, Task Force SIX NINE and Commander, Submarine Group EIGHT in Naples, Italy.

Following Nuclear Power and submarine training, CDR Collinsworth reported to one of only three forward deployed submarines in the US Fleet, USS CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI (SSN-705), home-ported in Guam. While onboard, he completed numerous operations in the Western Pacific region. After shore duty, he reported as Engineer onboard USS BOISE (SSN-764) in November of 2013. During this tour he completed one deployment to the Central Command Area of Responsibility and supported three Submarine Command Courses. His last sea tour was as Executive Officer of USS NEVADA (SSBN-733) (BLUE), where he completed three strategic deterrent patrols.

Ashore, CDR Collinsworth completed a one year Global War on Terrorism Support Assignment in Baghdad, Iraq during Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and NEW DAWN. He served in the J5 Assessments Directorate of United States Forces Iraq (USF-I) Headquarters in Camp Victory until March of 2011, where he was responsible for assessing the efficacy of the American efforts in Iraq. Following that assignment, he spent two years as a visiting lecturer and instructor of Naval Science at Cornell University. He received a Master of Engineering degree in Operations Research and Information Engineering from Cornell University in December of 2012 and a Master of Business Administration degree from Oklahoma State University in 2017. He has also served as Force Radiological Controls Officer on the staff of Commander, Submarine Forces.

CDR Collinsworth’s units have earned one Navy Unit Commendation, three Battle Efficiency “E”s, two Joint Meritorious Unit Awards, a Meritorious Unit Commendation, the Submarine Squadrons Fifteen, Six, and Seventeen Spirit Awards, the Bangor Damage Control Brass Nozzle, the Olympic Bowl Trophy, and the Omaha Trophy.

CDR Collinsworth resides in Caiazzo, Italy with his wife, Elena and sons, Ford and Vance. Elena earned her veterinary degree from Cornell University after completing her undergraduate degree at North Carolina State University.