

**Covert Action:
A Useful Tool for United States Foreign Policy?**

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ABSTRACT

Covert action is a policy tool used by the United States government. It is secretive and highly controversial in that it attempts to actively change the course of events in other nations. Much covert action undertaken by the US government has taken place within the developing world – governments have been overthrown, elections influenced, media distorted, and the lives of millions of individuals affected by covert activities secretly organized and executed by US officials in Washington, DC and Langley, Virginia – headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The question must be asked: Is covert action a useful tool for US foreign policy? Evidence from two important case studies – Iran and Chile – reveals that covert action has very limited genuine value as a policy tool. It does not always produce desired results. Even “successful” covert undertakings can create additional problems, the type of which may not appear until many years after the fact.

Supervisor: Dr. E. Brunet-Jailly (School of Public Administration)

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the people of Chile and Iran.

It has been the one song of those who thirst after absolute power that the interest of the state requires that its affairs should be conducted in secret....But the more such arguments disguise themselves under the mask of public welfare, the more oppressive is the slavery to which they will lead....Better that right counsels be known to enemies than that the evil secrets of tyrants should be concealed from the citizens. They who can treat secretly of the affairs of a nation have it absolutely under their authority; and as they plot against the enemy in time of war, so do they against the citizens in time of peace.

– Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, 1677

And many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality; for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to profess his goodness at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity.

– Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1532

Nothing can destroy a government more quickly than its failure to observe its own laws, or worse, its disregard of the charter of its own existence.

–Tom C. Clark, US Supreme Court Justice, *Mapp v. Ohio*, 1961

The illegal we do immediately. The unconstitutional takes a little longer.

– Henry Kissinger, *New York Times*, October 28, 1973

Introduction

The topic of covert action is one that has had a rather notorious history. In the immediate post-World War II era, covert action was an element of the foreign policy of numerous nations, including the United States. As a form of policy it was implemented in a highly secretive manner, and its very existence was denied by those that used it. By the 1970s, the covert activities of US intelligence agencies had become a major recurring news story in the American (and international) media, and proved also to be a major stain on the reputation of the Central Intelligence Agency and the United States government overall. In the 1980s and 1990s its practice continued, albeit under different circumstances. Today, covert action is being promoted by many policymakers within the United States government as a means to achieve definite goals in foreign policy. The current “war on terror” and the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, as well as

the presence of certain “rogue states” such as North Korea, all provide incentive for policymakers to turn towards covert action as an answer to these perceived problems.

Covert action is essentially a policy tool or instrument used by various governments to pursue their own public policy goals. The main principle behind the use of covert action is the systematic interference in the internal affairs of one or more sovereign states by the government of another state, without the recipient government(s) knowing of its origin. The purpose is to actively change the course of events in the target state(s).¹ The government of the United States has used this policy tool in a number of ways in nations all over the world, with varying results.

Arguments both for and against the use of covert action have been made – and are still being made – with respect to today’s situation. One must ask the question, though, “does covert action actually work?” Is covert action a “useful” policy tool or instrument for achieving current US foreign policy goals?

This study attempts to address this question. Insufficient analysis of covert action and its usefulness in achieving policy goals has been undertaken as of late. Much of the existing literature on covert action has dealt only with specific aspects of its use, such as its questionable legality or its colourful and highly controversial history. At its worst, covert action has been a topic of media sensationalism, helping more towards the goal of selling newspapers, television air time, spy novels, or shocking new accounts of what the US government has been up to in various countries over the past several years.

As an option which is available to US policymakers, with the Cold War over and a new global scenario now in place, covert action requires some significant, current, in-depth analysis. Historical use of different types of covert action has a great deal to offer

the scholarly investigator, as do the lessons learned from covert action experiences as applied towards today's global situation.

This study utilizes the comparative case study approach. Here, in-depth analyses of two covert action case studies – Iran and Chile – are undertaken. Both cases provide a wealth of data on the practical uses of covert action, as observed through the various types of covert activity applied in each case. Iran represented the first of its kind in US foreign policy, i.e. the top secret overthrow of a foreign government by the CIA in the form of a *coup d'état*. Chile represented the last of its kind, i.e. excessive US government interference in the affairs of a sovereign state which ended in a similar, although certainly not identical manner. Iran was viewed for many years as a success, while Chile was viewed as a failure in many respects. The Iranian operation remained secret for years after the event's actual occurrence, while CIA operations in Chile, although secret at first, later became public over the course of time almost as they occurred. In both cases, there was a gradual escalation of covert operations which culminated with dramatic results, thus shaping the course of world events. Such cases provide ideal opportunities for foreign policy analysis.

In addition, a number of different individuals have been interviewed for this study. Respondents ranged from experts in US foreign policy and intelligence, to former employees within the US intelligence community, to nationals of both Chile and Iran, all of whom had a great deal to offer in terms of valuable data. The data gathered through this method complements the findings made in the initial comparative case study approach. It is hoped that by studying covert action in this way, a more thorough analysis of the usefulness of covert action can therefore be made.

Accomplishing this task is never easy. The greatest problem with studying covert action is that of its very essence – being covert it must involve secrecy. Analysts of all types are burdened with these fundamental limitations. This should never discourage one from attempting such a study, however, as covert action remains a subject given inadequate attention, particularly within the academic community. This secretive nature has

made covert action a subject resistant to scholarly analysis. In the face of thick veils of government secrecy, documentation becomes difficult. The researcher is forced to rely heavily on interviews with those who have a practical familiarity with the policy and who, in most cases, demand anonymity in order to protect their identities. The approach must be rooted chiefly in historical description, rather than the more satisfying and modern methods of transhistorical generalization. As a result, the scholar is pushed toward a search for “wisdom” in a region inhospitable to more exacting forms of scientific inquiry – though even in this difficult terrain the obligation remains to bring scholarly rigor to bear wherever possible.

Despite the methodological obstructions that hinder research into secret policymaking (and they are considerable), one conclusion is certain: students of international affairs can scarcely ignore covert action. (Johnson 1989: 100)

Given these limitations, the variety of methods utilized in this study will attempt to bridge any informational voids and fill in any gaps which almost always obstruct the drawing of conclusions and recommendations regarding this topic.

The focus of this study is on the use of covert action as a tool or instrument of US foreign policy. The terms “policy tool” and “policy instrument” are used in various ways by scholars, analysts, public servants, and politicians throughout the policy literature and in professional practice. Here, no distinction is made between these two terms. As a result, both terms are used interchangeably.

This entire project is outlined in the following manner, as organized on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

Chapter I provides an overview of covert action, how it works, who uses it within the US government, and for which purposes. The concept of covert action here is defined, as are the four main types of covert action operations: (1) propaganda (also psychological); (2) political; (3) economic; and (4) paramilitary. Each type has its own idiosyncrasies and therefore requires further discussion and analysis.

Chapter II outlines arguments both for and against covert action, covering the main reasoning for why it has been used in the past, and why it was used to such a great extent in the developing world. The use (or misuse) of covert action as a policy tool or instrument occupies an important area of US foreign policy, and the controversial nature of covert action and its outcomes are explained. This chapter also provides a brief history of US covert intervention in the main regions of the Third World, including: (1) West Asia, Africa, and the Middle East; (2) Latin America and the Caribbean; and (3) East Asia. Given that a great deal of post-World War II covert action has taken place in the Third World, and that today the potential targets of US-based covert action are often developing countries, the focus of this study is, of course, the Third World.

Chapter III introduces the concept of “usefulness” as a means of evaluating covert action as a policy tool. The secretive nature of covert action requires a somewhat different approach towards policy analysis than the more traditional approaches used in other areas of policy research. Traditional approaches have their limitations, and these limitations seriously inhibit a thorough analysis of covert action and its outcomes in both the short and long terms. Usefulness here is defined as an analysis based on the following four criteria: (1) efficiency and effectiveness; (2) risk and repercussions; (3) legality and legitimacy; and (4) mix with overt policy tools. The reasons why each has

been used are provided in this chapter, as well as analyses of these four criteria as applied to the four main types of covert action outlined in Chapter I. These concepts together provide a framework by which the two case studies, Iran and Chile, can be analyzed in the following two chapters.

Chapter IV examines Iran as a case study. The reasons for US intervention in Iran in the 1950s are provided, as well as a breakdown of events and covert action methods used by the US government. The Iranian operation, code named Operation Ajax, culminated in a *coup d'état* in Teheran in 1953. It was viewed by the CIA and the US government as a covert action success story, although an analysis of both short- and long-term outcomes provides a significantly more complex picture.

Chapter V provides a thorough analysis of Chile as the second case study. As with Iran in the previous chapter, the policy framework based on usefulness is used here for the Chilean situation. The intervention of the US government in Chile took place over a longer time frame and involved a less clear picture of events than that in Iran. The involvement of the CIA is, to this day, the subject of significant debate, and many of the details regarding the CIA's involvement in Chile (before, during, and after the coup) have yet to be made public. Nevertheless, a study of Chile as a case in covert action is highly revealing and, as with the case with Iran, presents an extremely complex picture as well as providing many lessons to be learned from the use of covert action.

Chapter VI provides a comparative analysis of the two cases studied. Also included are qualitative data gathered from a number of different respondents who agreed to participate in this study. Their input is highly valued and forms an essential element of any investigation into covert action. An analysis of these findings reveals a certain

diversity of opinion, perspective, and approach, although some commonality does exist among all participants. These findings will be related to the findings of the two case studies, as well as additional findings from current sources both within and outside the US intelligence community. An attempt is made here to incorporate the findings of the two case studies into an overview of covert action as it was used in both Iran and Chile, and also to relate these findings, to some extent, towards the current global situation and to Washington's policy regarding covert action. These findings complement one other, do not contradict the historical analyses of the two previous chapters, and add to the depth and diversity of research methods used in this study.

Chapter VII provides conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the previous six chapters. The conclusions are broad principles dealing with the use and effects of covert action, while the recommendations are a brief set of more specific guidelines designed for use by policymakers and public officials in dealing with the planning and implementation of foreign policy. This chapter will be a synopsis of covert action as a policy tool, based on its four major types and the usefulness of each. This study has discovered that covert action has very limited usefulness during times of peace². Paramilitary covert action is by far the most contentious and least useful type, and is, in practice, never actually covert. Other types (propaganda, political, and economic) are not as dramatic but are also very limited in their usefulness, and are also prone to becoming public knowledge, though usually over a longer time frame. Covert action on the whole also tends to result in many long-term negative repercussions which are difficult to predict, yet are avoidable by not using covert action in the first place.

Foreign policy goals for the most part, it would appear, are better pursued through other policy tools.

The purpose of this study is to provide some results that would be valuable to a variety of interests, including the scholarly community, the makers of US foreign policy, and of course, the general public. As a tool of foreign policy, covert action requires the kind of assessment and evaluation which most other tools do not. Despite any benefits which may or may not result from its use, covert action remains to this day a controversial topic in international policy studies, one that never quite vanishes from the minds of US policymakers. Regardless of its limitations – and they are numerous – covert action is still a pervasive shaper of world history.

Notes to Introduction

¹ This definition of covert action may lead one to believe that covert action is always state-centric. While the state is usually the major player and instigator of covert activities, other non-state actors have been known to have played roles in covert action in the past. The example of Chile, a case study further discussed in Chapter V, saw roles played by privately-owned American corporations including the Anaconda and Kennecott copper companies, as well as International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT).

² An exact definition of the term “peace” is not always easy to determine. It will naturally include an absence of overt war as well as an absence of an official state declaration of war. For the purposes of this study, it will also include an absence of smaller scale overt hostile activities (which some have labeled campaigns or actions) between specific states, at specific times. This study focuses on two specific case studies – Iran in the 1950s, and Chile in the 1960s and 1970s. In both examples, the United States was not involved in any type of overt warfare or hostile activities with either state, and will thus be considered to have been at peace with these two states during these respective periods.

Chapter I

What is Covert Action?

The term “covert action” is often cited in the media as various forms of government activity, at least with reference to the actions of the United States government in both domestic and foreign affairs. Covert action is essentially a public policy tool or instrument, or more specifically, a collective name given to various policy tools or instruments used by many national governments throughout the world, including the United States, to pursue goals in public policy. The techniques utilized in covert action can be used, and indeed have been used in the past, both for domestic and foreign purposes.

Several issues arise with the use of covert action. One issue is the legality and legal basis of such activities. Bureaucracies within the United States government have been known to break laws, or at least to have engaged in questionable practices, in the

past. Domestically, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has in the past undertaken covert activities against US citizens within US borders. As an agency of government, it has broken domestic law on numerous occasions since its establishment in 1935. Its long history of such activities is well documented (Church Committee 1976a, 1976b), and a great deal of this became public in the 1970s along with similar activities of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Abuses of governmental power by these agencies and others became widely publicized with such investigative bodies as the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (i.e. the Church Committee), the House Select Intelligence Committee (i.e. the Pike Committee), and the Rockefeller Commission (established by President Gerald Ford).

Another issue that arises with the use of covert action is the usefulness of such an approach. Given its controversial nature, is it an efficient or effective way of pursuing public policy goals? Does it achieve goals in the most desirable manner possible?

In foreign affairs, the CIA has been the primary governmental body utilizing covert action as an instrument of US foreign policy. The international repercussions of the CIA's covert activities have been enormous – entire governments of Third World nations, for example, have been overthrown through coups instigated and orchestrated by the CIA. Well-known examples of US governmental interference include Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Iraq (1963), Chile (1973), and many others. Other types of covert action are of a less spectacular nature, and include such activities as bribing foreign politicians and public servants, manipulating elections, secretly supporting foreign political parties, trade unions, and student groups, and engaging in questionable activities with political, social, and/or economic goals and objectives overseas.

This study will analyze the value of covert action as a tool of US foreign policy. As the focus of this study will be on the impact of covert action on developing nations and the effect of covert regime changes and the activities that influence politics overseas, the main governmental agency under study will be the CIA. Other important United States governmental organizations such as the National Security Council (NSC) will also be noted for their relevance, as will further organizations and elements within the US intelligence community, wherever applicable. The Pentagon and the Department of State will also be discussed due to their importance in this area. Other actors, including private and “non-governmental” organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) will also be noted to some extent. The CIA, however, is the major player in covert action, and its past, present, and future cannot be ignored.

This chapter will provide a brief outline of covert action, its history, and its international impacts, as well as describing the ways in which covert action actually works. Different types of covert action will be discussed along with the actors who undertake them, with relevant examples provided.

Brief Overview of Covert Action

Covert action has been an inseparable part of US foreign policy since the Second World War.¹ It differs from more conventional policy instruments in that it attempts to mask its origins as well as its specific actions. In other words, *ideal* covert activities should remain untraceable to the United States government.

Covert action is defined in the US as the attempt by a government to influence events in another state or territory without revealing its involvement. Seeking to influence the politics of other governments and societies is, of course, the stuff of foreign policy....Moreover, usually governments do not reveal exactly what they seek to accomplish nor how they intend to do it. They are to one degree or another secretive or covert. (Godson 1981: 1)

The desirability of covert action in US foreign policy has been appreciated by policymakers and senior officials due to this secretive nature. Ray S. Cline, a former Deputy Director of Intelligence (DDI) at the CIA, elaborates:

Covert action is often useful because the information given, the money passed, the influence built up by whatever methods is not directly attributable to the US Government. In 1952 we coined the word "covert" to mean not "clandestine," because everybody can see what is happening, but rather to refer to something that could not be proved to be coming from the US Government. (Cline 1981: 125)

Covert action that has been performed by the United States in the developing world has been undertaken by the CIA. The CIA was established under the *National Security Act* of 1947 for the purposes of providing the National Security Council (NSC) with advice and recommendations regarding intelligence, as well as gathering, evaluating, and correlating intelligence and other tasks for reasons pertaining to national security. The legality and morality of the CIA in interfering with the internal affairs of other nations and in employing the use of covert action is questionable, although this small oversight did not stop the CIA from adopting the use of covert action on a widespread basis throughout its history.

Nevertheless, intelligence agencies engage in a large variety of activities on a regular basis. Ideally, all of these activities should be legal, legitimate, responsible, and accountable to a democratically elected body. Some of these activities are just that. Others are not quite as straightforward. Due to the clandestine nature of much intelligence work and the secretive nature of the agencies involved, there can exist abuses that go far beyond what might ordinarily be allowed or expected by the general public. This type of covert activity has for quite some time been a part of the CIA arsenal of intelligence tools. Covert action is well known for its emphasis not on mere collection of intelligence, but on changing political systems overseas:

It is covert intervention in the affairs of another state to try to produce a result that is nonattributable. The so-called department of dirty tricks runs the gamut from a simple bribery to assassination. It includes making propaganda and carrying out psychological warfare, subsidizing individuals and organizations, trying to influence elections, engaging in subversive and conspiratorial activity, and conducting paramilitary and guerrilla operations. (Amerigner 1990: 7)

According to an encyclopedia on US intelligence and intelligence communities, covert action is defined simply as

a clandestine operation designed to influence foreign governments, events, organizations, or persons to support U.S. foreign policy. It may involve political, economic, propaganda, or paramilitary activities. Covert action is called *special activities* in Executive Order No. 12333. (Watson et al. 1990: 132)

Executive Order No. 12333 was drawn up originally during the administration of President Gerald Ford which attempted to redefine and limit the role of US intelligence agencies. According to this Order,

[s]pecial activities means activities conducted in support of national foreign policy objectives abroad which are planned and executed so that the role of the United States Government is not apparent or acknowledged publicly, and functions in support of such activities, but which are not intended to influence United States political processes, public opinion, policies, or media and do not include diplomatic activities or the collection and production of intelligence or related support functions. (Federal Register 1998, italics original)

The central premise behind the use of covert action is the inability to attribute any activities to the United States government or any of its agencies. Covert action is essentially, as the name suggests, a collective form of secret operations untraceable to their origins. This has historically proven to be somewhat faulty, particularly in the long term, as much covert activity eventually finds its way into the public domain, either with or without a certain degree of overt criticism.

Covert action (CA) is employed to influence politics and events in another country without revealing one's involvement or at least while maintaining plausible deniability. Although relatively easy to define, it has become increasingly difficult for the American democratic regime to consider it as a strategic instrument of statecraft. (Schultz 1989: 165)

Fully congruent with the clandestine nature of covert action is the principle of “plausible denial,” which is the key to non-attribution of covert activities to the US government or its agencies. Plausible denial has been described and critiqued by the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (i.e. Church Committee) as follows:

Evidence before the Committee clearly demonstrates that this concept, designed to protect the United States and its operatives from the consequences of disclosures, has been expanded to mask decisions of the President and his senior staff members. A further consequence of the expansion of this doctrine is that subordinates, in an effort to permit their superiors to “plausibly deny” operations, fail to fully inform them about those operations. (Church Committee 1976c: 11)

Covert action came about as a result of an emergency response to conditions in Europe in the immediate post-World War II era, and the long-term effects of such actions were not always in the minds of policymakers when these ideas were under development. The concept of plausible denial was incorporated into the original wording of the directive² which established covert operations by stating that US government activities should be “so planned and conducted that any US government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered the US government can plausibly disclaim any responsibility for them” (cited in Ranelagh 1992: 72).

The message the United States was sending its secret warfare operative was quite plain: Don’t get caught – but if you do get caught, be sure that no mud can stick in Washington. It took no account of what people might do if they were captured and tortured. It showed how simplistically the intelligence conflict was undertaken. One day mud would stick in Washington, as everyone who knew about intelligence understood...In the late 1940s, however, such a directive passed without much notice or discussion. (Ranelagh 1986: 134)

The CIA has indeed been involved with numerous plans of a dubious nature, including various plots to assassinate specific public figures in the developing world, and plausible denial is a convenient method of redirecting any accusations or criticism of covert actions of this type and others. This principle of plausible denial has also been

supported on the basis of its ability to keep open the normal diplomatic channels of international relations, as the sponsorship of covert activity is not tied to any particular government (Breckinridge 1986: 244). The United States can, and does, plausibly deny any wrongdoing overseas when its own state apparatus (including the CIA) is often involved or even in charge of specific covert action operations.

Types of Covert Action

There are numerous activities that can be grouped under the broad umbrella of covert action. Scholars and analysts have categorized covert action in myriad ways.³ A simple yet illustrative taxonomy of covert operations is outlined below. Johnson (1989) divides covert action into the following four main types: propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary.⁴

(1) *Propaganda* (or *psychological*) operations – involve the control of media elements overseas, in which specific information (or disinformation) is planted by the CIA, in order to control certain news events. The CIA can influence, fund, or even own, entire media operations in foreign nations. The CIA had always maintained an effective capability in international propaganda operations, and Frank Wisner, a former Deputy Director of Plans (DDP) at the CIA used to call the propaganda unit as “his Wurlitzer” or as the “CIA’s Wurlitzer” (Smith 1976: 323-324).

(2) *Political* operations – involve the funding (some would suggest bribing) of individual politicians and bureaucrats overseas, which Johnson (1989: 25) describes as “quiet assistance” after that which had been so termed and promoted by former CIA director William Colby. This type of covert activity also includes the funding of specific

political parties, actions against other “unacceptable” political parties, and the rigging or influence of elections in foreign states.

(3) *Economic operations* – involve clandestine efforts to upset the economies of foreign nations, and include such methods as counterfeiting, motivating labour unions or other groups to disrupt the flow of everyday business, damaging commodities and interfering with a nation’s global trade, and tampering with the international price of products and commodities including natural resources or agricultural output.

(4) *Paramilitary or PM* – this last type of covert action is the most contentious, and usually the most expensive. PM operations involve the use of warfare and/or related violent activities by the CIA, but in a secretive and indirect manner. An excellent example of this is the so-called “secret war” in Laos between 1963 and 1973, in which the CIA utilized violence and military organization to combat communist forces, and in so doing, also managed to involve itself with the huge drug trade that existed within the region (Marchetti & Marks 1980; Scott 2003; Johnson 1989; Cockburn & St. Clair 1998). Paramilitary operations have been conducted by the CIA in other parts of the world, such as Afghanistan and Central America, and have also involved the trade in illegal drugs. The paramilitary element also included murder and assassination as a necessary part of the CIA’s business. In fact, those individuals within the Agency that specialized in such activities were known by insiders to be in the “Health Alteration Committee” (W. Blum 1986: 109). Apparently, this Health Alteration Committee⁵ also included the temporary incapacitation of certain individuals such as enemy heads of state through the use of chemical poisons, and such methods were certainly designed for more permanent health

alteration including assassination plans for such national leaders as Fidel Castro of Cuba and Patrice Lumumba of Congo (Johnson 1985: 49-50; Church Committee 1976c).

Ameringer (1990: 232-233) describes the Special Operations Division (SOD) of the CIA as being the branch that did the dirty work of the Agency. It had engaged in acts of violence including paramilitary operations which obey no recognized rules of engagement or warfare. They play by no book and are the most direct and secretive of operations. Known more commonly as "special ops," they are not the "gentleman-spy" types of cloak-and-dagger novels, but closer to the analogy of a killer, gangster, or criminal thug. Such individuals are usually recruited from the experienced ranks of the elite special services units of the US military, and are sometimes known within the CIA as "animals" (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 96). Simple PMers (paramilitary officers) were also known as "knuckledraggers, mesomorphs, and gorillas" (McGehee 1983: 12).

Scale of Covert Action

Covert action was neither small in scale nor peripheral to the overall activity of the CIA. Enormous funding of taxpayer dollars supported covert action. Johnson (1989: 21) reports that the several hundred covert action operations that were taking place in the late 1960s used up over half of the CIA's annual budget, with much of this being directed towards the US war in Vietnam, and although this percentage declined near the end of the Carter administration a decade later, it subsequently increased under President Reagan. In fact, the Reagan administration made great use of covert action, both in scale of use and freedom from interference by outside authorities (Peterzell 1984).

The use of paramilitary covert action waxed and waned over the years and underwent some degree of public scrutiny, yet appears to be fashionable once again due

to the increased threat of international terrorism. Although covert action continues essentially to the present day, its overall benefits are questionable and uncertain.

Scott (2003) argues that the ramifications of covert activity last well into the long term, and are not simply minor incidents with minimal, forgettable after-effects. Given that Saddam Hussein, for example, was once employed – in one form or another – by the CIA, there is reason to take this argument very seriously. The CIA had supported Saddam Hussein as early as 1959 when he worked as an assassin with the task of killing Iraqi prime minister General Abdul Karim Qasim, who had recently withdrawn Iraq from an anti-Soviet pact and turned towards the Soviet Union for arms purchases (Sale 2003). Although this attempt failed, the CIA finally succeeded in 1963 when they aided the Ba'ath Party in taking over the government of Iraq (Cockburn & Cockburn 2002: 74; Penrose & Penrose 1978: 288; Batatu 1978: 985-987), a party to which Saddam Hussein belonged and later assumed leadership.

Negative repercussions of covert action have been given a label by the CIA: “blowback” is the term usually applied (Scott 2003: 28). This term, however, fails to capture the severity of long-term covert action. What the CIA does at one time may indeed have negative consequences many decades later.

The damage done to the international image and reputation of the United States and its government is also of concern. It can be argued that the United States was once the recipient of much admiration and respect throughout the world, and that this once proud position has deteriorated greatly as a result of both covert and overt US intervention in the affairs of other nations, particularly in the developing world. One prominent US politician claimed that this kind of intervention

has destroyed the moral leadership of our country throughout the world...Resistance, hostility, and hatred toward the United States – much of it stems from our covert actions. It has been ‘counterproductive,’ in that favorite Washington term. (Frank Church, cited in Johnson 1985: 102)

The long-term value of covert action as a policy instrument is in need of some serious re-evaluation. Is covert action indeed, as Senator Church claims, counterproductive, or does it have much to offer the United States and its policymakers with respect to renewed threats to national and international security? Is covert action a useful tool of foreign policy, one that offers results that can be obtained through no other means?

Actors' Involved in Covert Action

As stated above, the CIA has played a major role in US-supported covert action all over the world. But what exactly is the role of the CIA,⁶ and how is this linked to covert action? The CIA is essentially America's overseas spying agency. Its origins lie in the World War II-era Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which engaged in traditional espionage as well as covert action in the campaign against Nazi Germany. Although the OSS was dissolved at the end of the war, another organization, the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), was established by President Harry S. Truman in 1945 for the purposes of intelligence collection and analysis, to serve the strategic purposes of the United States. The CIG was then dissolved with the creation of the CIA in 1947 when the *National Security Act* was enacted by the Truman administration.

The goals of the CIA were not exactly the same as the goals of the wartime OSS. The CIA's original purpose was to serve as an intelligence gathering and analyzing agency, and to advise the National Security Council (NSC) on matters of national security. Covert action is not espionage. Traditional espionage is that which most know of as spying, or the attempt to undercover and collect information that other nations wish

to keep secret. Covert action, on the other hand, goes further – it attempts to influence or alter the course of events in other nations. Both are usually performed secretly.

Covert action became a tool of the CIA over time, and specifically it was undertaken by the branch of the CIA known as the Directorate of Operations (DDO), formerly known as the Directorate of Plans (DDP). This is the same branch that deals with espionage, however, and sometimes the two roles overlap as the same individuals are utilized for both purposes. The DDP was created in 1952 upon the merger of two pre-CIA intelligence organizations, the Office of Special Operations (OSO) which dealt with espionage, and the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) which dealt with covert action. It was decided that one directorate would best handle both types of activity. Renamed the DDO in 1973, it essentially engages in four main types of activities: liaison, espionage, covert action, and counterintelligence. Treverton (2001: 137-138) outlines each as follows. Liaison involves working with intelligence agencies and other governmental agencies such as law enforcement officials in foreign nations. Espionage involves the recruitment of foreigners in valuable social or political positions to provide intelligence to CIA case officers, who may or may not remunerate these individuals with various types of payment. Covert action occurs if these foreigners are asked to not only spy within their own country (or others), but also to act at a designated time and place, for purposes useful to the United States. Counterespionage is the attempt to uncover and counter the espionage activities of other nations within the US intelligence community.

Other directorates of the CIA include the Directorate of Intelligence (DDI) which provides analysis of raw data and produces reports for US policymakers, the Directorate of Science and Technology (DDS&T) which deals with high-tech intelligence, and the

Directorate of Administration (DDA) which provides administrative support functions for the CIA. Although the DDO is not officially of higher status or importance than the other three directorates, it does have a significantly larger budget and staff, as well as having its director being considered, according to one CIA insider and official, as “clearly something more than first among equals” (cited in Treverton 2001: 146). A history of the CIA itself would reveal that involvement in covert action by CIA employees led to rewards more readily than with involvement in intelligence collection⁷ – in fact, some would argue that the leadership of the CIA has been heavily weighted by those whose careers began in the DDO (Leary 1984: 104), with the implications being that covert action had a greater intelligence role than that of espionage and analysis.

The CIA operates overseas in a manner which has been called “building assets,” or “developing operational apparatus” (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 35). Career CIA employees from the DDO known as case officers work in various cities throughout the world. They attempt to recruit contacts from the local population who are employed in important positions in government, the military, and society to act as agents or informers. If these agents are utilized for intelligence gathering it is espionage; if they are asked to perform acts that alter the course of events it then becomes covert action. In any case, the CIA case officer’s job is to build up a solid and reliable repertoire of agents that can act in the interests of US foreign policy goals. As Marchetti and Marks (1980: 34) remind us, this process of building assets must take place over a long period of time, and a vast network of connections must be made over the long term in order to support any planned covert action in that country or region – covert activities usually involve the press, the

military, labour unions, student groups, political parties, and various other organizations, each of which may have a role to play in the greater scheme of things.⁸

Other actors within the United States intelligence community⁹ deal more with intelligence collection and analysis than with covert activities, although at times they may play somewhat limited roles in covert activities, usually in conjunction with the CIA. Examples of other intelligence organizations in the US government include the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) which acts as the intelligence gathering agency of the Defense Department, the various intelligence branches of the US armed services (i.e. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard), and the National Security Agency (NSA) which deals with the interception of communications transmissions, decoding, and related data collection.

Not all actors within the governmental apparatus of the US intelligence community engage in covert action, and some actors are certainly more important than others. The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), for example, has a well-defined role that is restricted to the coordination, collection, and analysis of information from airplane and satellite reconnaissance by the military services and the CIA. On its own, the NRO is not a major player in covert action, although intelligence that it collects may be used to support specific covert activities.

One of the most important actors in the United States is the National Security Council (NSC), the council of the executive branch of the US government which acts as the highest policymaking entity for intelligence-related operations in the United States, and these operations may of course include covert action. It includes the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense, while the Chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Central Intelligence serve in advisory roles. It serves in policy roles rather than being an operational agency, and thus does not normally (and is not supposed to) engage in covert action, although it makes decisions that involve the planning and implementation of such activities.

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) is an analytical organization which serves the entire intelligence community in the United States by producing national intelligence estimates (NIEs) and by providing advice to senior policymakers in government. It is not an operational organization with regards to covert action, but nevertheless must analyze covert action policy as an essential element of intelligence and the activities of the intelligence community in general.

In certain cases, non-governmental actors may play a role in covert, or at least what were once considered to be covert activities, in developing nations. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is one such “non-governmental” or “nonprofit” organization that has had a rather dubious history in foreign affairs. Funded almost entirely by the United States government, the NED engages overtly in what the CIA once did covertly, although these actions are certainly of the less violent variety, such as the funding of specific political parties and opposition groups in various countries throughout the world. The NED is thus able to go beyond what governmental agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Information Agency (USIS) are normally capable of doing (Conry 1993), although the NED has been known to work with these organizations in the past. So-called quasi-governmental organizations such as the NED can act as tools of extended foreign policy that appear to act in more legitimate activities than those which would be undertaken directly by a governmental

organization such as the CIA. Whether or not these organizations are indeed legitimate remains a matter of significant debate.

In conclusion, covert action on the surface is a policy instrument which appears at first to lend itself rather well to goals in US foreign policy. Whether it actually achieves these goals is another matter altogether. It may be that covert action serves only itself, and ultimately defeats that which it attempts to achieve. Conversely, it may also be the case that covert action – despite its ethically questionable methods – is a most effective and efficient means of achieving foreign policy goals, and can actually achieve positive results where all other policy tools cannot. The next chapter will try to provide some insight and analysis as to how and why covert action has been used in the past as a policy tool. An overview of covert operations in the developing world, and the reasons behind them, will be provided, along with the basic theoretical and practical arguments that underlie these policy decisions. The third chapter will define what a policy tool really is, and what indicators can be used to measure success or failure of covert action. This analysis will include a definition of “usefulness” with regards to policy tools, as well as an inclusion of the legal concerns that underpin the very nature of the covert approach. It should not be forgotten that covert action remains legally questionable as a form of governmental activity, and this factor of contention is an inherent and unforgettable aspect of covert action.

Notes to Chapter I

¹ Although covert action accelerated in occurrence and frequency during the Cold War era with the expansion of intelligence activities and the creation of the CIA in 1947, the first real covert action undertaken by the United States (of the military variety) occurred in Russia – in the newly created Soviet Union – in 1919. A military force of American, British, and Canadian troops took part in an impromptu covert operation in Shevagarask, Archangel (Arkhangelsk) in an attempt to counter the Soviet Red Army's expansion. This force was unsuccessful in the face of some 42,000 Soviet troops (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 4-5, 11).

² This NSC directive referred to the operations of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC), the then branch of the CIA that dealt with covert action, and was dated January 1949 (Ranelagh 1992). Some years later, under the leadership of CIA director Allen Dulles, further plausible denial was made possible through the establishment of a subcommittee of the NSC that would review operational plans of the CIA, which would effectively segregate the White House from the “dirty talk of international skullduggery” (Hinckle & Turner 1981: 43).

³ The manner in which covert action has been categorized for the purposes of this study is based on the four major types described by Johnson (1989), and includes: (1) propaganda (or psychological) operations; (2) political operations; (3) economic operations; and (4) paramilitary operations. Other authors have developed similar but not identical taxonomies of covert action. For example, Godson (1989) includes “propaganda, political support, intelligence support, and paramilitary activity,” (p. 22) and makes the point that one “method of increasing U.S. capabilities to influence events is to seek help from foreign intelligence services” (p. 26). If the goal, as Godson suggests, is to “influence events” with the intelligence assistance of foreign services, then for the purposes of this study those events would have to be broken down into one of the four types described in the Johnson taxonomy. For example, US covert action conducted with the support of foreign intelligence agencies will itself have to be considered as propaganda if the means and goals are to influence public opinion in any given country overseas. Or, on the other hand, if US collaboration with foreign intelligence agencies involved the use of violence and force, then this type of covert action would be considered as paramilitary. In another taxonomy, Schultz (1989: 166) breaks down covert action into five categories: propaganda, political, paramilitary, *coup d'état*, and secret intelligence support. In this study, *coup d'état* will be grouped into the paramilitary type of covert action, as any coup usually involves such activity, as well as perhaps propaganda or political activity, and will be categorized accordingly. Schultz's “secret intelligence support” to foreign regimes can be categorized in this study as either a liaison activity (and therefore not by definition covert action), or if it involves actively altering the course of events (and therefore covert action) it can be broken down into one of the four major types described by Johnson. The goal of this study is to analyze covert

action according to its basic component parts, regardless of whether or not the United States works in collaboration with any foreign intelligence services.

⁴ Johnson (1989: 21) notes the rough proportions by numbers of covert actions that have taken place thus far: propaganda 40 percent; political 30 percent; economic 10 percent; and paramilitary 20 percent.

⁵ The term, "Health Alteration Committee" originated with a somewhat ambiguous CIA plan to deal with Iraqi Colonel Qasim in 1960. It appeared in a message from the CIA's Near East Division to CIA headquarters in Washington, DC, and reads as follows:

We do not consciously seek subject's permanent removal from the scene; we also do not object should this complication develop. (message dated February 25, 1960, cited in Freemantle 1983: 170)

⁶ Many critics argue that the major role of the CIA is covert action, rather than intelligence collection or espionage. Some CIA insiders with covert experience will attest to the importance of the role that such policy has within the CIA as an organization, and how it operates:

T[he] CIA is not now nor has it ever been a central intelligence agency. It is the covert action arm of the President's foreign policy advisors. In that capacity it overthrows or supports foreign governments while reporting "intelligence" justifying those activities. It shapes its intelligence, even in such critical areas as Soviet nuclear weapon capability, to support presidential policy. Disinformation is a large part of its covert action responsibility, and the American people are the primary target audience of its lies. (McGehee 1983: 192)

Some critics have concurred that covert action is an essential function of the CIA, but stress that the CIA engages in both intelligence collection and covert action. Some have suggested that the second is highly dependent upon the first, even that the former exists to serve the latter:

Expressed still another way, covert action is the way the CIA *uses* the information it collects in order to penetrate and manipulate the institutions of power in a given country, i.e. the military services and political parties, the security services, the trade unions, youth and student organizations, cultural and professional societies, and the public information media. Covert action is the way the CIA props up and strengthens the "friendlies" and disrupts, divides, weakens, and destroys the "enemies." Covert action, then, is the American euphemism for subversion and counterrevolution. (Agee 1978a: 257, italics original)

Regardless of these criticisms, the CIA has acted, and continues to act, in operations that involve covert action and espionage, as well as high-tech intelligence collection, intelligence analysis, and many other areas of operations. The CIA defines itself as "an independent agency, responsible to the President through the DCI, and accountable to the

American people through the intelligence oversight committees of the U.S. Congress” (CIA 2004a).

⁷ Treverton (1987: 196) reports that the espionage aspect of intelligence work is “a slow, undramatic process” in which CIA case officers spend years establishing contacts, which itself rarely leads to promotion within the organization, whereas covert action, by great contrast, produces dramatic results rapidly and allows career CIA employees to better showcase their efforts to senior management.

⁸ Former CIA Deputy Director of Plans Richard Bissell stated the importance of such long term and thorough coordination:

Covert intervention is probably most effective in situations where a comprehensive effort is undertaken with a number of separate operations designed to support and complement one another and to have a cumulatively significant effect. (Richard Bissell, cited in Marchetti & Marks 1980: 35)

⁹ Recently there has been some degree of restructuring within the US intelligence community, including the new position of Director of National Intelligence (DNI). These recent changes will not be included within this study, as the approach taken here is one of a more historical analysis. Therefore, the traditional terms and designations will be used as they apply to the structure of the US intelligence community of the time.

Chapter II

Cases of Covert Action and its Use in the Developing World

A great deal of US covert activity takes place in the developing world, or so-called Third World. Since the end of World War II, much of the Third World has seen some form of covert action, sometimes with little effect, at other times with disastrous consequences. The use of covert action did not disappear with the ending of the Cold War, and post-Cold War realities present new challenges to US policymakers, challenges which have renewed interest in covert action as a policy instrument.

The wealthier nations of the world have not always held the Third World in high esteem.¹ As a region it has frequently been colonized, neglected, and/or exploited by nations of the industrialized world, depending upon keys factors including strategic importance or the extraction of valuable natural resources. The developing world is the

most rapidly growing part of our planet – in terms of population, urbanization, industry and international trade, environmental pollution, social upheaval, and numerous political factors – and its global importance needs to be addressed. The Third World essentially represented the major theatre of operations for Cold War (and post-Cold War) use of covert action. The approach taken by the United States government with respect to the developing world, and the use (or abuse) of covert action as a policy instrument, will have repercussions that will last well into the twenty-first century.

This chapter will present arguments both for and against covert action by explaining the rationale that lies behind its use, both historically and currently. Political and theoretical arguments will be presented. The implementation and results of much covert action policy throughout the developing world will be also be discussed. Prior to any major analysis of covert action as a policy instrument, a thorough knowledge of global covert history is in order, and it is hoped that this chapter will provide the fundamentals for a solid basis for an understanding of the issues to come.

Theoretical and Political Support for Covert Action

The primary theoretical argument in support of covert action is that it is a highly necessary policy choice for the pursuit of US foreign interests (Schultz 1989; Purcell 1981; Cline 1976, 1981; Shackley 1981; Henrikson 2000; Huntington 1981; McLaughlin 2004). It allows for the elimination of threats to US interests, supports governments that maintain cordial relations with the United States, supports democratic and free trade regimes which benefit the United States and other nations, and ultimately improves both national and international security situations in the United States and worldwide.

Covert action is purported to be non-attributable to the United States (despite the sometimes violent and repugnant nature of covert activities), and is often cited as a highly cost-effective policy choice relative to the more obvious overt choices that are normally an inherent aspect of any nation's foreign policy apparatus.

One particular and common justification for the use of covert action supposedly emerges when all other policy instruments have failed. When used as a method of last resort, it claims to accomplish what all other policy choices cannot. "Covert action is," as a former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) once stated, "frequently a substitute for a policy" (Richard Helms, cited in Cockburn & Cockburn 2002: 31-32). Another former DCI, Admiral Stansfield Turner, has stated that "[t]here is an old cliché in intelligence that says the place for covert action is as an alternative between diplomacy and war" (Turner 1985: 87). This so-called "third option" or "third way" has also been called the "quiet option" by the CIA, as it is alleged "to be less noisy and obtrusive than some other instruments of American foreign policy" (Johnson 1989: 17). It purports to be a useful means by which the United States can advance its own security and foreign policy goals.

From international development and global security perspectives, covert action, as has been claimed by US policymakers, is ultimately beneficial to those nations which have had their governments subverted or overthrown in military coups organized by the CIA. Despite the questionable nature of implementing covert action policies, the outcomes of covert action are supposedly advantageous to those who are eventually on the receiving end of such policies. Given that most US covert activity takes place within the developing world, the majority of the residents of the Third World should therefore be satisfied and thankful that the United States has indeed undertaken such

developmental initiatives – at least in theory. Such assumptions and statements require thorough assessment.

Much of the justification for covert action was originally based on a Cold War analysis of world affairs. The threat of the Soviet Union as perceived by the United States, particularly with respect to nations within the developing world, created a common paranoia of alleged communist takeovers, either covert or overt, throughout the globe. The uncertainty of Third World nations that chose a strategy of non-alignment was seen with great suspicion by both sides during the Cold War. The United States, believing that the Soviet Union was using every method at its disposal to influence and control Third World nations, decided that it must do likewise, and covert action strategies naturally filled this void. In the 1950s, President Eisenhower decided on a fight-fire-with-fire approach in foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union (Ameringer 1990: 226-227). Although the adversaries have changed significantly, today, the words of President George W. Bush echo similar sentiments in the US “war on terror.”

Was there evidence to suggest that this Cold War analysis was in fact the case? The United States may or may not have overreacted in deciding upon a course of covert action policies based on these assumptions. Today, the international threat is no longer communism, but terrorism and religious extremism, as well as that posed by certain “rogue states,” which may or may not justify covert action as a legitimate choice in US foreign policy.

In both the past and the present, covert action has certainly been, and is currently being supported by various US officials as both necessary for US security interests, as well as ultimately benefiting those states that have directly experienced various types of

covert activity, including regime changes brought on as a result of CIA-supported and organized military coups. The CIA has been criticized for engaging in covert activity, although the US leadership in the White House at any given time appears to be the origin of most substantial covert operational decisions.

It has been argued at times that the CIA has been a “rogue elephant” or an out-of-control bureaucratic organization² which develops its own policy and follows its own course of action, using covert activities as its primary instruments. The facts appear to discredit this thesis somewhat, given that the White House itself is usually the underlying authority and ultimate force in charge of covert operations. The CIA may or may not support the use of covert action at any given time, but nevertheless it undertakes covert operations when ordered to do so by the White House.

The case of the 1973 coup in Chile provides an illustrative example of presidential preference for the use of covert action. The perceived “threat” to US interests by a successful election of a left-leaning president in that nation, by the US administration, goes back to the early 1960s. Eventually, it was the administration of US president Richard M. Nixon that took Chile most seriously. The Nixon administration had for some time been preoccupied with the removal of newly elected Chilean president Salvador Allende, as Senator Frank Church explains:

The imperial view from the White House reached its arrogant summits during the administration of Richard Nixon. On September 15, 1970, following the election of Allende to be president of Chile, Richard Nixon summoned to the White House Henry Kissinger, Richard Helms, and [Attorney General] John Mitchell. The topic was Chile. Allende, Nixon stated, was unacceptable to the president of the United States. In his handwritten notes for this meeting, Nixon indicated that he was “not concerned” with the risks involved. As Director Helms recalled in testimony before the Senate Committee, “The president came down very hard that he wanted something done, and he didn’t care how....” To Helms, the order had been all inclusive.... Thus, the president of the United States had given orders to the CIA to prevent the popularly elected president of Chile from entering office. (Church 1977: xxi)

US policymakers at the time have since been noted for their once-secret comments with regards to their preference for covert action. On the topic of Chile, Nixon's then (1970) National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made his intentions and preference for regime change perfectly clear, with his now famous and often quoted comment:

I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people. (Henry Kissinger, cited in Lewis 1975: 35)

Public acknowledgement of covert action is not always forthcoming from public officials, as is evidenced by Kissinger's overt public denial of US involvement in Chile, as testified under oath in 1973:

The CIA had nothing to do with the coup, to the best of my knowledge, and I only put in that qualification in case some mad man appears down there, who, without instructions, talked to somebody. (Henry Kissinger, cited in Halperin et al. 1976: 27)

After the 1973 death of popular and democratically elected Chilean president Salvador Allende and the violent *coup d'état* in Chile, Kissinger later expressed his thoughts to Allende's successor General Augusto Pinochet:

In the United States, as you know, we are sympathetic with what you are trying to do here....We wish your government well. (Henry Kissinger, cited in W. Blum 2000: 143)

Successive US administrations within the White House have often continued to support the use of covert action. In 1974 US president Gerald Ford publicly stated with regards to Chile:

I think this is in the best interest of the people in Chile, and certainly in our best interest. (Gerald Ford, cited in the *New York Times* 1974: 22)

I'm not going to pass judgment on whether it's permitted under international law. It's a recognized fact that historically as well as presently, such actions are taken in the best interest of the countries involved. (Gerald Ford, cited in the *New York Times* 1974: 11, 22)

Covert activities are normally planned with the support of the White House and executed with all the necessary policy approval (Purcell 1981: 223). It was Kissinger who stated to the House's Pike Committee that "[e]very operation is personally approved by the President" (Henry Kissinger, cited in Agee 1978b: 20).

US officials have consistently asserted that covert action is beneficial for US security interests. A former deputy director at the CIA, Ray S. Cline, claims that covert action is absolutely necessary, and indeed, should be used on a regular basis:

Covert action or special activities or political and propaganda covert action are not a last resort. Rather, they should be one of the first resorts to supplement strategic planning and policymaking....My point is that we should be thinking strategically all the time about all of the weapons or means available to our government. If we had a strategy in foreign policy which we have not had for a number of years, it would be very useful to supplement that routinely by a persistent effort in every part of the world to conduct what I call covert political action....I think that this kind of covert activity should be a routine part of the human resource activity of the intelligence services. (Cline 1981: 125)

Certain members of the US academic community have also supported the use of covert action as a policy instrument:

The strength of US covert action clearly has been its relative effectiveness. By and large, the record is very good. One only has to think of what the world would be like if we hadn't engaged in covert action in Western Europe, or the Middle East, or in the Philippines or Central America and the Caribbean. Obviously, it would be a very different – and a much worse world. (Huntington 1981: 208)

There is a great deal of room for argument as to whether or not the world is indeed a better place because of covert action, but support for covert action by US policymakers continues. International events which affect the United States and its citizens are used as support for covert action on a regular basis. Amongst others, one particular US Congressman, Bill Young, claims the following example as a perfect illustration of the need for a covert action capability:

I think Iran is a good example. We needed some strong covert activity in Iran starting on November 5, 1979. Because we didn't, 52 Americans remained hostages for over a year. Why could we not have put in a covert team?...We should have had assets

in the Khomeini entourage from the beginning. We should have been able to influence some of the decisions that Khomeini made. Recently in other countries we have done such things and done them fairly effectively, but we didn't in Iran. (Young 1981: 233)

Historically, the anti-American Islamic theocracy brought in by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1979 represented a widespread and popular dissatisfaction with the rule of the Shah, who himself was a product of US-supported and CIA-led covert intervention in 1953 (known as Operation Ajax by the US authorities in charge). The Shah himself, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, was widely regarded as "America's Shah" by most Iranians by the time of the Islamic revolution in 1979. These occurrences appear to have been lost on many Americans. Congressman Young's assertion that US covert action should have started in Iran in November of 1979 represents a fundamental ignorance, perhaps even apathy, of the long-term significance of covert action as a policy instrument as well as a long history of US involvement in the affairs of Third World nations. This type of rationalization of support for covert action has persisted with some policymakers in the United States, and continues to do so to the present day.

Presently, the use of covert action as a means to counter potential terrorist threats has been given the full support of the White House (Waller 2003; Wise 2003; Cross 2002). According to then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, the present administration of George W. Bush has continued the previous Clinton administration's covert efforts against potential terrorist threats, such as those posed by Al-Qaeda: "Our goal was to ensure continuity of operations while we developed new and more aggressive policies" (Rice 2004).

The more specific tool of assassination has been supported by the current administration, particularly with regards to enemies of the United States, including Iraq. Just prior to the 2003 US-led war on Iraq, a White House official claimed that one bullet

(i.e. for Saddam Hussein) is more cost-effective than going to war. Then White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer stated: "Regime change is welcome in whatever form that it takes" (*Washington Post* 2002). While Fleischer also claimed that he was actually referring to Iraqis doing the assassination, and not the United States, the CIA for some time has been planning specific assassinations (*Washington Post* 2002). Of course, in the past the CIA has been known to supply, train, and fund assassins and other covert operators native to Third World nations that have governments or national leaders which are not considered acceptable to US interests.

Iraq is not the only country to recently face US action. Iran has been singled out by the United States as a potential target for a covert takeover. The current regime in Iran, a virulently anti-American Islamic theocracy headed by Ayatollahs, may be progressing in its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. To counter this, the US has developed an initiative of its own. Officials within the State Department and the Pentagon informed ABC News that this initiative

includes using all available points of pressure on the Iranian regime, including backing armed Iranian dissidents and employing the services of the Mujahedeen e Khalq, a group currently branded as terrorist by the United States. (Cannistraro 2004)

Then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice has also alluded to the use of covert action against Iran as a counter-measure towards Iran's nuclear weapons program (*Courier-Mail* 2004; *Herald-Sun* 2004).

More recently, then Acting Director of Central Intelligence John E. McLaughlin stated publicly to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the 9/11 Commission Findings that covert action and CIA cooperation with the US military in the developing world was not only desirable but already highly successful in the goals of maintaining security:

[i]t was imaginative covert action – CIA officers working with the US military – that helped drive military operations and ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan and broke up the al Qaida sanctuary. (McLaughlin 2004)

In addition, McLaughlin asserted that the relationship between US intelligence organizations and the US military was an absolute necessity in the current “war on terrorism,” which is usually a necessary component in large, covert activities:

[L]et me be clear about one thing: no matter what course the Administration and Congress choose, intelligence support to the military, especially in time of war, should not be allowed to diminish – and I believe such support can and will be preserved under any of the options being considered. (McLaughlin 2004)

The CIA tradition of supporting military coups in Third World countries to topple undesirable national leaders is certainly not out of fashion either. During the Clinton administration there was indeed a CIA plan to oust Iraqi president Saddam Hussein (ironically a former CIA-financed hit-man himself). One such plan involved Mohammad Abdullah al Shawani, a former Brigadier-General in the Iraqi Republican Guards, and was organized by the CIA and set for June of 1996 (Hiro 2001). It was a complete failure, but nevertheless illustrates that such methods have not been abandoned (but rather, embraced) by the United States as a foreign policy tool. Another General in the Iraqi army, Adnan Nuri, had been recruited directly by the CIA as early as 1992 for the purpose of forming a military coup that would topple Saddam from power in Baghdad (Cockburn & Cockburn 2002: 212). Current US president George W. Bush’s military action in Iraq appears to attempt overtly what the CIA failed to do covertly just several years previously.

Also included amongst US covert activity in Iraq is the use of local operatives financed by the CIA. Such operatives bombed civil targets (i.e. a cinema and a mosque) in the mid-1990s, as well as a car bomb near the offices of the Ba’ath Party newspaper,

al-Jumhuriya. Roughly 100 civilian were killed in these bombings (Cockburn & Cockburn 2002: 211).

Support for covert action as a policy tool in the post-Cold War era continues to be strong despite the obvious criticisms. Its major supporting argument, that it is a viable third way or third option between diplomacy and outright warfare may at times be justified. The value of covert action lies precisely in this approach.

Covert actions can succeed in cases where direct intervention might exact great costs in American lives, funds, and damaged international relations; they can also promote democratic ideals and economic development without putting American force and prestige on the line. Critics retort that the record of covert operations has included bloody tactics, right-wing death squads, and human rights violations. But their opponents were equally ruthless....All war is hell. But is subversive warfare worse than the collateral damage done to hospitals, schools, and houses by aerial bombardments? America's newfound reliance on the "immaculate coercion" of dropping bombs from jets flying three miles over Iraq or Yugoslavia to attain our policy objectives has led us not only to eschew the deployment of land forces but also to downplay indirect antiregime ventures. (Henrikson 2000)

Rather than engaging in overt yet ineffective and potentially counterproductive measures such as the "immaculate coercion" of America's tactics in Yugoslavia and Iraq (pre-Second Persian Gulf War) which itself can be highly destructive, covert action might be utilized as an effective measure to achieve certain foreign policy objectives unattainable through any other means, and with less "collateral damage." One must be careful to maintain balance with regard to method, however, as in dealing with "ruthless" opponents the user of covert action is in danger of reducing oneself to that same level of ruthlessness. Combating terror for example, with yet more terror (however covert and however defined), may not be useful in the long term. Senator Frank Church's response to President Ford's support for covert action in Chile sums up his consideration of the larger context:

It seems he declared that the United States respects no law other than the law of the jungle in its dealings with foreign countries. He equates us with the Russians, I thought

there was a difference, and the difference is what it's all about. (Frank Church, cited in Daniel 1974: 4)

If the United States (or any nation for that matter) attempts to utilize covert action for whatever purposes, it must maintain a certain perspective, both ethical and long-term. Both ends and means require serious consideration.

Perhaps covert action is in fact a useful policy tool that simply has not always been used properly? It may be true that covert methods can in fact be used for constructive purposes rather than simply the typical, negatively-oriented destructive purposes such as regime change? Overly harsh and undue criticism of agencies such as the CIA and its covert operations have in the past been concentrated on the negative and the sensationalistic, especially within the media, and it becomes easy to overlook any benefit that might have been brought about as a result of covert action and the foresight that initiated it. Such criticism itself may become a destructive force,

[f]or, it creates a false image of the United States worldwide and can deprive our nation of an essential tool with which to meet future problems. And an essential step toward the proper use of this tool is to understand what it can do in a careful, long-term operation of supporting local leaders and groups, helping them to accomplish what they do want to accomplish – in short, what it can do when it is *for* some cause and group, rather than being *against* an adversary. (Colby & Forbath 1978: 307, italics original)

What then, is the future of covert action as an instrument of US foreign policy? Is it a useful yet potentially dangerous policy tool that requires careful attention and supervision of its use? Now – more than ever – covert action requires reassessment and evaluation as a legitimate instrument of public policy in international affairs.

Rationale for Past Covert Action in the Developing World

The developing world has been the theatre for most covert activity undertaken by the CIA and occasionally with the involvement of other US intelligence agencies or

branches of the US military. Covert actions themselves have been varied in their degrees of success. Covert activities may be small in operation, such as the CIA funding of a local radio station for the purposes of disseminating propaganda, or they may be extremely large and influential operations, such as the overthrow of a Third World government in the form of a military *coup d'état*. The goal of what is now commonly known as regime change has long been a history of the CIA experience.

Some covert operations have not managed to achieve their goals of regime change through the overthrow of national leaders, such as the attempts against Indonesian president Achmed Sukarno in 1958. Conversely, other operations have been very successful such as the eventual attempt to overthrow Sukarno in 1965 which not only replaced Sukarno with the dictatorship of General Suharto, but also succeeded in killing at least 105,000 suspected communists in Indonesia, an act in which the United States not only had knowledge of, but also assisted in (National Security Archive 2001).

The CIA itself, as evidenced through the minutes of a senior meeting led by Richard Bissell (a former Deputy Director of Plans at the CIA), had concluded that the developing world is particularly open to the use of covert activity due to its very nature:

[T]he underdeveloped world presents greater opportunities for covert intelligence collection, simply because governments are much less highly oriented; there is less security consciousness; and there is apt to be more actual or potential diffusion of power among parties, localities, organizations, and individuals outside of the central governments. (Minutes of the "Bissell Meeting" within the CIA, recorded by William R. Harris, cited in Marchetti & Marks 1980: 332).

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the nations of the developing world have served as surrogates for the United States and the Soviet Union, in what might have otherwise been another global conflict. The essential Cold War theatre included much of the Third World, and covert action was just one of the major types of engagement that

took place which involved one of the two superpowers. This is not to suggest, however, that every single nation within the Third World followed an either/or path with respect to these two ideologies, rather, the United States and the Soviet Union made it appear that way. As a former Jamaican prime minister once stated, “Everyone wants me to be either a capitalist or a Communist. Why can’t they just let me be?” (Michael Manley, cited in Crittendon 1979: A2). There was a perception by many during the Cold War that the entire world would eventually have to choose between one side or the other in this game of global ideologies, and much of the support for the use of covert action by US policymakers lay in this Cold War paranoia.

The single most important factor in the transformation was policymakers’ perception of the Soviet Union as a worldwide threat to United States security....For nearly two decades American policymakers considered covert action vital in the struggle against international Communism. The generality of the definition or “threat perception” motivated the continual development and justification of covert activities from the senior policymaking level to the field stations. Apart from the overall anti-Communist motivation, successive Presidential administrations regarded covert action as a quick and convenient means of advancing their particular objectives. (Leary 1984: 104)

In this sense, covert action was more than justified by those who supported it. The uncertainty of many Third World states (and their leaders), most of which were of non-aligned status, did not sit well with policymakers in both Washington and Moscow. Developing nations that refused to take sides between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War were thus viewed with suspicion, as was certainly the case with the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s, and onwards.

From an American security perspective, was there any real evidence to suggest that such non-aligned states were indeed a significant threat to the United States, or that they themselves were susceptible to takeover by serious Soviet or Chinese communist influence and control? Was this paranoia with or without a solid basis? The official CIA

line has been to meet these “obvious” threats to the national security of the United States. The longest-serving Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles (1963: 224), claims that although the Iranian and Guatemalan governments were democratically elected and did not originally demonstrate communist ambitions, they eventually presented the United States with a national security problem, and thanks to US covert intervention, “[i]n each case the danger was successfully met.” Dulles unfortunately, like many other US policymakers of the time, does not provide any solid evidence to support the existence of a real danger to the security of the United States. In fact, the haste and enthusiasm by which the Eisenhower administration undertook both operations gave little regard for overt methods normally used in statecraft and in international relations.

The success of these early covert operations (i.e. Operation Ajax in Iran, and Operation Success in Guatemala) gave the use of covert action as an effective policy tool more serious consideration by US policymakers. Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA organizer of the Iranian operation, made it clear that the larger scale paramilitary operations cannot be performed just anywhere at any time, as they required a great deal of internal support as well as long-term planning and intelligence gathering. Much to his disapproval, covert action became a policy tool of choice.

Roosevelt’s warning should have been inscribed in stone at the White House. Unfortunately, the long-term effects of Operation Ajax meant that the agency became a victim of its own success: the politicians were falling in love with covert operations. (Ranelagh 1992: 78)

Although Roosevelt felt that covert action was a policy tool to be used sparingly, and with great caution, he does not appear to have delved deeply into the importance of whether or not there was a genuine Soviet threat to Iran in the first place, merely assuming this to be the case. He was not concerned with Iranian prime minister

Mohammed Mossadegh's nationalization of British oil companies, but rather "with the obvious threat of a Russian takeover" (Roosevelt 1979: 3). Little evidence exists to support a planned Russian or Soviet takeover in Iran in 1953. As will be seen, successive covert operations in other parts of the world had also been based on the presumption of a Soviet threat, with no hard evidence or convincing arguments to support them.

Often without regard for those nations that are on the receiving end of US foreign policy, the United States has managed to significantly alter the course of history and national development in various states throughout the world. Perhaps this is desired if genuine disasters and catastrophes such as wars and genocide can be averted. Perhaps this is undesirable if such activity is ultimately counterproductive, and in turn may even lead to unnecessary disasters and catastrophes.

The following is a brief overview of the covert activities of the United States government in the developing world, which for the most part have been undertaken by the CIA. Three major world regions have been outlined: (1) West Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, (2) Latin America and the Caribbean, and (3) East Asia.

Covert Intervention in West Asia, Africa, and the Middle East

The United States has had a significant interest in the Middle Eastern region for some time now, and the first major covert operation, or series of covert operations, undertaken by the CIA occurred in Iran. The Cold War necessitated the use of Iran as a buffer state against the Soviet Union and as a regional power (and customer of US arms) on friendly terms with the United States – at least in the eyes of those in Washington. In a Special Message to Congress regarding the potential threats to the nations of the Middle East, then US president Dwight D. Eisenhower stated that it may be necessary

to employ the armed forces of the United States to assist to defend the territorial integrity and the political independence of any nation in the area against Communist armed aggression. Such authority would not be exercised except at the desire of the nation attacked. ...If power-hungry Communists should either falsely or correctly estimate that the Middle East is inadequately defended, they might be tempted to use open measures of armed attack. If so, that would start a chain of circumstances which would almost surely involve the United States in military action. I am convinced that the best insurance against this dangerous contingency is to make clear now our readiness to cooperate fully and freely with our friends of the Middle East in ways consonant with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. I intend promptly to send a special mission to the Middle East to explain the cooperation we are prepared to give. (Eisenhower 1957)

Iran was the first major case of US “cooperation” in the region. The various covert operations that occurred in Iran will be discussed and analyzed in further detail in Chapter IV, but let it be stated here that the eventual *coup d'état* that was organized by the CIA (known as Operation Ajax) which toppled democratically elected Iranian prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 was at the time considered a striking success, and it served as a model for subsequent covert actions,³ some of which were also very successful (e.g. Operation Success in Guatemala in 1954), and some of which were abysmal failures (e.g. the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba in 1961).

In Syria the United States had twice planned (in 1956 and 1957) to repeat their success in Iran by similar means, and to replace the current government with a more conservative and pro-American administration in Damascus (although it is believed that the US may have been involved to some extent in an earlier coup in Syria in 1949). These plans were not ultimately carried out. Covert plans to assassinate Egyptian president General Gamal Abdul Nasser were considered by CIA officials, which also never quite unfolded.⁴ In Lebanon the CIA funded the election campaigns of pro-Western president Camille Chamoun during the 1950s, and when Muslim and other groups rebelled against his leadership the US came to Chamoun's assistance with the help of the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

Significant covert operations also took place in Iraq. Then prime minister of Iraq, General Abdul Karim Qasim, was the target of a CIA-organized assassination attempt in 1959, and one of the would-be assassins supported by the CIA was a young and energetic Saddam Hussein. This plan was not successful, unlike a later 1963 coup also organized by the CIA, which allowed the Ba'ath Party to seize power and hold it for the next 40 years. Qasim, like many other Third World leaders, refrained from taking sides during the Cold War and instead pursued a non-aligned path to development, one in which both superpowers, including the United States, had a difficult time accepting. When Saddam Hussein later attained the presidency (i.e. dictatorship) of Iraq he received a great deal of support from the Reagan administration in Washington. Included in this mutual friendship were numerous benefits for the Iraqis, such as economic aid in the billions of dollars, a removal of Iraq on a US list of nations that supported terrorism, and the provision of intelligence⁵ in various forms (such as satellite data) for use against Iraq's enemy Iran, the kind of benefits which continued even as late as 1989 under the first Bush administration (Klare 2003: 396-397). It was the United States in the early 1980s that encouraged its new ally in the Middle East, Iraq, to go to war with America's new enemy Iran, a bloody conflict that lasted nearly a decade and achieved essentially nothing productive. The deputy head of Istikbarat (i.e. Iraqi military intelligence), General al-Samarrai, met with members of the CIA and noted that the "CIA used to send us a lot of information about Iran" (cited in Cockburn & Cockburn 2002: 35).

Although not of primary importance, the continent of Africa saw much CIA activity during the Cold War. The number of CIA stations in the region rose by 55.5 percent in the period 1959-1963, as the United States perceived Africa as a potential area

ready for Soviet influence and thus decided to act more pro-actively to avoid this apparent threat (Karalekas 1977: 68). The government of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana was overthrown in a CIA-supported coup in 1966. Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's (later Zaire's) first prime minister, was assassinated in January 1961 with the indirect assistance of the CIA, which led to the subsequent and US-supported rule of Mobutu Sese Seko, one of the most corrupt and brutal dictators of the twentieth century.

The US government had worked covertly with the apartheid-era regime in South Africa for many years. Cooperation included CIA efforts in aiding South African intelligence authorities in the arrest of suspected "terrorist" Nelson Mandela in 1962 (W. Blum 2000). Intelligence sharing between the US and South Africa continued well into the 1980s despite a 1977 ban by the Carter administration on intelligence sharing activities (Hersh 1986).

The 1970s-era civil war in Angola witnessed the expenditure of \$31 million by the CIA in its efforts to aid the National Front for the Independence of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in 1975, of which the House's Pike Committee asserted that "[t]he American taxpayer clearly does not receive full value for his intelligence dollar" (cited in Freemantle 1983: 68). There was no apparent success from these operations. A former CIA Angola Task Force Chief (1975-1976) claimed that there was essentially no real strategic importance to this action whatsoever, as "Angola had little plausible importance to American national security and little economic importance," and that American involvement was simply a form of political posturing⁶ against the Soviets, albeit one with great costs (Stockwell 1978: 43).

Many argue, including the Pike Committee, that both Cuba and the Soviet Union had become involved in Angola as a result of US activity, rather than the reverse.

In Chad, the government of Goukouni Wedeye was overthrown in a 1982 coup assisted by the CIA as well as the French military. The US government saw Chad as an effective buffer state to Colonel Moammar Qaddafi's Libya, and helped to install the dictator Hissen Habré as Chad's new ruler.

American antagonism against Libya and Qaddafi are well known, and there have been several yet ineffective efforts against Libya, particularly under the Reagan administration. Past plans included propaganda and the consideration of a coup. Even former DCI Stansfield Turner admitted to *The Baltimore Sun* in May 1983 the existence of CIA plans to oust Qaddafi, which were never actually approved under the Carter administration (Peterzell 1984: 63-65).

Afghanistan is a very telling case of CIA covert involvement. The presence of the Soviet Union, or Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" in Afghanistan was a direct challenge to the Reagan administration. National Security Decision Directorate 166, signed by President Reagan, stated the importance of removing Soviet forces from Afghan soil "by all means available" (cited in Hoodbhoy 2003: 615). Muslim fundamentalists were encouraged by the US to combat Soviet influence in Afghanistan, and the CIA began an important covert action program to aid this opposition group which eventually became known as the Mujahedeen. One of the more memorable episodes occurred when the United States decided to supply stinger surface-to-air missiles to the Mujahedeen in March of 1986. These were used to destroy Soviet helicopters which were vital to the Soviet military efforts in Afghanistan's mountainous terrain. The Mujahedeen brought

down hundreds of Soviet helicopters, with the result that Soviet bombers were forced to fly at much higher and thus less accurate altitudes, from the previous 2,000-4,000 feet to 10,000 feet (Richelson 1995: 413). Later realizing that these missiles may eventually make their way to parties potentially hostile to US interests, the CIA attempted to purchase⁷ these missiles back in 1989-1990 (Scott 2003: 5). The stinger buy-back program continued several years afterwards, except that the price kept rising on the international black market due to high CIA demand. It was believed that many of the missiles were being stockpiled by Afghan warlords (Moore 1994), although some missiles found their way into other countries. It turns out that 24 of these missiles actually made it into Iran (Wise 2003: 20), while others were believed to have been purchased from Afghan commanders by China and North Korea (Kremmer 2001).

American involvement in Afghanistan goes back earlier, however, as the US provided aid to the opposition of the socialist-oriented Afghan government led by Noor Muhammad Taraki, in the late 1970s. It was this resistance, led by Islamic groups and traditional ethnic leaders, who were encouraged by the United States to resist any attempts at modernization or socialization of their economy. Although the official US claim is that they aided Afghan rebel forces *only after* the Soviet invasion in December 1979, it was actually the Carter administration which authorized the first covert operation against the pro-Soviet government *in July of that same year* (Gates 1996: 146). Thus, the United States was to lure the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor, elaborates:

Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention. (Zbigniew Brzezinski, cited in Bennett 2002: 319)

Brzezinski claimed that such covert operations would “draw the Russians into the Afghan trap,” although the Soviets were initially not enthusiastic about the decision to invade (Chomsky 2003: 110). The US influence, both covert and overt, has continued in Afghanistan to the present day.

Covert Intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean

The first major CIA intervention in Latin American politics took place in Guatemala in 1954 when US policymakers perceived a possible Soviet takeover of that nation, in addition to threats to private interests through nationalization by democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz. The CIA successfully organized a *coup d'état* to topple the Arbenz government in what was known officially as Operation Success (also Operation PBSUCCESS). The United Fruit Company, an American-owned enterprise, not only had a major stake in Guatemala but also close connections with policymakers in Washington. This appeared to be the more significant factor, as the argument for Soviet involvement in Guatemala was not convincing. Even US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles admitted that the Soviet threat was not an issue – the coup appeared to be more of a warning to other Latin American nations as well as a demonstration of support for US-owned corporations in the region (Ranelagh 1992: 81).

The CIA orchestrated the coup in several ways. One method used was that of propaganda. A radio station⁸ was established in the remote hills of that nation and transmitted false reports of a large uprising with the intention of ousting Arbenz, who actually fell for the scheme (Johnson 1989: 23). The CIA also had the assistance of the US Information Agency (USIA) which attempted to portray Arbenz as a communist threat to Guatemala through further propaganda efforts (Treverton 1987: 64).

Local assistance was utilized. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas of the Guatemalan army led the CIA-supported opposition. Despite a leak to the press, the impending coup (which was denied⁹ by the US government) known as Operation Success lived up to its name. The total price tag for the coup was \$20 million plus the use of a very small army by Colonel Castillo (Freemantle 1983: 169). The ease and relatively inexpensive cost of ousting Arbenz, so soon after the CIA's successful coup in Iran one year earlier, made covert action appear as a highly desirable option at that time to US policymakers.

Guatemala was then used by the US government as a model for capitalism in Latin America – in fact, the United States provided some 40 percent of the state budget for Bolivia by the latter part of the decade (Ames 1987: 21). Bolivia also witnessed a CIA- and Pentagon-supported military overthrow of President Victor Paz in 1964.

Latin America in general was an active covert action Cold War battleground. The CIA worked hard on several unsuccessful attempts to depose Costa Rican moderate-socialist president José Figueres starting in the 1950s. Decades later, Figueres admitted publicly that he had actually worked for the CIA in “20,000 ways” and that he believed other Latin American leaders had also worked for the CIA (*Los Angeles Times* 1975). The United States provided military assistance to Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier’s dictatorship in Haiti commencing in 1959. Both the US and British governments combined their efforts to keep democratically-elected Cheddi Jagan from remaining in office in British Guiana. The CIA was linked to the assassination of Generalissimo Rafael L. Trujillo Molina, the dictator of the Dominican Republic (which was a rare instance of US covert action directed against a right-wing dictator rather than a left-wing democratically elected leader)¹⁰. Although the Trujillo operation of 1961 was initially

considered a victory for US foreign policy and Dominican politics in general, a great deal of social unrest occurred in subsequent years, including a civil war and eventual US military intervention in 1965. Trujillo's successor, Juan Bosch, was also ousted in a coup.

In Ecuador, presidents José María Velasco Ibarra and his successor Carlos Julia Arosemana were both forced out of office in 1961 and 1963 respectively, in efforts organized by the CIA. The US military quietly aided the Peruvian government in its struggle against guerrilla-type insurgents throughout the 1960s and beyond. The democratically elected president of Brazil, João Goulart, suffered overthrow of his administration in 1964, an episode that had American support behind it.

Some of the most interesting, although ineffective measures taken in Latin America were those that were directed against Cuba and its president, Fidel Castro. A Deputy Director of Plans of the CIA once proudly claimed, "[t]here will be no Communist government in Latin America while I am DDP" (Richard Bissell, cited in Smith 1976: 324). Commencing with US president Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration the CIA was in preparation for the removal of Castro, and these plans continued into the Kennedy era. In March 1961, CIA operatives based in Havana received orders to assassinate Castro's brother Raul, although this was rescinded almost immediately (Ranelagh 1992: 84). The attempts at covert overthrow of Castro's Cuba failed miserably in the Bay of Pigs invasion, although further attempts continued in the form of what officials in Washington called Operation Mongoose, which in 1962 was overseen by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and a group known as the Special Groups (Augmented) or SGA (Church Committee 1976c: 139-140). The CIA even

contacted powerful members of the American Mafia to participate in the covert assassination of Castro.¹¹

One of the most dramatic and telling of CIA-associated covert actions was that of the many attempts to oust Chile's left-leaning president Salvador Allende throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. This incident will be analyzed in further detail as a case study in Chapter V, but suffice it to say here that the CIA had for many years been involved in numerous covert activities that were aimed at removing Allende from office. In 1973 Allende was successfully removed.

In Jamaica, the government of democratic-socialist prime minister Michael Manley was the target of many CIA attempts to destabilize or overthrow his administration in the mid- to late 1970s, including the arming of opposition groups, the rigging of elections, propaganda, and economic destabilization. Although the more physical forms of covert intervention were unsuccessful, Manley was finally defeated for re-election in 1980.

In the post-Church Committee era, Nicaragua was a major Latin American target for CIA covert operations, which in many ways were so open that there was almost little which could be genuinely labeled as covert. President Ronald Reagan and DCI William Casey spent a great deal of time, effort, and funding on aiding the right-wing Contra forces with the mission of overthrowing the leftist Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega. But Reagan and Casey's plans remained controversial as there did not exist Congressional agreement as to how to treat the Nicaraguan issue (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 225).

The tiny island of Grenada was the target of US covert activity which eventually culminated in an overt military invasion by the United States in 1983. The CIA had also made covert plans for deposing Desi Bouterse's government in Suriname, which were never quite realized. US aid to various Latin American nations, including Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Mexico, and Colombia was of both the overt and covert variety. Such aid took the forms of assistance offered by both the US military and the CIA, and was directed towards governments with questionable commitments to democracy.

Covert Intervention in East Asia

Post-Second World War covert action in East Asia from the United States took place in various countries throughout the region. Immediately after the war, the CIA undertook operations in China. Efforts in Yunnan and Manchuria, however, were unproductive and might even have hindered the CIA's own intelligence collection efforts; this also appeared to be the case in Burma to some extent (Prados 1986: 77-78).

The US government was also involved in the early post-war era in the Philippines (in various forms, including military aid and interference in elections), in Korea both before and during the 1950-1953 Korean War, and in Indonesia throughout the 1950s and 1960s in several attempts to discredit and remove Indonesian president Sukarno from power. In late 1956, the CIA's Deputy Director of Plans Frank Wisner made his attitude towards the independently-oriented Indonesian president perfectly clear in his now-famous comment to Al Ulmer, the chief of DDP's Far East Division: "I think it's time we held Sukarno's feet to the fire" (cited in Prados 1986: 132; Smith 1976: 205). Indeed they did, although it was not until the turbulent 1965-1968 period in which Sukarno's rule was finally replaced by General Suharto and his administration which was more

compatible to US interests. Throughout this entire period the official line in Washington was that of non-interference, or at least the pretence of non-interference, as US intervention in Indonesia's internal troubles was consistently denied by US officials.¹² The United States also supplied Indonesia with arms and turned a blind eye to the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975, commencing a period in which some 200,000 East Timorese eventually died (Amnesty International 1999).

Quiet intervention in Vietnam by the United States eventually led to an escalation into overt warfare which lasted well into the 1970s. The Montagnards, Vietnam's tribal hill people, were utilized by the CIA in cooperation with the US Army Special Forces (i.e. Green Berets) to combat the communist North Vietnamese forces, but were left at the mercy of the North Vietnamese as traitors (and were almost exterminated) when the United States eventually pulled out of Vietnam (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 146-147).

Vietnam's neighbours also experienced America's covert foreign policies. Cambodia's Norodom Sihanouk was toppled in a CIA-assisted coup in 1970, to be replaced by the more US-friendly leader Lon Nol, whose own administration fell to the murderous Khmer Rouge in 1975. The CIA's so-called "secret war" in Laos, although now rather famous in intelligence circles, was considered a success in its day. Based on US military bases in Thailand, American forces were able to wage an ongoing and often violent campaign against the leftist Pathet Lao forces. The CIA recruited an army of some 30,000 known as the *Armée Clandestine* (W. Blum 2000: 136). Much of this army was composed of local tribal people, including the Meo, who as a result of their participation in the war were scattered as a population only to end up homeless or in Thai refugee camps (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 146-147).

More Recent Covert Activities in the Developing World

More recent events in the developing world shed new light on the CIA's use of covert action. Regions such as the Middle East and Afghanistan are currently CIA hotspots. For example, the CIA utilizes remote-controlled Predator flying drones (armed with laser-guided Hellfire anti-tank missiles) to "terminate" individuals perceived as terrorists. Such drones have already claimed the lives of some, including a small group (one of whom was a US citizen) in Yemen in November 2002, as well as three Afghans in February 2002 who were claimed by locals to be simple smugglers or scrap metal dealers, not terrorists (Waller 2003; Wise 2003; Risen & Johnston 2002). The CIA's fervour to kill some individuals, who may or may not be terrorists, as well as anyone who happens to be standing in their vicinity, who also may or may not be a terrorist, promotes the highly questionable "shoot first, ask questions later" mentality which can unfortunately be quite common with covert activities. The fact that such victims may indeed be US citizens, essentially executed without trial, judge, jury, conviction, criminal charge, or due process of law, does not appear to be a serious issue either within the CIA or the current administration in Washington.

Previously, the CIA had been able to claim that although their efforts may have in fact aided in certain assassinations, or that their efforts may have supported assassinations with weapons, training, funding, etc., the CIA as an organization had never *directly* committed an assassination. This had been true up to a point, or at least none had ever been uncovered.¹³ "Executive action," the CIA euphemism for assassination, has not only been used but is openly boasted about and embraced enthusiastically by some officials in Washington. Current US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has even

provided what he feels as the political justification for the use of such “self-defence” missions (Gow 2001).

Covert action has been used with some effectiveness in Afghanistan. In 2001-2002, CIA special operations entered Afghanistan immediately prior to the overt military action, an undertaking which helped conventional US forces to overthrow the Taliban and battle Al-Qaeda. The CIA force numbered about 150 (Bennett 2002: 54-55).

The highly topical and newsworthy regions of Afghanistan and the Middle East, however, are not the only Third World regions to come under the influence of US covert activity. Central and South America, for example, are still very much CIA theatres of operation. Colombia is one such theatre. The American initiative known as Plan Colombia is a program of aid, but is in reality a package that is 90 percent military with the remaining 10 percent economic and social (Scott 2003: 73). The CIA has had an important presence in Colombia for many years now, and this does not appear to be diminishing. The current US interest in Colombia was enlarged in 2001 when President George W. Bush guaranteed the support of oil pipelines and the Colombian army in addition to the usual US role of targeting the drug trade (Scott 2003: 71). Colombia already has a well-deserved reputation as being one of the most violent nations on earth, and the United States certainly does not appear to be willing to change this situation.

Analysis of the outcomes of nations that have experienced covert intervention by the United States will shed some light on the value of covert action as a policy instrument, from the perspective of international development in the Third World and long-term benefits. Such an analysis of the long-term results of covert action is necessary, given that US policymakers and intelligence bureaucracies tend to look only at

short-term results of covert action. Covert action, especially when performed as a military coup, produces an entire change in government for a particular nation – the long-term ramifications of which are something rarely considered by those who utilize covert action as an instrument of foreign policy.

[O]nce a covert action has been carried out, Washington tends to assume that the problem has been solved. After the United States helped to overthrow Arbenz in 1954, Guatemala became a relatively low priority for U.S. policymakers. Even worse, what little concern it received was devoted mostly to routine transfers of economic and military assistance, thus paving the way for further corruption and oppression and a future problem for American leaders. Diplomatic support for needed internal reforms in the 1950s might have been able to resolve such difficulties, but, in the aftermath of Arbenz's removal, Washington never considered that option. A similar conclusion can be applied to Operation Ajax in Iran in 1953. The operation prolonged the shah's tenure but allowed the underlying problems to fester until they exploded into the radical Islamic revolution of the late 1970s. (Isenberg 1989)

In fact, when the Shah's rule collapsed in 1979, the United States essentially lost its most important ally in the region. A relative regional newcomer, Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein, was welcomed as a valuable new US ally in the Middle East – a relationship which itself eventually turned sour.

Using the CIA's own terminology, "blowback" of this kind can occur in a variety of formats, on both the large scale and the small. The Afghan rebels who had learned so much from the CIA on how to combat the Soviets in the 1980s soon turned towards the United States. In fact, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City had been performed by Islamic fundamentalists "following a formula taught in CIA manuals" (Chomsky 2003: 111).

Covert action is not a policy tool to be analyzed only in terms of short-term goals. The long-term ramifications must be given serious consideration. Blowback or negative repercussion is just one argument against the use of covert action. More fundamentally,

covert action is fundamental interference in the internal affairs of another state, which compromises its political sovereignty and alters the course of events for entire populations (both domestically and internationally) in other nations, often for the worse. Such interference is itself highly questionable.

If the choice of policy instrument is seen upon a spectrum, that is, starting with diplomacy, then covert action, then overt war, the first step may at times be excluded. In the past, covert action has been considered more readily than it was originally meant,

[f]or the low-risk, quick-fix aspect of covert action almost certainly encourages decision-makers to commit national power more widely than they would otherwise find is advisable to do. It also reduces the incentives to reach diplomatic solutions. (Beitz 1992: 318).

Over-reliance on covert action began immediately after the Guatemalan operation in 1954, continued for decades with mixed results, and now appears once again as a tool of choice by US policymakers. Covert action does not necessarily have to have such a high level of consideration, but historical factors have made it that way. Marchetti (1976: xiii) presents four major reasons why covert action was emphasized as much as it was, at least by the CIA: (1) antagonistic societies such as China and the USSR were closed to the West, and the extreme difficulty of engaging in traditional espionage was greatly curtailed by this simple fact; (2) advances in high-tech intelligence gathering made traditional espionage appear less important; (3) the Defense Department's generous budget allowed for great activity in high-tech intelligence, and financially unable to keep up in this field, the CIA found its own private niche in covert action; and (4) senior officials at the CIA were no longer interested in traditional espionage. Each of these arguments does have its merits – Allen Dulles, for example, during his tenure as DCI often preferred covert action over espionage as an instrument of choice. These arguments

also have their merits in the post-Cold War world, as countries such as China, North Korea, and Iran remain uncertain, and there continues to be great difficulty in penetrating non-state organizations such as Al-Qaeda for espionage purposes.

These arguments, however, relate better to the practical realities of covert action and lack a thorough political explanation, being as they emanated from the perspective of the CIA and not the White House or other elements of the United States government. Richard Helms, during his tenure as DCI for example, was not enthusiastic about Nixon and Kissinger's plans for Chile and the ousting of Allende, but nevertheless went along with the orders of his superiors. With other covert operations, including those against Cuba (the Bay of Pigs, Operation Mongoose) "former U.S. presidents and their advisors had ordered the CIA into action, but the agency had taken the brunt of criticism when the operations were blown" (Stockwell 1978: 44). But covert action itself should be analyzed and critiqued as a policy choice, rather than just the CIA alone. When viewed from the perspective of those who ultimately made the foreign policy decisions in the United States, is covert action in this sense a useful policy tool? Furthermore, what specifically makes a policy tool useful? This will be defined in the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter II

¹ Also commonly known as “the South,” US attitudes towards the Third World can be illustrated through remarks made by Henry Kissinger to Chile’s Foreign Minister Gabriel Valdés the day after a June 1969 White House meeting of Latin American ministers in Washington, DC:

Mr. Minister, you made a strange speech. You come here speaking of Latin America, but this is not important. Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance. You’re wasting your time. (Henry Kissinger, cited in Hersh 1983: 263)

Remarks such as these made by Dr. Kissinger are particularly important, given that he was a major player in the contemporary history of US foreign policy, and one of the key players in this study.

² The term “rogue elephant” was coined by Senator Frank Church who led the Church Committee’s investigations into the affairs of US intelligence organizations in the 1970s. The Church Committee eventually concluded that the CIA was for the most part, not a rogue organization at all, but one which was led, often very closely, by the White House.

³ The CIA commissioned a study of the inner workings of the 1953 Iranian operation to be used as a set of rules or guidelines for future covert operations of the same sort. Ajax was viewed as such a success that this CIA “secret history” contained a wealth of warnings, as well as procedures, that pertain to covert action and its use (Risen 2000). This document, written by a major architect of Operation Ajax Donald N. Wilber (1954), was recently declassified.

⁴ Regarding Nasser, then DCI Allen Dulles is known to have stated in late 1956 or early 1957: “If that colonel of yours pushes us too far, we will break him in half!” (cited in Powers 1979a: 36). As early as 1952, then Colonel Nasser had been aided by the CIA in a military takeover of Egypt, but later proved antagonistic towards Washington in his pursuit of non-alignment for Egypt and other newly independent Middle Eastern nations.

⁵ High-tech intelligence of this sort continued to be provided to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq despite the fact that on November 1, 1983 a senior official in the State Department notified US government leaders that Iraq was using chemical weapons in its war against Iran on an “almost daily” basis (Klare 2003: 397).

⁶ Former head of the CIA operation in Angola, John Stockwell, argues that it was in fact Henry Kissinger who insisted on US involvement in Angola in his anti-Soviet fervour, regardless of any genuine importance to the region:

...it was Kissinger who was pushing the agency into the covert operation in Angola. Kissinger saw the Angolan conflict solely in terms of global politics and was determined the Soviets should not be permitted to make a move in any remote part of the world without being confronted militarily by the United States....Uncomfortable with recent historic events, and frustrated by our humiliation in Vietnam, Kissinger was seeking opportunities to challenge the Soviets. Conspicuously, he had overruled his advisors and refused to seek diplomatic solutions in Angola. (Stockwell 1978: 43)

Kissinger is not the only party to blame. Then DCI William Colby stated that the "ominous" Soviet influence in the region had to be met with "increased CIA backing, including military hardware," to which the "CIA responded quickly," which in turn prompted the Soviets to increase their military aid to the Angolan theatre (Colby & Forbath 1978: 422).

⁷ Regarding the Stinger missile buy-back program, the CIA is offering up to US\$150,000 per missile, which is five times the original price (Kremmer 2001). Some \$65 million dollars had been allocated by the United States Congress to repurchase these missiles in the early 1990s, in a program that has been described by both US and Pakistani intelligence officials as being "plagued by failures, miscalculations and wasted money" (Moore 1994: A1).

⁸ E. Howard Hunt, later to achieve much fame with the scandalous Watergate episode in the 1970s, was a CIA-employed radio broadcaster in Guatemala during Operation Success (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 111).

⁹ The leaked plan for the coup was labeled "ridiculous and untrue" by the US State Department, who claimed that it "is the policy of the United States not to intervene in the internal affairs of other nations" (US Department of State press release, January 30, 1954, cited in Treverton 1987: 64).

¹⁰ The major concern of the United States at this time was that the Dominican Republic might have turned out as another "Cuba," in that a right-wing but extremely unpopular and oppressive dictator such as Trujillo would be overthrown in a popular revolution by a charismatic left-wing leader such as Fidel Castro. US policymakers wanted someone they could best trust to occupy the office of the Dominican presidency, and they were not about to leave such a momentous decision simply to chance.

The debate over exactly how responsible the CIA was for Trujillo's death still exists to this day, given that CIA case officers or agents did not actually do the killing, but instead utilized local contacts. A former OSS and CIA operative explains:

Was Washington responsible for Trujillo's death? Yes and no. It encouraged the group's activities, knew its intentions, and supplied it with arms. Yet it did not control the group (they were not agents in any sense) and therefore could not dictate its actions. Nor did Washington officially or unofficially encourage the murder itself. What it did do was to establish an unrealistic "yes and no" policy: to encourage the removal of the

Trujillo regime but to “dissociate” itself from any political assassination that might occur. Events did not permit such a simple separation of purposes. (Rositzke 1977: 201)

This blurring of responsibility conforms well to many of the practices regarding covert action, particularly that of plausible denial.

¹¹ American Mafia bosses Sam Giancana, Santos Trafficante, and John Rosselli were approached by the US government through Robert Mahau, a former FBI special agent and contact for the CIA, and were each offered \$150,000 to assassinate Fidel Castro (Ranelagh 1992: 84; Powers 1979a: 40). These individuals had lost valuable gambling interests in Cuba with Castro’s revolution in 1959, and thus also had vested interests in the success of any anti-Castro operations organized by the US government.

¹² To illustrate, the US government’s attempts to overthrow the Sukarno government in Indonesia through the use of a revolt supported by the CIA in 1958 failed miserably. At this time, the United States government denied any connection to the revolt. John Foster Dulles, then Secretary of State, claimed that “we are not intervening in the internal affairs of this country,” while President Eisenhower claimed publicly that “our policy is one of careful neutrality and proper deportment all the way through so as not to be taking sides where it is not of our business” (cited in Marchetti & Marks 1980: 101). Specific incidents, such as the shooting down of one of the CIA’s own B-26 bombers by Indonesian forces over Sumatra on May 18, 1958, which resulted in the capture of its pilot Allen Lawrence Pope, a US citizen and employee of Civil Air Transport (a proprietary of the CIA), were also denied by US officials, claiming that Mr. Pope was in fact a mercenary (Wise & Ross 1964: 136-137; Marchetti & Marks 1980: 26). At the time, the CIA was providing various forms of “aid” to insurgent groups in Indonesia, which including bombing missions such as these.

¹³ The US attitude towards executive action or assassination was originally one which can be described as follows: “If the Soviets can do it, so can the United States.” CIA assassination plans were certainly drawn up for such prominent figures as Fidel Castro of Cuba and Patrice Lumumba of Congo. The Castro plan failed whereas the Lumumba operation was not directly carried out by the CIA. Whether or not such plans succeeded though, is almost irrelevant, as

William Colby, who investigated such activities inside the agency in the 1970s, indicated that the executive action capacity had been there, but had been unsuccessful: there were no assassinations, he said, but it “wasn’t for want of trying.” (Ranelagh 1992: 62)

Chapter III

The Usefulness of Covert Action

In order to evaluate a policy tool one requires a definition of the term “usefulness.” Such definitions will differ between those who engage in various types of policy analysis, yet there are some basic criteria that will be common to most if not all such definitions. Does that policy tool accomplish what is purported to do? Does it do so in a reasonable manner? Is it a legitimate means by which government can operate? These questions, and more, will be addressed in this chapter.

The concept of usefulness and the purpose of policy instruments will be analyzed based on a variety of different criteria, and a definition of usefulness will be outlined as a result. This will provide a conceptual framework by which covert action can be evaluated, that is, according to its theoretical purposes. Covert action is unlike most other policy tools, and methods of evaluation used in other areas of public policy do not

necessarily apply to covert action. In this chapter, the concept of usefulness will be defined as an effective way of evaluating covert action and overcoming these limitations. Traditional policy evaluation methods and their limited applicability to covert action will be discussed, which itself helps to illustrate the necessity of usefulness as a concept. The secretive and questionable nature of covert action also necessitates a discussion of the legality and legitimacy of its use by the US government as a policy tool. Furthermore, the broad goals of the United States as it relates to current foreign policy will be discussed, as the very purpose of this study is to scrutinize covert action itself as a tool for foreign policy rather than for domestic purposes. The framework developed in this chapter will be the basis for the comparative case studies which follow.

The Need for a Concept of “Usefulness” in Covert Action Policy Evaluation

Policy analysis literature makes numerous references to the common methods and conventional practices in evaluating public policy and its instruments. These methods and practices may be applied to covert action at times, but are not always applied on a regular basis due to the secretive and questionable nature of covert action. Another concept, that of usefulness, is necessary in order to overcome the limitations of conventional policy evaluation. This section will briefly explain why conventional policy evaluation is insufficient when analyzing covert action.

One of the first practices used in any policy evaluation is that of defining the purposes of the evaluation and of the policy itself. This allows for the determination of boundaries of the evaluation (HM Treasury 1988: 4). These boundaries must not only be relatively clear cut, but also publicly stated with all the facts known to evaluators. With covert action, such information is never completely available, even in retrospect. In

secretive activities such as espionage and covert action, boundaries become blurred and purposes may appear to be counter-productive as goals cannot always be stated publicly, information is inadequate, and the need for secrecy is one of the main avenues to successful policy implementation.

This need for secrecy also implies that those who implement covert action plans do not always know the objectives or overall goals. In fact, secretive operations necessitate that such knowledge normally remains only at the very top levels of policy, while those in the field simply implement that which they are told. Uncertain objectives are not uncommon in other forms of policy analysis though. Wildavsky (1979: 215) states "that objectives invariably may be distinguished by three outstanding qualities: they are multiple, conflicting, and vague." With covert action, there is an additional quality, that of the objectives being not merely vague, but sometimes completely unknown, with indicators of success or failure at times also being unknown.

From the evaluator's perspective, there is also a great deal which remains unknown. Evaluation itself depends upon the evaluator's knowledge of the facts regarding public policy and how information is being used.

Evaluation is a principal feedback stage of the policy process. Policy analysts provide several types of information in this phase. Policy evaluation provides information which lets stakeholders know what happened following the initiation of a policy; it provides a description of implementation activities. (Putt & Springer 1989: 48)

This quotation sums up the essentials of policy evaluation. It also illustrates how any evaluation of covert action policy is extremely difficult using conventional means.

Information is not always available in covert policy analysis. The stakeholders themselves are inherently not always represented as covert action involves certain parties that have a stake in the policy outcomes, yet are not a part of the process. Citizens of

Third World countries are affected by US covert policy, but are normally not aware that they are being affected, and if they become aware they usually have no input in the matter. United States citizens are theoretically the recipients of the benefits of US covert action policy, yet are not even supposed to be aware of its existence. Even when major stakeholders have input they do not always make their intentions public – the Department of State, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the White House may all have somewhat differing objectives with regards to covert action policy, none of which can be made public due to secrecy and security issues. The policy analyst is at great loss in providing a description of implementation activities and defining real stakeholder outcomes.

Any reliable analysis and evaluation of policy will require solid information. The secretive nature of covert action implies that much information will not always be known, but also within the US government there has existed the problem of compartmentalization of information within the overall intelligence community. In other words, if one branch of government has the necessary information, it may not always share that information with other branches or agencies. Particularly within the intelligence community there has been a great deal of bureaucratic rivalry throughout the decades after the Second World War, and efforts to streamline the bureaucratic structure of intelligence and to reduce barriers to the necessary flow of information to those within the US government who really need it most are still taking place to this day.

Any policy evaluation will also involve values (Dunn 1981; Pal 1987; Wildavsky 1979), which are not always known. The values held by public leaders can be stated with some certainty, although there is a great deal more to values than the obvious, particularly with regards to covert action. To illustrate, one major cost/benefit of covert action is that

of human life, which of course has value, but few policymakers are willing to state a comparative figure for this. Most covert action takes place in the Third World, and the policy analyst working for the US government, for example, may or may not value the lives of US citizens differently from that of non-US citizens. The destruction of human life is a part of covert paramilitary activities, but even with propaganda, political, and economic covert activities, human lives may not be lost but are affected nevertheless as destinies of nations and individuals are altered in numerous ways. In these cases, most are not even aware that their lives are being, or have been altered by US-instigated covert action policies. The concept of values and how they are held by differing parties and individuals is a contentious one even in overt policy evaluation – covert action complicates this problem even further.

Difficulties in measurement also prevent accurate forms of quantitative analysis. Data cannot always be gathered accurately or completely with regards to covert activity, which makes any quantitative analysis extremely problematic. Dunn (1981), for example, defines cost-benefit analysis as “an approach to policy recommendation that permits analysts to compare and advocate policies by quantifying their total monetary costs and total monetary benefits” (p. 244) and cost-effectiveness analysis as a similar approach as used for costs measured in monetary units and effects as measured in non-monetary units (p. 250). Covert action presents a number of problems with such analyses. First, both types of analysis depend on accurate and reliable accounting procedures which include all costs or areas of expenditure of public funds. This concept is inherently in opposition to covert action, which demands that paper trails and accountability be avoided at all times in order to maintain the pretense of plausible denial

by the government funding covert action projects. When foreign political parties or trade unions are funded by the US government, it is absolutely necessary to hide any connection to the sponsoring government. Second, the costs involved are not only monetary. This is true with all policy decisions to some extent, but with covert paramilitary operations for example, costs are also borne in terms of human lives (which may or may not be US taxpayers, often not), as well as damage to international reputations of the sponsoring state when covert actions become publicly known. The existence of threats to multilateral agreements and other international regimes is also a major cost of covert action, which is not only difficult to quantify but also extremely difficult to trace to specific covert activities. Determination of per-unit costs for such goals as international security is a difficult practice even with overt policies, and covert action merely complicates the data collection process and establishment of cause and effect even further. The goals of covert action policy are often of the intangible variety, as are the consequences and repercussions.

The types of indicators commonly used in policy analysis are often not applicable towards the use of covert action. Pal (1987: 49-50) describes the various indicators used by policy analysts as being one of three types: social, program, or impact indicators. Social indicators include examples such as demographic statistics. Program indicators describe performance of government programs and include such things as specific expenditures. Impact indicators illustrate the effects of specific policies. All three types of indicators pose problems when applied to the use of covert action. Covert action is not designed as a social program and social indicators thus do not necessarily reflect policy performance. Covert program indicators are difficult to determine in such areas as

expenditure – when the CIA, for example, spends money on the funding of foreign political organizations, it can never do so directly. It may provide funding to a second party, which in turn funds a third party, which in turn funds perhaps another party, then finally the final recipient organization. For the purposes of secrecy, no direct connection between the US government and the final recipient organization can be made, hence the necessity of these intermediaries. This blurring of the lines between the US government and foreign organizations ensures the maintenance of plausible denial, but also complicates (or eliminates) accurate data collection and accountability regarding US government expenses in such activities. Impact indicators are also difficult to determine, as any given effect may or may not be attributed to the cause of covert activity; and whenever impact is clearly tied to cause there are often many unplanned repercussions that complicate the picture tremendously.

It must also be remembered that most covert action takes place in the Third World, which for many decades has proved problematic in areas of reliable data collection for a variety of reasons. Sufficient resources often do not exist for data collection, even from overt public sources. Covert operators working in a Third World country normally do not have the legal authority to engage in covert activity anyway, therefore attempts at data collection can be severely hampered. The governments of the developing world often do not get involved in many areas of social affairs, leaving this to other entities such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which often have evaluation agendas of their own. Some US-based organizations which work in developing countries including the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States Information Agency (USIA) have at times in the past been linked to

the CIA (whether they were aware of it or not) and covert action is not normally a part of their agendas. Any evaluation produced by such organizations usually does not pertain directly to the usefulness of covert action policy and its outcomes.

Any attempt at analyzing the different types of covert action may also be problematic. There is sometimes very little that differentiates political from propaganda from economic operations. On the issue of funding each of these types of operations, a certain degree of overlap can exist, which blurs accountability even when all recipients of covert funding are known. If, for example, a foreign trade union receives covert US funding, it may end up spending these funds on the support of strikes to disrupt the flow of commerce (economic operations), on a political party (political operations), and/or on various types of propaganda operations. This is also illustrative of the lack of control over covert funding that the US government must often deal with in any covert operation, as the recipients of such funding do not always spend as was originally planned.

These limitations do not eliminate such quantitative measures from any evaluation of covert action policy, however, they merely suggest that most such measures can be greatly inaccurate, often unreliable, and cannot always be tied to outcomes as easily as with other forms of public policy. Total amounts of US government spending on covert operations can be known with some certainty, but how that money was spent and exactly what resulted from that spending are altogether different questions. With most forms of public policy, outcomes analysis is often difficult although an accurate measurement of input and output is usually possible. With covert action, however, even the measurement of input and output is often as difficult as that of measuring outcomes. The analysis of

outcomes is a growing practice in public policy and public administration today, and when performed with respect to covert action there exists a need for a different approach.

Given that the final beneficiary of United States public policy is ultimately the US citizen, it is theoretically desirable to determine public opinion in the United States with regards to various policy choices and their perceived effects. User surveys are a common tool used by governments to gather public opinion regarding various government projects, programs, and policies, although this method is hardly adequate for covert action as its goal of being covert would be defeated with any public knowledge of it. Therefore, a useful means of public feedback regarding US public policy is essentially impossible, even if one assumes that the average US taxpayer actually understands the purported link between covert action operations and their effects on national security.

Other conventional methods of testing the effects of government policies and programs, such as the use of pilot programs or field trials, are complicated when used with covert action in mind. For example, exactly what does an assassination or *coup d'état* pilot program look like? Simpler and less controversial covert methods, including the funding of media elements or political parties, are not as blatantly inappropriate to the use of pilot programs, but are nevertheless very difficult – for the reasons discussed above – from which to gather important feedback for any pilot study.

The element of time is another major factor with which to contend. Time is an element of all policy analysis, however, as can be seen in various empirical studies of Third World states, covert action can certainly have a way of affecting the course of action over the long term. The covert overthrow of Iran's government by the United States in 1953, for example, in many ways led to the 1979 Islamic revolution, a case

study which will be analyzed more extensively in the following chapter. An important factor to consider regarding time is the position of the US government and how it changes in various countries over time. In 1953 the US government had access to the internal affairs of Iran, whereas by 1979 the situation had changed dramatically – even the CIA was caught off guard somewhat by the Islamic revolution. The point here is that in foreign nations the United States does not have the same degree of control over situations that it has within its own jurisdiction. What may appear at one point in time to be non-problematic may, many years later, become unworkable.

As can be seen, conventional methods of policy evaluation are inherently limited in their application to covert action policies. The upcoming sections of this chapter will help to define the purposes of policy instruments, outline the goals in US foreign policy, and will finally provide a definition of the concept of usefulness that will be applied to covert action in the next two chapters.

Theoretical and Practical Elements of Policy Tools

Governments have at their disposal many public policy tools or instruments, some common examples of which include taxation, regulation, legislation, and coercion. The choice of policy tool, however, must fit the policy goals and objectives in any approach – choices will be influenced by the inherent constraints within each policy tool as well as the goals themselves. Some public policy tools lend themselves better to specific types of goals. As an instrument of policy, covert action was never intended for general or everyday use – by its very nature it must be directed towards highly specialized policy goals if it is to be used at all. This section will briefly attempt to outline the purposes of

public policy instruments, and will establish a foundation for the concept of usefulness as used for an analysis of covert action.

How could covert action be used to pursue public policy? What kind of public policy goals would ever demand the use of a tool such as covert action? Policies will ultimately have certain goals which attempt to create improvement in noticeable areas, and there should exist some sort of general agreement or legitimacy in order to support these goals.

Policies are best thought of as creative solutions to challenging puzzles rather than just dry legislation and programs. The creative dimension breaks through conventional definitions of the issue and comes up with something people had not thought of before. This does not mean, of course, that those creative solutions are the correct ones, only that they offer an unanticipated or surprising approach. (Pal 2001: 131)

Covert action as a policy tool has certainly involved creativity in its varied approaches, which have also led to many “unanticipated” and “surprising” approaches to which Pal alludes. As such, covert action may or may not be the “correct” approach. But there is much more to policy and the use of policy tools than just this. Pal (2001) notes that the act of choosing the best possible and most appropriate tools in approaching a defined problem, is what constitutes policy design. One criterion of a policy tool is effectiveness, i.e. does it actually work to solve the defined problem? Another is efficiency, i.e. does it accomplish the task at low or reasonable cost with respect to the results achieved? Another consideration is that of using more than one possible instrument in combination with others, in order to produce the best possible results.

Effectiveness and efficiency are the more obvious and basic policy criteria. Others considerations include the risks and possible unintended consequences and that may result from the use of a particular policy tool, which in the case of covert action may in fact be quite severe.¹ All policy choices will involve some element of risk and

repercussion – some policy tools more than others – and covert action, due to this secretive nature, tends to lean more towards the classification of high risk and high likelihood of possible negative repercussion.

Also because of its secretive nature, covert action does not allow for the same level of public participation in the policy process, as with other items that make their way onto the public policy agenda. In fact, history would indicate that negative repercussions can result from public knowledge of US covert activity, as events throughout the 1970s demonstrated. Furthermore, there is a great deal of difficulty in seeing the real outcomes of covert action, over the short and long terms, as governments often tend to view the policy in terms of its intended and expressed goals rather than the actual results of covert action. If the US government took no action, for example, would there have been the same result in any specific case? The choice of inaction is very much a possible choice, sometimes the most desirable choice.

Which other criteria are used to determine the usefulness of policy instruments, as outlined in the policy literature? The pursuit of public policy goals involves the use (or misuse) of a multitude of specific tools or instruments by the various branches of government. Dror (1971: 3) defines policy instruments as “[f]utures-shaping variables which can be reset.” Such a definition is quite broad, of course, and a more defining definition or set of requirements is still necessary. Hood (1983: 133) provides four “simple, commonsense canons” (which are actually much more complex in practice) that should be used regarding the application of instruments by government: (1) a mix of instruments to allow for possible alternatives; (2) a government instrument that is well-matched to the task at hand (i.e. a “general purpose tool” simply does not exist); (3) the

inclusion of ethical considerations (i.e. fairness, justice) ; and (4) efficiency as well as effectiveness.

The correct combination of policy instruments is an important consideration, as the strategic use of two or more such instruments may accomplish more than the strict use of just one.

Indeed, in most circumstances, utilization of any one or few of these components as tools of directed change in isolation from the others will at best be very inefficient, usually useless, and often counterproductive. (Dror 1971: 170)

Dror wrote these words with regard to the use of the law as an instrument of public policy, although they may certainly pertain to other types of instruments as well. Covert action, in its pursuit of foreign policy goals, may or may not be used effectively with other instruments of foreign policy, such as embargoes, peacekeeping duties, and even war. The US government's use of covert action against Germany during World War II, for example, proved highly effective in combination with other foreign policy tools including overt warfare.² The key consideration here is for policymakers to remain open-minded with regards to mixing policy tools, rather than maintaining an "either/or" mentality with regards to all policy challenges.

Other notable considerations include the public participation element *vis-à-vis* democracy, or more simply, is there any public input with regards to agenda-setting? With covert action this is essentially impossible, at least as it is done with other policy issues, as covert operations would no longer remain covert if they were not kept secret. Although covert action is secretive, this does not entirely rule out its use by government – provided that the goals of covert action are in line with the broader, publicly stated goals of foreign policy, and that there is an increased awareness of its use, covert action may or may not prove to be an effective tool.³ Although direct public participation cannot be

expected in the process of using covert action, there is an assumption that over time covert activities will eventually be made public – here, covert action will fall under the scrutiny of the public as an issue of legality and legitimacy.

Once a clear definition of “usefulness” for policy tools has been established, it is not always easy or straightforward to make an evaluation of that specific policy tool. The government of the day must have a solid understanding of its own purposes and priorities, and must also be able to communicate this to others, but in reality, this is not always the case.

The evaluation of how well a particular policy instrument achieves what is expected of it is not a simple task. To begin with, the government’s goals may not be terribly clear and may even be confused and contradictory. (Brooks 1993: 20)

Covert goals have in the past been known to conflict with overt goals. The Iran-Contra episode in the 1980s is a famous example of an executive level covert operation that involved the clandestine participation of the US government with an overtly proclaimed enemy state of the United States, i.e. Iran. Which of the various goals is the ultimate goal in public policy? Is there not a fundamental issue of which means is legal (or most legal)? Indeed, can a policy instrument even be considered illegal?

CIA covert action abroad routinely violates United States treaties, which are part of the “laws of the land,” yet agency officials are stupefied when anyone suggests that covert action is therefore illegal. (Halperin et al. 1976: 225)

This once again raises the issue of combining policy instruments in order to achieve goals, as both overt and covert operations may be mixed to various extents. Overt policy tools such as treaties should theoretically conform to any covert action. This also begs one to ask the question: is it legal? Since its first use as a policy tool, any analysis of covert action has been plagued with this very question. Unfortunately, this issue has not always been addressed accordingly, and it has yet to be completely resolved.

The Legality of Covert Action

It should be noted that any policy instrument should take its own legitimacy as a policy instrument into serious consideration. Legality is an inherent aspect of legitimacy. This important criterion often goes unnoticed with most policy instruments, as they usually lack the controversial aura of covert action.

The technical means whereby we pursue goals are a reflection of the ways in which we perceive problems and the goals that we are pursuing....Any inventory of policy instruments will therefore be a snapshot of what is considered legitimate and efficacious at any given time. (Pal 2001: 132)

Legitimacy in the case of covert action must therefore ask some fundamental questions with regards to the legal basis of covert action and how it is used. Despite the fact that covert action has been a policy instrument of the United States government for decades, the legality of covert action has often been in doubt.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the main predecessor of the CIA, engaged in covert activities throughout the Second World War. After the war, however, the CIA utilized covert action during times of peace against non-aggressor nations, that is, nations with which the United States often continued to maintain normal diplomatic relations. The CIA's mandate from the *National Security Act* to "perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the President or the National Security Council may direct" (*National Security Act* 1947: Section 103) has been cited as the legal foundation for covert action. The inclusion of covert action under this line of reasoning, however, is debatable:

...it was this last provision that was said to furnish legal authority for the conduct of secret warfare by the CIA. It should be noted, therefore, that the terms *covert operation*, *clandestine operation*, *paramilitary operation*, *secret operation*, and *special operation*, all euphemisms for secret warfare, appear nowhere in the law authorizing the peacetime intelligence agency. The phrase "such other functions" was intended to cover unforeseen

circumstances, but even there, as the legislative history of the law makes clear, Congress was not considering international coercion. (Prados 1986: 221, italics original)

The issue is procedural and constitutional as well. American law is structured so that certain powers belong to specified parties within the United States governmental system, and any breach of these powers is matter of that party's actions extending beyond its own designated jurisdiction.

Legally, the argument that the "other functions" clause can justify large-scale covert operations is extremely tenuous. There is no indication that Congress intended the "other functions" provision to justify such operations, and if Congress did, the language of the statute would be overly broad. Moreover, covert operations – at least those involving paramilitary action or the overthrow of governments – would appear almost by definition to be unconstitutional. The Constitution vests the war power in the Congress, and operations on this scale are clearly the equivalent of undeclared war. Yet they are undertaken by executive action alone; Congress and the public, which Congress represents, have no opportunity to debate or approve such operations in advance. (Wise 1976: 25)

As commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the United States, the president has the authority to utilize armed force in a specific manner. The CIA, however, is not an "armed force" per se, and any presidential attempt to use this agency for military or paramilitary purposes is not only questionable but officially subject to the *War Powers Act* of 1973 – the use of the CIA as an "unofficial" armed force, on the other hand, would necessitate the involvement of Congress according to Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution (Prados 1986: 411).

Despite the apparent ambiguity of covert action and its legal status as a policy tool, the domestic legal argument is only part of the problem. The issue of international law arises on a regular basis as well, and this should be expected given the global theatre of operations of the CIA and US intelligence activities in general.⁴ Does the United States indeed have the authority to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states? Does such intervention conflict with existing legal regimes such as those established

through international treaties and arrangements made by multilateral institutions such as the United Nations? A history of covert activity would suggest that it does. The interference of other states in the domestic affairs of the United States would be condemned by policymakers in Washington, and one might point out the possibility of a serious double standard here.

The issue of the United States interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states is certainly a legal issue, but it is also a moral issue. Former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) William Colby agrees that such interference may in fact be illegal, although this is not necessarily immoral or illegitimate.

Now, there can be no denying that “interference” of this sort is illegal. Under most countries’ laws, as under American law, a foreign government is strictly prohibited from involving itself in that nation’s internal political processes. But its illegality in this respect does not settle the matter. Espionage is also illegal under the laws of most countries, and yet most countries consider themselves justified by the inherent right of sovereign self-defense to engage in espionage in order to learn of possible secret threats to their safety. Moreover, “interference” through direct political and paramilitary aid via secret channels has been characteristic of interstate relations for centuries. Indeed, such aid helped obtain the independence of the United States. (Colby & Forbath 1978: 113)

Colby puts forth the argument of the right of sovereign states to utilize force if necessary for the self-defense and self-preservation of that state’s very existence: “[i]f such *military* ‘interference’ is accepted, then surely lesser forms of interference can be justified under the same conditions” (Colby & Forbath 1978: 114, italics original). Although espionage may also be illegal, it is not covert action in that it does not attempt to change the outcome of events in other nations, but only to gather intelligence. Colby supports the use of the CIA in undertaking covert operations as it is the only realistic organization for this purpose that is available to the US government. But have past covert operations actually been directed against genuine threats to US security, or have they had ulterior

motives? Colby is not the only one to argue the importance of the ends and means in covert action.

I certainly do not believe in the proposition put forward by some that covert action is immoral; this is as lopsided as saying war is immoral. The appropriateness of a given activity, overt or covert, must be judged by whether the ways, means, and aim are acceptable, as well as by its failure or success. (E. Blum 1989: 225)

The topic of morality is naturally subjective, and without extending into a major philosophical argument that goes well beyond the scope this particular study, it should at least be underscored that covert action is a policy tool quite unlike any other in that its controversy involves both domestic and international legal issues, as well as basic moral issues, and yet has continued to exist despite the ongoing deliberation at all levels of government and society.

Covert operations, indeed intelligence operations overall, have occurred in a somewhat legal vacuum. Without a proper and comprehensive constitutional framework or statutory law to guide such operations, covert action occurred and evolved with a momentum of its very own. Its effects have been profound.

In the early years of the CIA the topic of covert action arose. In January of 1948, it was the CIA's general counsel, Lawrence Houston, who was unable to locate within the *National Security Act* any specific legal authorization for the use of covert action.⁵ Given that the CIA had planned on spending US taxpayer dollars to ensure the defeat of the Communist Party in the rapidly approaching Italian election, and that the White House did not have any desire to present the idea to Congress (which would have delayed the action), the CIA went ahead regardless (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 100-101).

Such unauthorized actions have continued throughout the history of the CIA for many decades, and the fact remained that for many years, the American general public

was unaware that any such covert activities had ever taken place. But such secrets cannot be kept secret forever, and many of the covert activities of various US intelligence agencies eventually became public. The 1970s were witness to much public scrutiny of the United States government and its intelligence organizations.

The Watergate era saw the passing of the *Hughes-Ryan Act* of 1974, which was an attempt to establish some limits on the use of covert action by the CIA and to improve accountability by those who use it (particularly the president, with regards to the plausible denial issue discussed in Chapter I). As successive use of covert action by the US government demonstrates, such legislation is not watertight, as administrations have managed to circumvent accountability in some creative ways (such as engaging in *non-CIA* organized covert action).

In 1975, accusations regarding the abuses of power and authority by the intelligence community in the United States led to the establishment of several committees during the Gerald Ford administration in the White House. These included the Rockefeller Commission and the House of Representatives' Pike Committee, both of which investigated the intelligence community. The most comprehensive review came from the Senate, which had established the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. Known more commonly as the Church Committee, after its chairman Senator Frank Church of Idaho, it investigated the actions of both the FBI and the CIA. The Church Committee's findings released in 1976 concluded that many abuses were made, both domestically and internationally. Included was the Committee's assertion that

[g]overnmental officials – including those whose principal duty is to enforce the law – have violated or ignored the law over long periods of time and have advocated and defended their right to break the law. (Church Committee 1976a)

This applied to many aspects of the behaviour of agencies within the US intelligence community, not just to the use of covert action in Third World nations. Congress itself was unaware that covert action methods would be used against other nations (Halperin et al. 1976: 32-33) when the *National Security Act* was originally drafted. The Church Committee found that

[a]uthority for covert action cannot be found in the National Security Act. The Committee finds that the executive branch should have approached Congress for authority for the CIA to engage in such activities, particularly where they involved the use of force. At the same time, Congress should have acted in response to well-publicized instances of covert action to clarify CIA authority in this area. (Church Committee 1976d: 128)

The Church Committee also found it necessary to express that

[c]overt action was not included as one of the charter missions of the CIA. The National Security Act of 1947 (which established the Agency and the National Security Council) does not specifically mention or authorize secret operations of any kind, whether for intelligence collection or covert action. (Church Committee 1976e: 143)

Both the legality and usefulness of covert action were highly criticized by the Church Committee, which found that it was a policy instrument that had been abused, with negative consequences as a result:

The Committee finds that covert action operations have not been an exceptional instrument used only in rare instances when the vital interests of the United States have been at stake. On the contrary, presidents and administrations have made excessive, and at times self-defeating, use of covert action. In addition, covert action has become a routine program with a bureaucratic momentum of its own. The long-term impact, at home and abroad, of repeated disclosure of U.S. covert action never appears to have been assessed. The cumulative effect of covert actions has been increasingly costly to America's interests and reputation. The Committee believes that covert action must be employed only in the most extraordinary circumstances. (Church Committee, cited in Leary 1984: 150-151)

Despite these and other criticisms, covert action has never entirely disappeared as a policy instrument. Under the Jimmy Carter administration, covert action appeared to fade somewhat but was still a viable government option. Cyrus Vance (Carter's eventual Secretary of State) informed the Church Committee in 1975 that covert action should

only be used “when absolutely essential to national security” (cited in Godson 1989: 24; Johnson 1985: 148). Carter’s Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Admiral Stansfield Turner claimed that covert action should only be used on very rare occasions as it accomplished very little. The use of covert action later increased in both size and scope of operations.⁶ Further attempts had been made to control the use of covert action, including the passing of the *Intelligence Accountability Act* of 1980, which stated that all covert actions must be reported to Congress, not just those undertaken by the CIA. Nevertheless, covert actions continued.

The 1980s saw enormous use of covert activity in Central America under the Ronald Reagan administration, which itself had a rather close relationship with the CIA. The early 1990s saw the use of covert activity in George Bush’s war on drugs. As president in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bush strengthened the use of covert and paramilitary capabilities within the CIA, including the use of assassination against drug cartel leaders (Scott & Marshall 1991: 2-3). This is in contravention of a 1976 presidential order which prohibited the use of assassination except during times of war.

Today, covert action is once again in high fashion with many influential policymakers in Washington, which includes the White House as well as officials within intelligence circles. The spectre of terrorism has replaced the old Soviet threat that was prevalent during the Cold War, and the CIA has over the past several years geared up its covert capacities. Without regard for President Ford’s 1976 ban on political assassination⁷ by US government employees, for example, the CIA currently has its own “hit list” of terrorists targeted for termination (Wise 2003: 21). The special operations (“special ops”) unit of the CIA had already begun rebuilding when George Tenet

assumed leadership of Central Intelligence in 1997, but this has only accelerated since September 11, 2001 (Waller 2003). The special nature of combating terrorism apparently entails a more active approach from those in Washington:

Confronted with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, an enemy that has no army, no fixed assets and no clearly defined territory, the Bush administration needed an unconventional military force. It wanted combatants who could match al-Qaeda for wiliness, adaptability and, up to a point, ruthlessness. (Waller 2003: 14).

The hawkish administration of George W. Bush presently appears poised to deal with terrorism or any other potential "threat" to US security with enormous enthusiasm, a very generous security/defense budget, and a political rhetoric that constantly reinforces potential terrorist threats to US security. In fact, just nine days after 9/11, President Bush stated to Congress the means by which America would fight back, that is, through "covert operations, secret even in success," amongst other means including "defensive measures to protect Americans" which were to be "coordinated at the highest level" (cited in Cross 2002: i). President Bush "has even authorized the CIA to kidnap terrorists in order to break their cells or kill them" (Waller 2003: 14). History, in certain ways, appears to be repeating itself, and the legal issue remains obscured.

The Use of Policy Tools in Achieving the Goals of United States Foreign Policy

Will covert action be used in the future, and if so how? If used, then theoretically it should support the stated goals of US foreign policy. In this section, some of the broader goals of US foreign policy, along with some of the more conventional instruments used to achieve them, will be outlined.

In foreign policy, certain tools or instruments have been useful for achieving specific and well-established objectives. For example, the US goal of stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has seen the utilization of four

particular policy instruments: (1) international treaties, (2) multilateral export control arrangements, (3) US export controls, and (4) security assistance to other countries (General Accounting Office 2001: 1). As the US General Accounting Office (GAO) claims, “[e]ach instrument is important to the collective framework for preventing the transfer of weapons of mass destruction and associated technologies to terrorists or rogue states, but each also has its limitations” (General Accounting Office 2001: 1).

Current US policy views WMDs (and their delivery systems) as a “direct and serious threat to the national security of the United States, and its friends, forces, and allies” (General Accounting Office 2001: 3). The United States has used the above mentioned policy tools with mostly positive, albeit imperfect results. Most of the treaties dealing with nuclear non-proliferation or chemical weapons, for example, which are adhered to by most nations, are still not recognized by all nations. No tool is perfect, however, but the right combination of tools can still be used with much effectiveness. Choosing the “correct” tool or tools, however, is not an easy task. It is a choice which

is influenced by how things have been done in the past; by vested bureaucratic, political, and societal interests; by chance, including the individuals involved in a decision; and by ideas and beliefs that may or may not be well founded. (Brooks 1993: 19)

Past experiences suggest that covert action, like any other policy tool, is not immune from these considerations.

Overall, current goals in US foreign policy have been stated in a number of ways. In terms of security policy (one that pertains a great deal towards covert action) the White House has been clear in its intentions. Defending the United States against such threats as terrorism and smaller scale perils, in addition to more traditional state-centred security issues, is a major goal.

Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically....To defeat this threat we must make use of every tool in our arsenal – military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing. The war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration. (White House 2002: Introduction signed by President George Bush).

Particular attention here must be given to two of the methods mentioned above – intelligence, and military power. American covert action is usually undertaken by intelligence agencies, such as the CIA, and can consist of paramilitary ventures undertaken in cooperation with elements and/or support of the US military. It has occurred during times of peace as well as war.

The relatively recent identification of certain states throughout the world as “rogue states” or members of the “axis of evil” has led to the US policy of containment for such states. Rogue states are special targets for US foreign policy:

By all considerations, “rogue” states are ones which America accuses of four “wrongdoings”: pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism, reprehensible treatment of their own citizens, and vocal animosity toward the United States. With the exception of Cuba – whose inclusion on any register of “rogues” is much more a reflection of domestic politics in the United States than any external criterion – a country must be guilty in all four departments in order to be classified as a “rogue” in American politics. (O’Sullivan 2000a)

Special cases require special policy alternatives. American foreign policy, in such cases, is directed overtly towards the “offending” state. One of the most well-known of such policy tools is that of sanctions, which “have been the mainstay of U.S. policy toward countries branded with the ‘rogue’ label” (O’Sullivan 2000a). Economic sanctions have had mixed results, and generally work when they are applied multilaterally, which requires broad international support. The American habit of supporting neighbour states that act as rivals to the enemy state (as was the case with

Iraq, which received much support from Washington throughout the 1980s, given that the major enemy in the Middle East was neighbouring Iran) is another policy choice.

In terms of both official policy and overall American public opinion, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 have had a profound impact on the manner in which the United States views its role in the world today. The goals of US foreign policy have been fundamentally altered (at least overtly) by these events, and the threat of terrorism, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, are never far from the thoughts of both policymakers and US citizens. Recent (July 2004) survey research suggests that 88 percent of Americans claim that terrorism should be a top priority in US foreign policy, although other, slightly less important foreign policy goals should also be pursued, such as the protection of American jobs from foreign economies, the international spread of communicable diseases such as AIDS, the proliferation of WMD, and the security of American energy supplies (Pew Research Center 2004).

The various policy tools that exist allow for a number of different options when it comes to deciding upon a course of action. What makes covert action unique is that it is exactly that – covert. Such actions are not to be made public, and decisions taken that involve covert action must be made in secrecy, otherwise they are no longer covert.

The CIA has used covert action many times in the past and retains its covert capabilities to the present day. It presently acknowledges that covert action is necessary for specific purposes, and that such actions must be approved from the top echelon of US foreign policy:

Only the President can direct the CIA to undertake a covert action. Such actions usually are recommended by the National Security Council (NSC). Covert actions are considered when the NSC judges that US foreign policy objectives may not be fully realized by normal diplomatic means and when military action is deemed to be too extreme an option. Therefore, the Agency may be directed to conduct a special activity

abroad in support of foreign policy where the role of the US Government is neither apparent nor publicly acknowledged. Once tasked, the Director of Central Intelligence must notify the intelligence oversight committees of the Congress. (CIA 2004b)

When overt actions have not succeeded, covert action may be utilized. These actions can take a variety of forms, including propaganda (i.e. psychological), political, economic, or paramilitary, or a combination of these. Often, covert activity starts with propaganda or political operations (or both), then gradually builds until it may or may not reach the level of the paramilitary, which is by far the most controversial and sensitive type of covert activity.

Paramilitary actions have in the past been targeted for the purpose of “regime change,” such as those directed against specifically identified rogue states. The history of success, or indeed – failure – of covert action as a policy response in such cases, is one that should be scrutinized with respect to regime changes. This use of covert action has its critics.

Probably more than any policy tool used to deal with “rogue” regimes, covert action has failed to produce its desired effect....Covert action’s inability to induce regime change in these circumstances has not only cost the United States millions of dollars, but has raised moral questions about the ethics of the tool and whether America has the commitment necessary to employ it. Certainly, the specters of CIA-backed Iraqi opposition forces who were brutally crushed by Saddam Hussein will not be easy for American policymakers to forget. (O’Sullivan 2000a)

Others argue that covert action is absolutely necessary. If so, then in which particular combination(s), and for which specific purposes? The choice of using covert action as a policy tool rests ultimately with the White House and the president. The CIA, for the most part, is the one agency of the US government best positioned to engage in and oversee such activity.

In summary, a multitude of policy options are available to the maker of US foreign policy, of which covert action is but one. Some examples of other foreign policy

tools include economic inducements, international cooperation in the area of law enforcement, and international courts (including one with a specialization in terrorism). These tools can range from those which are both friendly and persuasive, as well as those which are hostile and coercive (USA Engage 2004). The full gamut runs from the use of diplomacy and political resolutions to military intervention and declaration of war. As with other tools of foreign policy, covert action requires some evaluation in this area.

The Concept of Usefulness in Evaluating Policy Tools

Given the arguments and issues discussed above, there still remains an essential and unanswered question: what makes a policy tool useful? The concept of usefulness will be examined here in the context of US foreign policy and its goals. In a more general sense, does covert action achieve goals in US foreign policy? But as one can determine from the previous discussion there is a great deal more to the usefulness of a policy instrument than simply achieving goals. Other necessary considerations certainly enter the larger picture.

To discuss the concept of usefulness more specifically, covert action as a policy tool will be examined according to the following categories: (1) efficiency and effectiveness; (2) risk and repercussions; (3) legality and legitimacy; and (4) mix with overt policy tools. Each of these will be elaborated upon below.

(1) *Efficiency and Effectiveness* – is the policy tool a cost-effective and generally efficient means (in terms of money, resources, human life, diplomatic relations with foreign states, and overall productive value) for achieving US foreign policy objectives? Are there any cheaper or more efficient methods of achieving the same goals, within the same or shorter time frames? The cost of utilizing a policy tool should not be prohibitive,

although both short- and long-term costs and benefits should be taken into consideration. In terms of effectiveness, does the policy instrument actually achieve desired and overtly expressed goals of the US government, and does it serve these goals with regards to US foreign policy in a positive manner? Does it adequately achieve valued outcomes? Covert action should not conflict with other goals of foreign policy, as this would interfere with overall effectiveness. A policy tool such as covert action should not have its own goals that are not in line with greater goals of government. Furthermore, does covert action remain covert, or are covert operations expected to become public knowledge over time, as history suggests? Are they even covert to begin with – is the sponsor of covert operations known to some (or many) at the time of these operations?

(2) *Risk and Repercussions* – what are the overall risks, and are there any negative repercussions (in the short or long terms) that need to be assessed thoroughly before any decision is taken? (There is a great deal of concern for the potential for long-term repercussions when covert action is used.) Every policy option involves some degree of risk, and risk itself is not necessarily a negative if much success is to be had for relatively little input. This may or may not be the case with covert action. Both positive and negative considerations should be considered, and acceptable levels of risk must be clearly stated. Any analysis of risk and repercussions must be inclusive and comprehensive, as they may take a variety of forms including damage to foreign relations.

(3) *Legality and Legitimacy* – any policy instrument which is illegal, legally questionable, or which contains elements of illegality or illegitimacy must be scrutinized. This applies more to covert action – due to its questionable nature and controversial

history – than with most other policy instruments. Each type of covert action (as well as their respective combinations) must be assessed according to their usefulness as defined by these criteria. Ideally, both goals and the means used to achieve them should be appropriate in a legal and legitimate sense – although this may not always be the case. If the actions under consideration are illegal, what then are the consequences of undertaking such an action? Actions may also be legitimate in the moral or ethical sense, which themselves may or may not be legal. As former CIA Director William Colby suggests, it may be necessary to break some laws, some of the time. The best policy choice would be substantiated in both legality and legitimacy. Technically illegal actions, for example, may still be given consideration if they can be justified as legitimate, such as in emergency situations. It may in some cases be necessary to breach certain laws in order to prevent tragedies, for humanitarian purposes, or to ensure national security. Conversely, actions that are technically legal may not be considered legitimate if they involve ethically questionable practices or goals. If considered as a policy option, the consequences which are likely to result must also be considered. The policy tool must also be reviewed in terms of both domestic and international law and legitimacy. Together, legality and legitimacy constitute some common criteria used in policy analysis, including justice, fairness, accountability, and ethical suitability.

(4) *Mix With Overt Policy Tools* – does a particular policy tool work well when overt policy tools are utilized at the same time to achieve the same goals? Policy tools or instruments may or may not be utilized in isolation, however, the effects of any policy tool rarely ever happen in an isolated environment. It is therefore necessary to consider how any policy instrument will behave in combination, either directly or indirectly, with

other policy instruments or factors that may affect the actions undertaken. The goals of covert action should not be in conflict with overt goals, and all policy instruments should be relevant to the defined problem area. The use of covert propaganda, for example, should serve the same overall purposes that overt tools such as international treaties or multilateral organizations serve, if and whenever used.

In short, this is the essential policy framework by which covert action will be evaluated. Each of the above criteria will be used to analyze covert action as a policy tool, and specifically to each type of covert action: propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary. An evaluation matrix will be used to present and review the findings. Such a matrix will take the form of the model presented below in Figure 3-1:

Figure 3-1: Evaluation Matrix – Model

Criteria	(1) Propaganda	(2) Political	(3) Economic	(4) Paramilitary
(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness				
(2) Risk & Repercussions				
(3) Legality & Legitimacy				
(4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools				

The usefulness of each of the four evaluation criteria can in this manner be analyzed with respect to each of the four types of covert action instruments. Determinants for each category will be described under one of the following four categories: (1) *Positive* – indicates that covert activities have been successful in this respect; (2) *Negative* – indicates that covert activities have been unsuccessful in this respect; (3) *Neutral* – indicates that covert activities have had both successful and unsuccessful outcomes, resulting in no significant net success or failure; and (4) *Inconclusive* – indicates that no degree of success or failure can be determined as a direct result of covert activity.

To help illustrate, the first type of covert action – propaganda – will be described according to this matrix. If propaganda efforts have successfully achieved US foreign policy goals and at reasonable expense, according to the first set of criteria (efficiency and effectiveness), they will be deemed to have been *positive*. This may occur if a given political leader has been forced to step down from office, or if a specific “undesirable” political party has lost an important election. Propaganda will have been deemed to be *positive* under the second category (risk and repercussions) if objectives have been achieved with little or no risk, and with minimal repercussions. Under the third category (legality and legitimacy), propaganda will be deemed as *positive* if there were minimal issues of these types with respect to both US domestic law and international law. For the final criterion (mix with overt policy tools), propaganda will be deemed as *positive* if it served the same goals, and did so relatively well, as those same type of policy tools which were used overtly.

In addition, there are certain assumptions that need to be included if the tools of foreign policy and the evaluation matrix are to have significance. The given policy environment should reflect broadly the following assumptions, outlined below. One must keep in mind, however, that these are assumptions, rather than absolutes or expectations.

(1) *The goals of US foreign policy are publicly stated and agreed upon by elected policymakers.* There must not exist some form of “hidden agenda” or any ulterior motives that conflict with these goals. For example, what the US government declares to other nations, or organizations such as the UN, NATO, the World Bank, etc., is indeed genuine US foreign policy. Goals that are stated publicly are reflective of accountability in any democracy, and governments can thus be held accountable to these specific goals.

(2) *These publicly stated goals are supported by all branches and agencies of government within the United States.* For example, the White House, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the State Department cannot have their own separate agendas or goals, which may or may not conflict with one another, at various times. This is not to suggest that all branches and agencies of any government will always agree on every issue, all of the time – to expect this is unrealistic. Rather, the leadership of the various agencies of government must be prepared to accept the same goals as a broad consensus, as opposed to making diligent efforts at countering and undermining the work of other such agencies.

(3) *There exists more than one method of achieving US foreign policy goals, and each policy tool will be just one of several options considered by policymakers.* Thus, covert action (or any other policy tool) cannot exist to serve itself or those who utilize it (such as the CIA, or any other branch of government). All possible policy choices should be given proper consideration, and given the range of choices available, this is a formidable undertaking. Policymakers are presented with a variety of options on which course of action to take on any issue, and these choices should not be limited to only one possible course of action.

(4) *Any clandestine activity undertaken by the United States (such as espionage or covert action) will eventually be made public over the long term and therefore open to public scrutiny, both domestic and international.* Secrecy, being a fundamental consideration of covert action, should be considered a temporary condition or state of affairs. The government of the day must be prepared to defend its choice of policy instruments, perhaps even during its own tenure in office. Larger covert operations, for example, are burdened with the increased difficulty of maintaining secrecy, and therefore

pose a greater challenge in this area than smaller operations. Even in the short term, secrecy can be very difficult to maintain, and when discovered by unauthorized interests such as the media, can have volatile repercussions. Unauthorized discovery can also have significant repercussions on other aspects of public policy, both domestic and foreign. Sovereign states, for example, normally do not appreciate covert US interference in their internal affairs, and discovery of covert activities may jeopardize international relations even between friendly states. This does not suggest that secrecy is impossible, rather, that one should be prepared to justify one's policy choices if and when such secret policy actions have been made public. Secrecy is possible, although one should not become overly dependent upon maintenance of such policy choices.

This chapter concludes with this framework, as this will be the means by which covert action will be judged in upcoming sections of this study. The next chapter will examine the first of two case studies which delve more deeply into the actual use of covert action as a policy instrument. From these two cases the value of covert action will hopefully be revealed, according to the specific framework and evaluation matrix which has been set forth above.

Notes to Chapter III

¹ Some of the more severe consequences that can result from the use of covert action are illustrated well by the Bay of Pigs incident or “fiasco” as many call it, in which the CIA-supported plan to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro’s government in 1961 failed miserably. The actual costs of the invasion, both physically and financially, paled in comparison to the damage done to the CIA as a government agency (relative to both the US government and the American public, and the level of confidence they both placed in the competence and professionalism of the CIA), as well as to the international reputation of the United States and its leadership over the short and long terms.

² During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) performed a number of different covert action operations in North Africa, Europe, and the Far East. Such operations included the infiltration of occupied territory by parachuting teams of covert operators who aided local resistance fighters and prepared the way for overt military offensives by Allied forces (Cline 1976). William Colby, who served as CIA director in the mid-1970s, performed just such a role with the OSS during the war (Colby & Forbath 1978). In fact, Allen Dulles, who became CIA director in the 1950s, had a preference for covert action over intelligence analysis during his tenure as DCI, much of which was based on his experiences with the wartime OSS (Treverton 1987: 46-47).

³ This consideration brings forth the issue of accountability. To illustrate, covert operations as undertaken by the United States government have often been initiated and planned by the executive, and a very elite within the executive at that. In the past, Congress was usually unaware that covert actions had taken or were taking place. The US government’s efforts to thwart the government of Chile in 1970, for example, were unknown at the time to even the US ambassador to Chile, Edward Korry, and this had been directed by then President Richard M. Nixon (Powers 1979b: 11).

⁴ The international legal issue regarding the use of covert action has for many years not been granted the same level of importance as the domestic legal issue. As a result, much of the discourse on US covert activity has revolved around the question of the authority of the CIA, the White House, or the presidency in engaging in or authorizing covert actions.

Perhaps the illegality of secret operations is not noticed because there is no reason to expect governments to be responsive to international law when they are not even held accountable to domestic legal processes? (Falk 1976: 143)

Regardless of who does what within the US government, the issue remains as to whether or not the United States should even be engaging in covert action in the first place.

⁵ It was then DCI Roscoe Hillenkoetter who sought a legal foundation for the CIA to engage in covert action. “He knew that covert operations had been in no one’s mind when the National Security Act was passed, and so he asked Lawrence Houston....to

study the act and report back on the question.” (Ranelagh 1986: 115). Although CIA general counsel Lawrence Houston was not able to locate authority for covert action in the *National Security Act*, Hillenkoetter insisted that the CIA get covertly involved in the next Italian election in order to defeat the Communist Party. With the Cold War fate of Western Europe in the minds of policymakers in Washington, Italy was viewed with great attention. The idea of notifying Congress with such a plan was not undertaken by President Truman or Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal, as they felt that it would take too much time and reveal covert intentions (Volkman & Baggett 1989: 101). In the words of Houston himself:

Hillenkoetter sent me a note asking if we had the legal authority to undertake these covert operations. We wrote back an opinion that we could find nothing in the specific language of the legislation that specifically gave us authority for such activities. Section 5 of the “powers and duties” clauses of the act was not sufficient. Hillenkoetter then asked was there any way, and we wrote another opinion saying that if the President gave us the proper directive and the Congress gave us the money for those purposes, we had the administrative authority to carry them out. So that’s how we got into covert operations. (Lawrence Houston, cited in Ranelagh 1986: 115)

Presidential directives have been a mainstay of the use of covert action. Directive NSC 4, “Coordination of Foreign Intelligence Measures” dealt with the use of anti-communist propaganda by the State Department. A secret annex to this directive, NSC 4A, directed the use of psychological warfare by the DCI, the legality of which was of concern to Hillenkoetter at the time. “Administrative authority,” however, may still be defined as illegal, as one may argue.

⁶ President Jimmy Carter was unable to enact permanent legislation that could seriously restructure or modify the CIA, while the successive Reagan administration enthusiastically embraced the CIA and some of its specialties such as the use of covert operations. Carter had enacted an executive order and not law in reforming the intelligence community during his tenure as president. Such orders are more easily withdrawn than laws when leadership changes in the White House, which is precisely what happened when Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency in 1981.

⁷ President Ford’s executive order outlawing the use of political assassination by US government operatives was later widened to include assassination by any party “acting on behalf of” the United States when the word “political” was dropped from the ban during the Reagan administration (Wise 2003: 21). The entire phrase from President Reagan’s Executive Order 12333 reads as follows:

No person employed by or acting on behalf of the U.S. government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassinations. (Executive Order 12333, cited in Cockburn & St. Clair 1998: 107)

Chapter IV

Case Study No. 1: Iran

In terms of noteworthy and influential examples of US covert action cases in the developing world, Iran and Chile present two of the most striking. Iran in the early 1950s was the first major “successful” covert operation of its kind, while Chile throughout the 1960s and early 1970s was the last of its kind. Covert operations by the US government continued for many years later, but under different circumstances and utilizing different methods. The types of covert action that were experienced in both countries, however, did not vanish from the US arsenal of covert action instruments. Given all the existing cases from which to choose (and there are many), why focus on Iran and Chile?

These two cases offer some poignant examples of practical covert action in use. In both Iran and Chile one can witness the commencement of US covert activity at a smaller scale level, with propaganda and political operations, and then gauge their

impacts as covert action escalated into larger scale operations such as the economic or the paramilitary. In both Iran and Chile, covert operations started off small and eventually ended in *coup d'état*. Although not a great deal of US military involvement occurred in either situation, both cases utilized effective contacts in their respective countries, including of course, military elements.

This chapter analyzes the situation in Iran. In this case, one can see the reasons for covert intervention in Iran, justified or not, as well as the long-term implications on US foreign policy. The outcomes of US covert action in Iran have implications that go well beyond the use of immediate covert action as a policy tool. It will be discovered that these implications can have significant long-term results which may cause unforeseen problems on a much larger scale.

Background to Iran

Operation Ajax or TPAJAX, the CIA-organized military overthrow of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh's democratically elected government in Iran, did not start with such grand ambitions. In fact, it wasn't even the CIA that first devised the idea, but the resources of British intelligence. The CIA became involved with a plan for a *coup d'état* in Iran when the Eisenhower administration entered the White House in early 1953. As it turned out, Operation Ajax was considered a success by those policymakers in Washington who made decisions regarding covert action foreign policy, and served as a model and inspiration for successive covert actions in a similar vein. Unfortunately those same policymakers appear to have perhaps not studied Ajax in great depth, as it was an operation which initially failed, was aborted, relied heavily on many factors that were

beyond the control of the CIA, and succeeded only as a result of the stubborn insistence of Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA Middle East bureau chief in charge of Operation Ajax.

The original impetus for covert action against Iran was not a threat to US interests, but to British interests. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), a British firm and the only oil company operating in Iran at that time, was in danger of being nationalized in 1951 as a part of the reforms to be carried out in the name of Iranian sovereignty by newly elected prime minister Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh. The protests and demands of the AIOC and the British government as well as a British boycott and blockade on Iran had no effect on the nationalization of AIOC, which under nationalization became the NIOC (National Iranian Oil Company). Mossadegh's decision to nationalize, a decision which itself ironically resembled the national ownership of enterprises in Britain by the British government, was not without a basis in international law.¹ It was also a decision that was supported by 95 percent of Iran's population at the time (Nirumand 1969: 73).

The British turned to the United States for cooperation, but were not initially greeted with enthusiasm by the administration of President Harry S. Truman which was wary of the type of covert operations that the British had in mind, namely, the ousting of Mossadegh and his government. In spite of British concerns, Mossadegh's relationship with the United States was then positive, and Washington saw in the new Iranian prime minister a future ally (Mossadegh was in fact *TIME* magazine's "Man of the Year" for 1951). Under Truman the United States pursued two ambitions:

First, Iran was to be kept in the Western camp at all costs: its strategic location between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf oilfields dictated not only that it be kept from falling under Soviet control but also that it be prevented from adopting a "neutralist" posture. Second, because a protracted oil crisis might damage the U.S. economy and threaten U.S. and Western European security, stability was to be maintained in the world

oil market. Neither goal necessitated undermining the Mosaddeq government at this time. (Gasiorowski 1991: 67)

During the British oil blockade on Iran, the US maintained diplomatic approaches towards solving the oil problem, including non-interference in Iran's domestic affairs. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, US ambassador to Iran Henry Grady,² and US special envoy W. Averell Harriman all opposed a confrontation with Mossadegh. The Truman administration in general preferred a peaceful solution to the Iranian problem.³ It was Anthony Eden, Britain's Foreign Secretary, who was charged with the task of convincing Washington to think otherwise. The CIA actually had been operating a minor covert program known as Operation BEDAMN since 1948, which involved the use of printed materials (e.g. pamphlets, books, newspaper articles, and comics) to counteract the influence of the Soviets and the Tudeh (the Iranian Communist Party), although this operation was not originally targeted against Mossadegh's government.

When Dwight D. Eisenhower entered the White House in 1953, the British finally received the assistance they sought.⁴ On February 3, 1953, not long after Eisenhower was sworn into the presidency of the United States, American and British officials met to address the problem of Iran, and the idea of a military overthrow became public policy (Gasiorowski 1991: 74). The major issue in Iran had become the perceived threat of a communist takeover, either by the Tudeh, the Soviet Union, or through the cooperation of both. Without solid evidence to support this presumption, the White House, through the use of the CIA and with the support of British intelligence, began planning covert operations against Mossadegh's government. To US policymakers, there previously was some evidence of Soviet interest in Iran, however, as in 1946 the USSR had occupied Iranian Azerbaijan and only withdrew in 1947 after much protest from the United States.

Such occurrences may have led Washington to overestimate the Soviet threat to the region. Furthermore, Mossadegh had attempted to sell oil to the Soviet Union in 1952, although the state of Iran's economy necessitated these valuable oil revenues, and the paltry \$20 million annual aid package from the United States did little to alleviate poverty in Iran (Treverton 1987: 55).

A variety of methods were used by the United States, including an Anglo-US boycott of Iranian oil, the cut of financial aid to Iran, the freezing of Iranian bank assets in both London and Washington, as well as attempts at the destabilization of the Iranian government (Fatemi 1980: 183). Eisenhower announced in May 1953 that US financial aid to Iran was to be discontinued until the oil problem was solved. Economic action against Iran was more of the overt variety than that of the covert, and along with diplomatic measures were a complement to other areas of covert activity.

The CIA's covert activity against Mossadegh's government included minor initiatives, starting with political and propaganda operations. In 1953 the CIA attempted to convince Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (which itself utilized some expenditure of funds) that Mossadegh was a threat and should therefore be removed from office. The CIA attempted to organize internal opposition to Mossadegh through support for and from the Shah. Also key to the establishment of effective opposition within Iran was army General Fazlollah Zahedi, who motivated retired military officers in support of the Shah.

These efforts did not yet have the desired effect, which prompted the CIA to increase efforts through the use of propaganda and force. Propaganda included the ongoing CIA program of BEDAMN⁵ which was now directed against Mossadegh and his

government, as well as other initiatives such as the funding of local media elements. The CIA also paid locals to demonstrate in the streets of Teheran against Mossadegh's government. These demonstrations turned into riots in August of 1953 when as many as 6,000 CIA-aided and armed demonstrators encountered both Tudeh and pro-Mossadegh supporters. In order to discredit the Tudeh, the CIA employed locals to behave as Tudeh thugs attacking religious elements and demonstrating publicly in Teheran, events that Mossadegh's government met with both police and military in an attempt to curtail the violence (W. Blum 1998: 68). CIA operatives posing as communists even bombed the house of a well-known Muslim (*New York Times* 2000). In Iran at this time there was significant Islamic opposition to communism and to the Tudeh, and the CIA was attempting to further discredit the Tudeh in the eyes of Islamic supporters.

A local radio station was captured by the army and began broadcasting in support of General Zahedi. Supporters of the Shah congregated at the home of Mossadegh, led by Zahedi in a tank with officers under his command. A full-scale, nine-hour gun battle took place, killing 300 and injuring several hundred more (W. Blum 1998: 69; Gasiorowski 1991: 79). Mossadegh's guards were killed and his house destroyed, although Mossadegh and some of his supporters managed to escape, but were later captured and arrested. Pahlavi was re-installed as the legitimate Shah of Iran with Zahedi as prime minister, and the ancient tradition of Iranian monarchy resumed, which according to American interests effectively distracted from the appearance of a military dictatorship.

Operation Ajax was the official name of the coup to oust Mossadegh. It was an operation which at first failed, was difficult to implement, and appeared to be best

aborted as not everything at all times went according to plan. Much of Kermit Roosevelt's success with Ajax was based greatly on a mixture of luck, timing, and unplanned, unanticipated improvisation whenever necessary. Ajax was a project that was at one point actually abandoned due to lack of control over individuals and situations. Having the right connections and contacts was essential to any degree of success, although those local individuals involved with Ajax did not always act according to plan.

Succeed it did though, but only after considerable persistence. Ajax was designed to be a highly guarded secret as only three personnel within the US embassy in Teheran (Ambassador Loy Henderson and two other diplomats) even knew of its existence. Plausible denial was to be maintained, and was maintained to a great extent, although Eisenhower had to publicly maintain ignorance of the whole operation for the next several years. This lack of accountability and appearance of informality was a major reason that the US government was able to feign plausible denial for so long.

The larger the scale of covert operations, however, the more difficult they are to keep secret, and the role of the CIA eventually became more difficult to hide. Ajax was a major covert operation that was bound to become public knowledge in due time. Mainstream publications including *The New York Times Magazine* (May 21, 1961) and *The Saturday Evening Post* (November 6, 1954) reported on the CIA's participation in the coup of 1953 (Nirumand 1969: 88). Despite this, any involvement in the internal affairs of Iran was vehemently denied by the United States government of the day.

On the whole, Operation Ajax did not involve a great deal of extensive long-term operations (unlike other, later covert operations, including those in Chile which took place over many years). Ajax did not involve major covert economic operations either,

as economic action against Iran was primarily overt, which included the Anglo-American boycott of Iranian oil and public financial action against Mossadegh's government.

There was, for example, no major effort to covertly undermine the economy of Iran as was the case with Chile some twenty years later. US covert activity in Iran in the early 1950s involved primarily short-term operations designed around the goal of Ajax, which was to oust Mossadegh. Propaganda, political, and paramilitary operations were employed, although military personnel consisted of members of the Iranian armed forces rather than any US personnel. With Ajax, domestic internal opposition was effectively turned against the government of the day in Teheran by the CIA.

Iran: Key Policy Considerations

President Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers (John Foster as Secretary of State and Allen as DCI) considered Operation Ajax to be a success. The total costs of the operation vary, depending on the sources given. Ranelagh (1992: 77) claims that the CIA spent under \$200,000 of its \$800,000 budget and utilized only eight CIA employees. Fatemi (1980: 186) cites the total cost at \$19 million. Freemantle (1983: 168) claims a CIA budget of \$20 million, some of which was not actually spent, in addition to the use of a "small operational force" of CIA personnel. Treverton (1987: 45) cites an expenditure of roughly \$1 million spent over a six month period and a "handful" of CIA employees. William Blum (1998: 69) cites a figure of between \$10,000 to \$19 million, while Volkman and Baggett (1989: 110) claim a cost of \$10 million and the use of "about a dozen" CIA personnel.⁶

Regardless of the specific details, Operation Ajax was inexpensive in terms of costs relative to the results achieved, at least in the short term. If the goal of the operation

was simply to overthrow Mossadegh's government, then Ajax achieved exactly this, and at reasonable cost. Covert action subsequently became a policy of choice: "[s]mall, cheap, fast, and tolerably secret, they encouraged Washingtonians to think other covert actions could be likewise" (Treverton 1987: 45), which indeed led to further use of covert action in precisely this manner.

The fragility of the reality that was Ajax, however, is something which often went ignored by US policymakers after the fact. As an operation, it initially failed, was revived by Kermit Roosevelt (against orders from CIA headquarters who told him to abandon the operation and leave Iran), and eventually succeeded in overthrowing Mossadegh, a feat which surprised policymakers throughout the world, particularly those in Washington. Why was this the case, and why was Ajax held in such high esteem (secretly, of course) for many years later?

This section will analyze the specifics of Operation Ajax. Three of the four major types of covert action – propaganda, political, and paramilitary – will be examined according to the policy evaluation framework developed in the previous chapter. Covert economic operations did not play a major role in Ajax, thus its discussion will be minimal.

Propaganda. Prior to the coup, several propaganda efforts were undertaken. The CIA's ongoing covert propaganda campaign known as Operation BEDAMN had been modified from engaging in anti-Soviet and anti-Tudeh propaganda to also include anti-Mossadegh initiatives. The CIA also began supporting local media in order to counter Mosseadgh. For example, a \$45,000 loan was given to a local newspaper in order to aid the US initiative (*New York Times* 2000). Newspaper editors, reporters, and other media

personnel had received funding from the CIA to produce anti-Mossadegh journalism which, it was hoped, would sway public opinion against Mossadegh.

During the actual coup it was absolutely necessary to maintain key propaganda operations, which the CIA at many times found difficult to manage. Most newspaper printing presses in Teheran were off limits to coup plotters, being closely guarded by pro-Mossadegh soldiers. Pro-Shah forces desperately needed to publicize the dismissal of Mossadegh by the Shah in order to convince the public as well as the rest of the military as to who was in charge of the new government. It was the capture of a Teheran radio station by Shah supporters that eventually broadcast the news. Telegrams supporting the Shah were sent across Iran when the central telegraph office in Teheran fell to Shah supporters. Roosevelt eventually located a printing machine and managed to have copies of decrees signed by the Shah (dismissing Mossadegh as prime minister) published in the next day's newspapers.

In order to further manipulate public image, the CIA paid locals to act as demonstrators protesting the government of Mossadegh, presenting the appearance of a much larger and more vocal opposition than was actually the case. It also created the appearance of social and political instability, the kind of which supposedly resulted due to Mossadegh's rule. Some \$100,000 was used by the CIA to fund 6,000 local and armed demonstrators who publicly protested and eventually rioted in the streets of Teheran (Richelson 1995: 249-250). Some demonstrators were directed to act as communists, chanting pro-Mossadegh slogans, and vandalizing property. A second crowd was directed to fight the first crowd, creating images of upheaval, violence, and instability. It

was hoped by the CIA that these images would force a choice for most ordinary Iranians – those choices being instability under Mossadegh or stability under the rule of the Shah.

It can be seen that despite some difficulties, propaganda operations in Iran served the purposes of Operation Ajax rather well, thus concluding a positive rating in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The most effective operations – the use of radio, telegrams, and street demonstrations – occurred after the initial failure of the operation and served to ensure eventual success. In terms of risk and repercussion, propaganda operations were positive, as the CIA used primarily local personnel for key operations. The legality and legitimacy of propaganda operations, however, are questionable. They are negative in that the United States had secretly interfered in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, the citizens of which were unaware that their own media had been bought, manipulated, or taken over completely. Propaganda operations of the covert variety were not used in conjunction with significant overt propaganda operations, and judgment here is thus inconclusive.

Political. The employment of local residents by the CIA for the purposes of demonstrating publicly in Teheran's streets had great political effect as well as that of manipulating public opinion. The most visible contingent of these demonstrators were a flamboyant group of wrestlers, weight-lifters, and acrobats recruited from local gyms and athletic clubs in Teheran. Professionals of this sort were highly respected in Iranian culture, and the large and boisterous presence that they generated in Teheran's streets created significant interest in the cause which they appeared to represent. Curious onlookers joined in on the demonstrations. Rioting resulted when CIA-paid demonstrators encountered both Tudeh and pro-Mossadegh demonstrators in the streets

of Teheran. The employment of locals such as these, by the CIA, was a key element in mobilizing broad public support for the Shah and against Mossadegh.

Politicians within the Iranian *Majlis* (parliament) were bribed by the CIA to denounce the Shah, which included an \$11,000 per week budget from the CIA (Kinzer 2003: 163). Religious clerics and other prominent individuals, were also bought. The biggest problem with covert political operations, though, involved the two key Iranian individuals, these being the Shah and the highest ranking army officer who supported him, General Fazlollah Zahedi. Both the Shah and General Zahedi were not always the most reliable or cooperative of agents, in fact both even fled Teheran out of fear that the coup had failed, the Shah leaving Iran altogether (first to Baghdad then to Rome) and Zahedi who went into hiding north of Teheran.

From the start, there had been questions as to whether or not the CIA would receive the cooperation that it needed in order to ensure the success of Ajax. The Shah, for example, was required in the CIA plan to issue and sign royal decrees (drawn up by the CIA) which would “legally” dismiss Mossadegh as prime minister to be replaced by General Zahedi. (This is in spite of the Iranian custom in which only the *Majlis* or parliament – not the Shah – could decree such actions.) The Shah initially refused to sign these decrees, fearing that he lacked the support of the Iranian army. Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA operative in charge of the Ajax scheme, later managed to convince the Shah to acquiesce somewhat, but only after considerable pressure. After some time the Shah still refused to sign the decrees. Later, he reluctantly cooperated with the CIA plan, and only after receiving additional assurances of support from the US government (who continued to stress to the Shah that Iran was in danger of becoming communist if he did not

cooperate). Eventually, and after considerable pressure by the CIA, the Shah did sign these decrees, but only after consulting with General Zahedi and other military officers who supported a coup.⁷ CIA planners had anticipated the behaviour of the Shah and designed their plans to incorporate the placing of pressure on him. Donald N. Wilber, one of the original architects of Operation Ajax, claimed the following in a recently declassified CIA report, first produced in 1954:

From the very beginning it had been recognized that the Shah must be forced to play a specific role, however reluctant he might prove to be. Therefore, the plan presented a series of measures designed to rid him once and for all of his pathological fear of the "hidden hand" of the British, and to assure him that the United States and the United Kingdom would firmly support him and had both resolved that Mossadeq must go. The measures were also intended to produce such pressure on the Shah that it would be easier for him to sign the papers required of him than it would be to refuse. (Wilber 1954: 22)

The effect of these royal decrees was not only political in its purported adherence to legal procedure; it was also necessary for propaganda purposes, as the public dismissal of Mossadeq had to appear as legitimate as possible.

In mid-August of 1953, the coup began to take effect. By this time, Mossadeq had already become aware of an impending coup through his army chief of staff General Taghi Riahi, who had discovered the coup plans from within the Iranian army. The coup eventually became a military operation with the Iranian army and General Zahedi at its focus.

With regards to efficiency and effectiveness, political operations in Iran were positive – they managed to achieve a great deal, at little cost, and in a relatively short period of time despite the delays caused by the Shah and General Zahedi. It was the behaviour of both the Shah and Zahedi, however, which resulted in high risk political operations. Had neither of them cooperated with the CIA, the entire plan would have

failed (which it initially did, before Roosevelt revived it and made it work). The potential repercussions of a failed coup would have been enormous – the government of Mossadegh may have survived only to become more aggressive in its attempts to stifle an opposition which in many ways had been created by the CIA, or conversely there may have been further political and social upheaval which could have endangered the lives of many Iranians. It is difficult to determine what course of events would have unfolded had Roosevelt actually given up on Ajax when ordered to by CIA headquarters, suffice it to say here that risk and repercussion with political operations were negative overall.

The legality and legitimacy of covert political operations are also negative as, with covert propaganda operations, it is the clandestine interference by the United States government in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Such interference is more crucial here than with propaganda though, as political operations involved the secret and direct bribing or coercion of political figures in that sovereign state, rather than the influencing of non-political figures. In terms of a mix with overt political policies, there is insufficient experience for an in-depth analysis, and the evaluation result is inconclusive.

Economic. No major covert economic operations were undertaken against Iran, either as a part of Operation Ajax, or before/after its implementation. Overt economic operations were utilized by both the United States and the British government, such as the boycott of Iranian oil after Mossadegh's nationalization of AIOC in 1951. Although these were major policy initiatives, their analysis says more about overt action than covert action, and as such, the result here is inconclusive.

Paramilitary. Operations of the paramilitary sort were actually military in that they were undertaken by the Iranian army rather than any armed US personnel. The CIA

made major efforts to influence, aid, and direct key Iranian military figures in undertaking the actual coup.

Efforts to physically oust Mossadegh began in mid-August of 1953. Military personnel found themselves on one of two sides, supporting either the Shah or Mossadegh. The CIA provided General Zahedi with \$60,000 (eventually totaling \$135,000) for the purposes of bribing senior officers within the Iranian army to participate in a military showdown against Mossadegh (Kinzer 2003: 163). Skirmishes ensued, and it was at first unclear whether or not the coup would actually work. In order to sever communications between Mossadegh and the military, pro-Shah forces took over the telephone exchange in Teheran and cut telephone lines between government buildings and the army. But not all lines were cut, and Mossadegh managed to retain some control over communications. General Taghi Riahi, a senior military officer who remained loyal to Mossadegh, managed to unite other officers in support of the government. Pro-Mossadegh soldiers even apprehended pro-Shah forces who had attempted to arrest Mossadegh while at home.

The military component of the coup had commenced on August 15, 1953, and by the following morning it had already appeared to have failed. The CIA was, at this time, at a loss as to what it should do next. It was the effort of Kermit Roosevelt, who managed to locate General Zahedi (who was then in hiding) and convince him to continue to support further efforts for a coup. Roosevelt had already been ordered by CIA headquarters to leave Iran and abandon Ajax, but his persistence led to eventual success. Pro-Shah forces mobilized once the Shah's decrees were published, and they forcibly took over key points in Teheran including the police headquarters, the central

telegraph office, the foreign ministry, the broadcasting centre of Teheran radio, and finally the house of Mohammed Mossadegh. By August 19, 1953, there was a new government in Iran, one which owed its very existence to the CIA.

The efficiency and effectiveness of paramilitary covert action in Iran was ultimately positive. Delays were caused, and failure resulted at first, although this was more a result of faulty political and propaganda operations upon which paramilitary operations depended. The CIA found it effective to use local operatives and the Iranian military rather than excessive use of armed US paramilitary forces. The risk and repercussions, on the other hand, were negative. Had Roosevelt accepted the initial failure of Ajax and obeyed CIA commands to leave Iran, the coup ultimately never would have happened. The consequences would have been severe to those who were in charge of it, such as Zahedi and many others within the Iranian army. The ultimate effect that it would have had on Iranian society is unknown.

As with the other types of covert action examined thus far, paramilitary covert action is questionable in its legality and legitimacy. The policy result is therefore negative, and the actions of the United States interfering with the military of a sovereign state without any genuine security concern is tantamount to subversion. The effectiveness of the military element of the coup relied heavily upon the decrees signed by the Shah, which themselves were legally questionable and acts created not by the government of Iran (or even by the Shah) but by the CIA. For the United States to have essentially engaged in undeclared war against a government with which it was officially at peace is neither legal nor legitimate. Paramilitary covert operations were also not

combined with paramilitary overt operations by the United States, and the result here is thus inconclusive.

Table 4-1: Evaluation Matrix – Iran

Criteria	(1) Propaganda	(2) Political	(3) Economic	(4) Paramilitary
(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness	<i>Positive</i> – Use of BEDAMN program, radio broadcasting, and telegrams; locals paid to create appearance of opposition	<i>Positive</i> – Locals paid to riot against the government; Shah and Zahedi ultimately supported the US	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Covert economic operations not given adequate attention	<i>Positive</i> – Use of local officers and military forces; despite delays, action took just a few days
(2) Risk & Repercussions	<i>Positive</i> – Primarily local effects and local involvement; CIA not directly involved	<i>Negative</i> – Both Shah and Zahedi were not always fully cooperative; Ajax almost failed on several occasions	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Covert economic operations not given adequate attention	<i>Negative</i> – CIA employees not directly involved in military action, but the military coup failed at first
(3) Legality & Legitimacy	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the private internal affairs of a sovereign state	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the internal affairs and political process of a sovereign state	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Covert economic operations not given adequate attention	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the internal affairs and military of a sovereign state
(4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to propaganda	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to political efforts	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Covert economic operations not given adequate attention	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to the paramilitary

The results of this analysis can be viewed through the summary in Table 4-1 above. In retrospect, the efficiency and effectiveness of covert operations in Iran do appear to be positive in some respects, although they are negative or inconclusive in most others. What had been celebrated (secretly) by the US government for many years as a staggering success, Ajax, the results of which upon further analysis appear more a mixture of luck, timing, persistence, and order out of chaos rather than that of successful

meticulous planning and policy implementation. Given this, it is remarkable that Operation Ajax was ever used as a model for successive covert action policy.

Probably the greatest key to the propaganda, political, and paramilitary achievements in Ajax was the CIA's use of its well-established network of local agents which "had been assembled at great cost and had shown its ability to spread inflammatory rumors, place provocative articles in newspapers, manipulate politicians, influence mullahs, and produce hired crowds on short notice" (Kinzer 2003: 168). Networks such as these take considerable time to establish, and the relatively short time frame from the start of the Eisenhower administration in January of 1953 to the actual coup date on August 19 of that same year would not have likely been possible if the CIA had not already had a presence in Iran for some time. What is not mentioned sufficiently in most accounts however, particularly in Roosevelt's 1979 book *Countercoup*, was the significance of the intelligence assets and planning of British intelligence operations in Iran. The British had maintained a secret presence in Iran and had established their own valuable network of informants and agents in key sectors of Iranian society. This network "embraced military officers, a broad array of conservative politicians (many indeed members of Freemason orders), conservative religious leaders, mob and labor leaders, tribal leaders (especially of the Bakhtiari and Qashqai tribes), and the court" (Cottam 1988: 103-104). Given that the coup had been an idea originally developed by the British, the CIA had valuable access to these assets without any real setbacks, and the success of Ajax would have been in serious jeopardy without such access.

Operation Ajax did not represent the end of US influence and activity in Iran. In many ways, Ajax was the start of a whole new era of both covert and overt action in Iran.

One of the first essential policy considerations that must be addressed, it that of asking the question: was Mohammed Mossadegh ever actually a threat in the first place? It was assumed by many in the United States that Soviet influence in the region was a threat to international stability, including Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA organizer of the Iranian operation, who stated that “the Soviet threat is indeed genuine, dangerous and imminent. At this moment, time seems to favor the Russians and their unwitting ally, Dr. Mossadegh” (Roosevelt 1979: 11). But although Mossadegh’s policies were left-leaning, they were not communist, and his own administration had a rather tenuous relationship with the Tudeh (who often identified Mossadegh with the Americans), as well as with the Soviet Union.⁸ In July 1953 then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles testified in a Senate committee that there was “no substantial evidence” in support of the notion that Iran was indeed collaborating with the Russians (cited in the *New York Times* 1953: 4). In fact, the Tudeh remained publicly somewhat adversarial in its approach to Mossadegh’s government during the oil boycott, while the Soviets offered no assistance to Iran, and neither the Tudeh nor the Soviet Union supported Mossadegh or his government during and immediately after the coup (Fatemi 1980: 186).

The differences between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations regarding Iran and Mossadegh were striking. Truman was not only unsympathetic to the idea of a covert takeover of Mossadegh’s government, but recently declassified documents confirm that Truman considered Mossadegh as Iran’s best defense against communism, and that communism would not prove to be a significant threat to Iran throughout 1953 (National Security Council 1952). Eisenhower disagreed, as did other likeminded individuals within his administration including key players such as the Dulles brothers.

The short-sightedness of Operation Ajax may have been its main drawback, as history indicates eventual political upheaval and uncertainty in Iran. A former Deputy Director of Intelligence at the CIA later claimed of the Agency's activities in Iran, as well as those of Guatemala a year later, that "[t]hese covert political actions were justified at the time" (Cline 1976: 133). Interference of the covert kind did not appear to be an issue amongst US policymakers of the day, who may indeed have utilized covert action as a policy tool without sufficient regard to the long-term consequences or of the ethical considerations that should normally be taken with this type of activity.

Given that Mossadegh was a democratically elected leader, his authority contained legitimacy. A coup against his government may be seen by many, particularly those within Iran, as anti-Iranian. Anti-Soviet or anti-communist operations carried out by the US government on Iranian soil may have some legitimacy if tolerated by the Iranian government, but anti-Iranian government operations do not. Covert action in the form of Operation Ajax, despite the setbacks, appeared to have succeeded, but perhaps it succeed a little too well in altering the long-term course of events in Iran.

In the immediate short term, the basic overthrow of Mossadegh's government did not eliminate his influence entirely, as the popularity of both he and his coalition National Front continued in the months following the coup. It was necessary for the United States to build a strong authoritarian administration in Teheran in order to counter these non-stabilizing forces.

Such short-term costs over time become long-term costs, which are all too often given insufficient attention. The United States government for many years needed to provide a great deal of aid to the Shah's Iran in order to maintain the stability of his rule.

As soon as the Shah was installed, it was necessary to provide aid in the form of both police and military support. The US government employed some 900 personnel in Iran for the purposes of training the Iranian secret police force of 60,000 officers, plus regular police at 30,000, plus the Iranian army of some 200,000 men (Nirumand 1969: 94).

Funding of corrupt Iranian government personnel in the early years (between 1951 and 1964) drained the US government of some \$1.3 billion (Wise & Ross 1964: 113). Commencing in September 1953 at the start of the Shah's regime, the US government gave Iran \$45 million followed by another \$15.5 million soon after, which for just the first year eventually totaled some \$127.3 million (Nirumand 1969: 93).

An important question to ask is whether or not the coup was even necessary in the first place. Support for Operation Ajax appears to have emanated from the upper echelons of power in US government, rather than from the intelligence officials who are best familiar with the situation, including the CIA (with the exceptions of Kermit Roosevelt, Allen Dulles, and Deputy Director of Plans Frank Wisner). In many respects, Ajax was a political decision rather than strategic. US intelligence experts (along with the Truman administration) did not necessarily consider Mossadegh to be a communist, and neither did they anticipate a communist or Soviet takeover in Iran under Mossadegh's rule. Cold War paranoia demanded that the United States appear to be taking some form of action against expanding Soviet influence, somewhere in the world – at least that was how the government of the day in Washington viewed the situation.

The implications for other policy areas are worth noting. Excess attention to countries that lie on the Soviet periphery as part of a US Cold War containment strategy draw resources away from other concerns. Firstly, it would appear that US taxpayer

dollars spent on providing covert support to the Iranian armed services in order to maintain the Shah may have hindered economic development in Iran a great deal. These same funds could have otherwise been spent towards genuine economic development for the people of Iran, such that Iran may have in fact become a loyal and willing ally of the United States rather than a “forced” ally that is entirely dependent upon an unpopular government subject to internal overthrow without massive US support. Secondly, the attention given to developing countries with potential Soviet influence resulted in less attention given to other parts of the developing world. Economic aid to Cuba in the early 1950s, for example, may have created conditions which could have made Castro’s popular armed revolution impossible. Although one will never know, there are always a vast number of approaches towards foreign policy rather than simply using covert action, a choice that the Eisenhower administration may have made all too quickly.

Outcomes of the Iranian Operation

Within a year of the overthrow, both the United States and Great Britain negotiated new oil contracts, and the wealth of Iran’s greatest natural resource had yet to benefit the majority of its population. Great social and economic inequality amongst the population continued to plague Iran, a condition which itself suggested that “Iran remained a ripe breeding ground for Communism” (Wise & Ross 1964: 114), rather than the reverse. The perceived threat of a communist takeover thus remained, at least internally, and could only have been dealt with through the large-scale operations of a repressive dictatorship and an efficient police state.

Immediate outcomes of the operation were significant. From an American perspective, covert action was now seen as an effective and useful policy tool, one that

was capable of manipulating the affairs of sovereign states, and one that would protect the reputation of the United States as well as the president through plausible denial of these interventions. Covert action thus became an effective Cold War-era counter to Soviet interests throughout the world. Covert operations could be accomplished within reasonable time frames and at acceptable costs (at least in the short term).

In economic terms, the United States gained valuable access to the Iranian oil industry. Oil fields in post-coup Iran were divided up between the United States (40 percent), Great Britain (40 percent), and all other countries (20 percent) which included involvement by Royal Dutch/Shell (with 14 percent) and Compagnie Française des Pétroles (with 6 percent). Profits were shared with Iran and the name NIOC remained to continue the pretense of nationalization. There was some US interest in Iranian oil prior to the coup,⁹ although this was not apparently a major consideration at the time. The oversupply of crude oil on the world market in the early 1950s did not necessitate the United States gaining more access to Middle Eastern oil, as their Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian supplies were more than adequate to meet then-current US consumption demands. Despite this, the United States was still concerned over long-term access to Middle Eastern oil, however, as revealed in recently declassified CIA documents:

Even without the most basic intelligence on Iran, two elements drove American foreign policy in the post-war Persian Gulf region: oil and the fear that political instability might jeopardize Western access to oil. (CIA 1998)

By the early 1970s, Iran was spending much of its profit from oil wealth on Western military hardware, and proved to be a valuable customer of American manufactured products.

In political and strategic terms, the United States gained what it saw as a valuable ally in the Middle East. To US foreign policy officials, Iran acted as “the eastern anchor

of our Mideast policy,” and with its long border with the Soviet Union Iran was effectively able to “pose a barrier to Soviet encroachment that could not be surmounted short of all-out invasion” (Kissinger 1982: 524). An Iran cooperative to US interests proved to be of certain value against Soviet ambitions in the region for many years.

In Iran, “the evidence suggests that the Mosaddeq regime probably would have survived had it not been for U.S. intervention” (Gasirowski 1991: 80) despite the actions of the British as well as the Tudeh. Opposition to Mossadegh within Iran was not strong enough to remove him from power, and the various efforts that managed to finally topple Mossadegh had all been coordinated with American efforts. Recently declassified CIA documents agree with this conclusion:

CIA’s role was significant. Without Kermit Roosevelt’s leadership, guidance, and ability to put some backbone into the key players when they wanted to quit, no one would have moved against Mossadeq. Iran had many political factions but few political leaders – and even fewer leaders with the discipline and will necessary to take risks. (CIA 1998)

Although communism had grown during Mossadegh’s rule, it was not in a position to seriously threaten the stability of Iran. Communism had also grown in other countries throughout the world which were not subsequently invaded by the Soviet Union or covertly overthrown by the US, thus Iran was hardly unique in this respect.

Other scholars disagree that Mossadegh would have remained in power at the time of the coup, but make it clear that, once again, Iran was certainly in no position to be taken over by communism or by the Tudeh:

[T]he overthrow of Mossadeq was probably unnecessary. By the summer of 1953 Mossadeq was in such a precarious political position that he would probably have fallen of his own weight. Disrupted by the oil boycott, the Iranian economy was in shambles. The Eisenhower administration’s refusal to extend further American aid had probably doomed Mossadeq in any case. Although his popularity with the masses remained high, many of his political allies had deserted from his National front coalition, most notably the Ayatollah Kashani and the traditional Islamic radicals, along with the noncommunist middle-class factions led by the bazaar merchants. And though there exists a remote possibility that the Tudeh Party could have capitalized on his downfall to seize power, the

forces on the right were in a much better position to replace Mossadeq than the ones on the left. The United States would most likely have achieved a similar outcome by simply doing nothing. (Lytle 1987: 208-209)

Given this, the overt efforts of the Eisenhower administration would have been sufficient in achieving the goals of covert action, making covert action therefore unnecessary.

Mossadegh may or may not have fallen from power without US intervention, but in either case it would appear that covert action was not the best policy choice.

Once firmly established in Teheran, the Shah's hold on power was made possible due to many years of US support, in terms of overt and covert military aid, which allowed the Shah to continue ruling with confident authority. The period of the Shah's rule (1953-1979) was not without incident though, and much anti-government turbulence occurred in Iran until the Shah was finally overthrown. Massive anti-government demonstrations in Teheran by Islamic clerics and anti-Shah conservatives in June 1963 indicated popular dissatisfaction with current rule, as well as providing some insight into things to come in Iran.

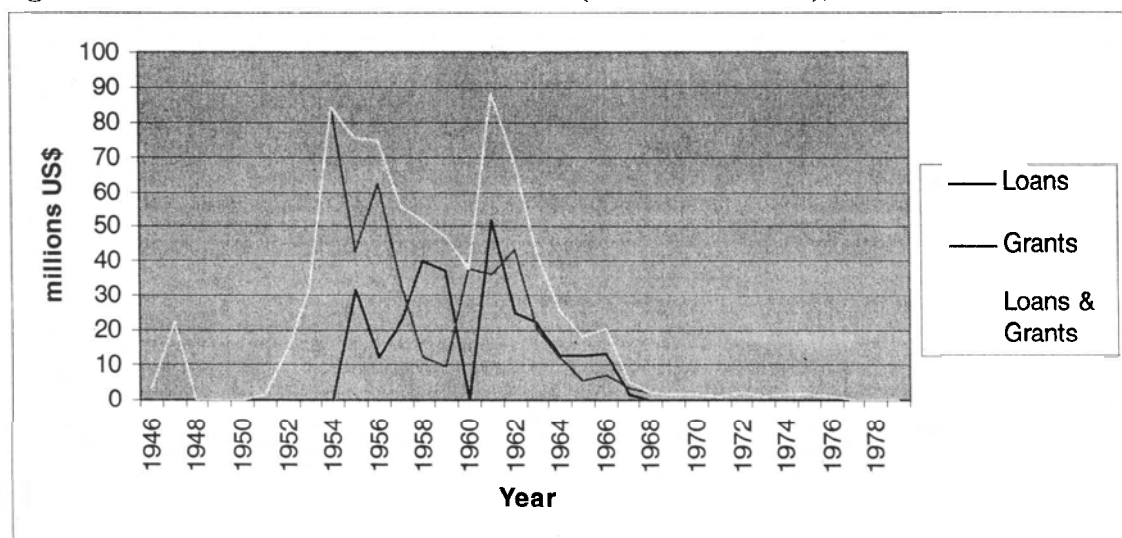
It appears that the United States government in many ways had become complacent with the Iranian situation over the years, despite these internal problems. The gradually rising importance of the Islamic fundamentalist clergy was not given proper attention by US intelligence employees or by US embassy staff. In fact, starting in the mid-1960s, the United States began cutting back on its involvement in Iran. In 1963 the political section of the US embassy numbered 21, which was cut to 10 in 1969, then again to 6 in 1972, while the CIA pulled all of its operatives from the Tudeh as well as officers working in other parts of Iran (Gasiorowski 1991: 99). The CIA did, however, make large payments to certain ayatollahs in order to ensure their cooperation (or to purchase their non-interference in domestic affairs), which lasted between 1953 until

President Carter cut funding in 1977, which may have amounted to as much as \$400 million annually although this estimate appears excessive (W. Blum 1998: 72).

Nevertheless, such cooperation or non-interference could not be maintained without further expenditure, and over the long term these costs add up considerably. US taxpayer funds such as these may have been better spent on overtly promoting economic development in Iran and improving the standard of living for most Iranians, which may have actually resulted in better long-term cooperation (and thus better value per dollar) than that purchased from fundamentalist Muslim clerics.

Supporting a dictatorship is never cheap. American assistance to Iran came in economic and military forms. Figure 4-1 illustrates US economic assistance to Iran for the period 1946 to 1979. It can be noted how both loans and grants to Iran rose dramatically in the immediate post-coup years (1953 onwards) until the late 1960s and early 1970s when the US started cutting back on aid. By the late 1970s, Iran was receiving no economic aid from the United States.

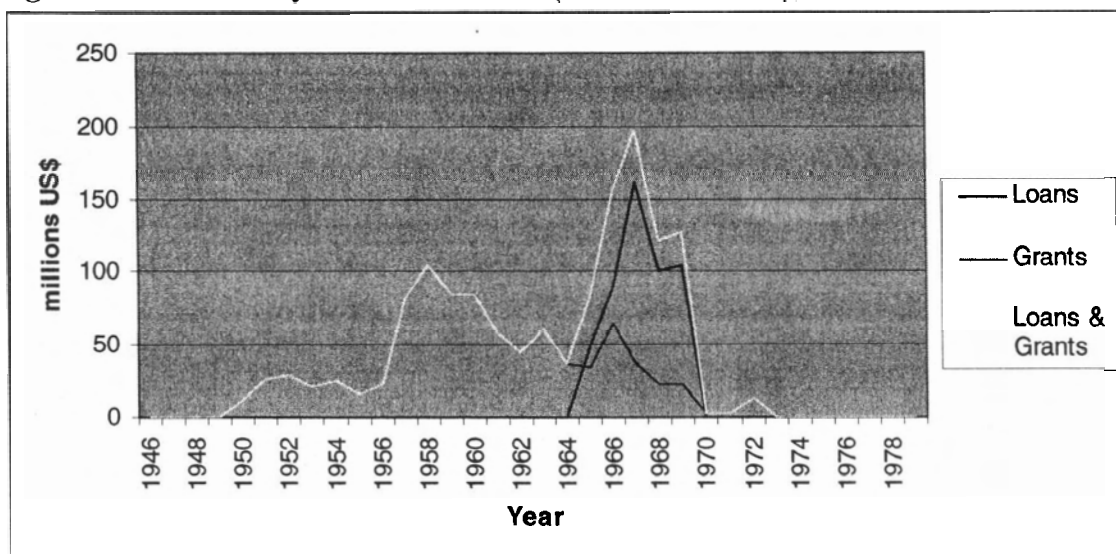
Figure 4-1: US Economic Assistance to Iran (Loans and Grants), 1946-1979



Source: US Agency for International Development 2005

Military assistance to Iran should be examined as well. Figure 4-2 illustrates US military assistance, both loans and grants, to Iran over the same period as above. A somewhat similar pattern emerges, except with military assistance rising more gradually in the immediate post-coup years, peaking later in the late 1960s, then declining rapidly in the early 1970s. In both cases though, assistance was non-existent in the years up to the eventual Islamic revolution in 1979.

Figure 4-2: US Military Assistance to Iran (Loans and Grants), 1946-1979



Source: US Agency for International Development 2005

Most of the \$68 million that the United States granted to Iran just after the coup went to support the Iranian government (Gasiorowski 1991: 101). The data illustrated above appear to indicate the start of a long-term dependency by Iran's government on US financial support. It will never be known for certain how Iran would have coped without such support, but the pattern does indicate one of Iranian government stability associated with US financial backing.

By the late 1960s, oil revenues began to contribute more towards Iran's own economy, which then increased dramatically in the early 1970s when world oil prices skyrocketed. Iran was at this time a major purchaser of US military hardware, and continued as a valuable customer well into the Carter administration.

As for Iran's standard of living during the Shah's tenure, the situation showed no signs of improvement, although poverty had been quite common in Iran from the earliest years. With all of its oil wealth, Iran could have become one of the most prosperous nations in the Middle East. In 1950 the AIOC earned between 180 and 200 million pounds as compared to the Iranian government's share of just 16 million pounds (plus taxes); the British government, in great contrast, received 50.5 million pounds in taxes from Iran's oil (Nirumand 1969: 44-45). When Mossadegh took office in 1951, the quality of life for most of Iran's population was extremely low. Chronic malnutrition afflicted 80 percent of the population, per person calorie intake was the lowest in the entire Middle Eastern region, and the average life expectancy for a rural peasant was only age 27, and the rate of illiteracy was 90 percent (Nirumand 1969: 43-44). Over the course of the Shah's rule, Iran was plagued with shortages in housing, inflation, and high living costs, as well as later having to import food staples which it used to export in 1953 (Fatemi 1980: 189).

Much of the period of the Shah's rule saw on average an increase in inequality in Iran. As measured through consumption expenditures, Table 4-2 presents selected data that illustrate inequality through the Gini coefficient, which demonstrates a basic rising trend over the period 1959 to 1974, as well as those expenditures which are allocated to the top, middle, and bottom 20 percent groups in urban Iranian society.

Table 4-2: Four Measures of Inequality of Consumption Expenditure in Urban Areas in Iran, selected years 1959-1974

Years	Gini Coefficient	Share of Top 20 Percent (%)	Share of Middle 20 Percent (%)	Share of Bottom 20 Percent (%)
1959-1960	0.4552	51.79	27.54	13.90
1969-1970	0.4710	52.91	26.96	12.99
1970-1971	0.4859	54.30	26.05	12.71
1971-1972	0.5051	55.48	25.49	11.65
1972-1973	0.4916	55.33	26.29	11.88
1973-1974	0.4946	55.56	26.06	11.96

Source: Pesaran (1976: 278)

Over the same period, the top 20 percent of Iran's population gained, from 51.79 to 55.56 percent of consumption expenditure, while the bottom 20 percent lost. A similar picture of Iranian society is illustrated in Table 4-3, which for the same period suggests rising inequality based on decile groups.

Table 4-3: Decile Distribution of Household Expenditure, Urban Areas in Iran (percent)

Deciles: Lowest to Highest	1959 – 1960	1969 – 1970	1970 – 1971	1971 – 1972	1972 – 1973	1973 – 1974
1 st	1.77	1.59	1.48	1.34	1.37	1.37
2 nd	2.96	2.86	2.62	2.39	2.51	2.40
3 rd	4.09	3.96	4.07	3.60	3.36	3.42
4 th	5.08	4.58	4.54	4.32	4.64	4.77
5 th	6.17	5.94	5.60	5.66	5.16	5.08
6 th	7.37	7.96	7.68	6.94	6.98	6.85
7 th	8.92	8.48	8.23	8.57	9.51	9.36
8 th	11.85	11.72	11.48	11.70	11.14	11.19
9 th	16.42	16.05	16.18	16.00	18.38	17.57
10 th	35.37	36.86	38.12	39.48	36.95	37.99

Source: Pesaran (1976: 278)

Once again, the lowest groups experience a decline, while the highest groups experience a general rise in household expenditures.

This is not to suggest that there was no economic prosperity in Iran. To the contrary, Iran experienced certain economic growth mainly due to oil revenues, although, as with many developing nations this wealth was not equally shared. The urban middle- and upper-classes of Iranian society benefited a great deal, but as a minority of that nation's population these socio-economic groups were not reflective of overall conditions. Such disregard of living standards for average Iranians by the Shah's government, combined with other essential factors, led to a radical change of government in Iran in 1979.

Iran under the Shah became one of the worst abusers of human rights in the world. The police state that was supported by the United States for many years had utilized both the military and the secret police to conduct purges in all areas of Iranian society. It was the CIA which in 1957 created, and subsequently trained, armed, and assisted the Iranian State Intelligence and Security Organization known as SAVAK (*Sazman-e Ettela'at Va Amniyat-e Keshvar*), which turned out to be a highly oppressive and extremely brutal secret police organization. Israel's secret intelligence agency Mossad had apparently also played a role in the creation of SAVAK. Even former Director of Central Intelligence William Colby had admitted that it was the CIA which created and taught intelligence techniques to SAVAK (Roosevelt 1979: 9n). Although SAVAK was known as a "security and information agency" by some, it soon became associated with a reign of terror internationally. A former CIA task force chief claimed that Iran was tied with South Korea as having the deadliest secret police force in the world (Stockwell 1978: 35n). With its head appointed directly by the Shah, SAVAK acted as the Shah's own personal enforcement organization.

Justice in Iran was lacking in other areas. Under the Shah, Iran had no legitimate civilian court system, the highest number of executions, and the worst human rights record on earth, according to a 1976 Amnesty International study (W. Blum 1998: 72). Immediately after the 1953 coup, the Shah attempted to suppress all opposition to his rule by censoring the media, banning political organization, and reducing Iran's *Majlis* to a mere puppet form of representation, one that reflected only the policy of the Shah.

Regardless of these internal matters, subsequent generations of policymakers in the United States considered Iran as America's closest ally in the Middle East and saw it as the most powerful player in the entire region. President Eisenhower's vision for Iran did not change dramatically under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Under Richard Nixon, Iran was being promoted as the dominant military power in the Persian Gulf and a great deal of military hardware was sold to the Shah.¹⁰ In the early 1970s Iran was profiting handsomely from its copious oil revenues, although the vast majority of its population remained living in abject poverty. The Shah's excessive military purchases had an adverse effect on overall economic development in Iran, as these oil profits could have been spent on more productive ventures. To the Nixon administration, Iran acted effectively as a "defender of the West" (Hoveyda 1980: 54) regardless of its own despotic and corrupt rule.

While the United States was focused on using Iran for its value as a counter to the Soviet threat, internal affairs within Iran itself were given insufficient attention. The result was that the Carter administration was caught completely by surprise¹¹ when Iran's revolution occurred in 1979. This revolution represented not only a rise in Islamic fundamentalism, but also a widespread and vehement dissatisfaction with the Shah and

his ruthless and corrupt rule of the past quarter century. It appears that all the covert action and military support by the United States to the Shah could not maintain the Shah's hold on power forever. Perhaps if the United States had continued providing massive economic and military aid to Iran it may have sustained the Shah's regime indefinitely – but at what cost? Both economic and military assistance from the United States had completely dried up several years prior to the Islamic revolution in 1979, with an unwritten assumption that Iran was now capable of overseeing its own internal affairs and security without US support.

In Iran's post-revolutionary years (1979 onwards), the United States was no longer able to claim that Iran was its closest ally in the Middle East. Iran had become an arch enemy of the United States, with Iraq somewhat filling in the vacuum created by Iran's departure as a major US ally. The US-Iranian relationship since 1979 has certainly had its moments, but the expenditure of US taxpayer dollars on the Iranian problem has persisted. Iran's situation has created new avenues for such expenditure:

...although the United States no longer claims to desire the overthrow of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 1996 Congress authorized US\$18-20 million to fund activities of U.S. intelligence agencies seeking to destabilize the government of Iran....Whatever the variance of tools used to try to curb the activities of the 'rogues,' the instruments have – until recently – been ones of coercion, rather than persuasion or inducement. (O'Sullivan 2000b)

Coercive policy by the United States towards Iran remains to this day. Grouped within the so-called "axis of evil" by the George W. Bush administration in Washington, Iran is now seen as a potential target for US covert activity due to its increasing involvement in nuclear power projects, which Washington perceives as a dangerous and threatening step in the development of nuclear weapons capabilities. The problems now plaguing the United States with regard to Iran are in many ways linked to the 1953 coup. Had the

coup never occurred, Iran may have by now become a mature democracy and perhaps even a developed economy capable of dealing with international problems on the diplomatic level, and not an enemy of the United States. The answer to this question is something the world will never know.

In conclusion, covert action as used in Iran under Operation Ajax was quite efficient and effective. It utilized a minimal expenditure of resources and effort, and achieved a major outcome (provided one chooses to ignore the failure which it almost became). As viewed through the eyes of the Eisenhower administration, Operation Ajax was indeed a success – but successful in achieving which particular goals? If the goal was to change the government in Iran to that of a pro-US administration, and to do so cheaply, then it was highly successful in the short term, but an expensive failure in the long term. If the goal was to secure a stable Middle Eastern oil supply for a quarter of a century, it was also very successful. If the goal was to stop communism, then the success of Ajax is highly debatable as communism does not appear to have been a threat to Iran in the first place. If the goal was much broader though, such as the positive promotion of the United States and its influence abroad, as well as long-term US security at home and abroad, then covert action can be seen as a failure. In this sense, covert action created more problems than it solved. Such problems are today being addressed with the possibility of simply more covert action. Whether or not this is a helpful approach is the subject of considerable debate, and it is a topic that will be analyzed in coming chapters of this study.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹ Mossadegh defended his decision to nationalize Iran's British-owned oil industry at both the United Nations Security Council and The Hague's International Court (a case which he won) in 1951-1952. He even provided compensation in the form of ensuring the employment and safety of the British oil employees as well as providing for the former owners 25 percent of the net profits of Iranian oil (W. Blum 1998: 65).

² Ambassador Henry Grady accepted Iran's decision, stating that "Mossadegh's National Front party is the closest thing to a moderate and stable political element in the national parliament," and that "[s]ince nationalization is an accomplished fact, it would be wise for Britain to adopt a conciliatory attitude" (cited in Kinzer 2003: 93).

³ The CIA had already been planning a coup for Iran even during the latter days of the Truman years, but purposely neglected to tell anyone in the Truman administration about these plans at the time. The CIA's Middle East bureau chief Kermit Roosevelt admitted to the *Los Angeles Times* that the CIA felt that the Truman administration (especially President Truman himself and his Secretary of State Dean Acheson) was "sympathetic" to Mossadegh. According to Roosevelt, then DCI Allen Dulles had said, regarding these plans, "Let's not get this thing evolved until the Republicans and my brother [future Secretary of State] Foster take over" (cited in Scheer 1979: 6).

⁴ US assistance to Britain during the Eisenhower years may have been aided by the fact that then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles, had both been employed as senior partners by Sullivan and Cromwell, a law firm that represented the AIOC (Fatemi 1980: 183). In fact, John Foster Dulles had also worked on an important case for United Fruit in 1936, "far and away the largest landowner in Guatemala" (Treverton 1987: 53), a nation which experienced its own CIA-organized *coup d'état* in 1954.

⁵ BEDAMN's annual budget was \$1 million and it employed in excess of 100 agents, although its original purpose was to counter communism, not to counter Mossadegh (Kinzer 2003: 164).

⁶ Roosevelt himself claims that he had access to a total of \$1 million, but only spent just under \$75,000, the rest of which just "sat and sat" at the United States Embassy in Teheran under secret storage in rather large vaults, only to be granted to the Shah eventually as a gift (Scheer 1979). The funds of which Roosevelt speaks apply only to the demonstrations which he personally organized in August 1953, and do not include long-term expenses on which Operation Ajax also depended.

⁷ When these decrees were first delivered to the prime minister's residence on August 16, 1953, Mossadegh arrested the colonel delivering them, proclaiming them to be forgeries. The coup thus failed, at least for the time being.

⁸ To most Iranians at this time, the Soviet Union continued to represent what Imperial Russia once represented, i.e. a genuine threat to Iranian territory with imperialist ambitions (Cottam 1988: 115). Any friendly overtures towards the Soviet Union, by any party within Iran, would have had to deal with this reality of Iranian public opinion, thus making any such policy difficult to support or implement.

⁹ The United States had some access to Iranian oil before 1953, as certain US oil companies negotiated deals with the AIOC, including the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (108 million tons of crude oil) in 1947, and the Socony-Mobil Oil Company (67.5 million tons) (Nirumand 1969: 41).

¹⁰ Both Britain and the United States were actively supplying Iran's military. A secret CIA paper dated July 20, 1971 cited a \$1 billion deal that would build up Iran's military capabilities in the Persian Gulf region. Britain was to supply warships, Chieftain tanks, and armoured hovercrafts, while the United States was to provide Chinook helicopters, Phantom jets, and other military hardware (Szulc 1978: 444-445). Later increases in Iranian oil revenue allowed the Shah to spend some \$10 billion on American weapons between 1972 and 1976 (Kinzer 2003: 196).

¹¹ On December 31, 1977, President Jimmy Carter had stated that the Shah maintained "his people's total confidence" (cited in Hoveyda 1980: 7). The CIA was also out of touch with internal realities in Iran, as a September 1978 CIA report detailing the stability of the Shah's government concluded that Iran lacked such domestic threats. Even the Shah himself had claimed, "Nobody can overthrow me. I have the support of 700,000 troops, all the workers and most of the people" (Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, cited in Hoveyda 1980: 5, 23; originally reported in the *US News and World Report*, June 26, 1978). Cottam (1988: 148) argues that the relationship between the CIA and SAVAK eventually became that of a "liaison relationship," in which the CIA depended on "certainly self-serving reports from SAVAK for their internal intelligence yield....an important part of the explanation for the poor quality of American intelligence concerning such regimes."

Chapter V

Case Study No. 2: Chile

Every case study in covert action tells a unique story. In Iran, the time frame from problem definition to final action was not a lengthy one. Only two weeks into the Eisenhower administration, Mossadegh's government was given serious attention, which resulted in his overthrow just seven months later. The previous Truman administration did not view Mossadegh in the same light, and had Adlai Stevenson won the 1952 US election rather than Eisenhower, Iran's future may have been dramatically different. Had the British been able to deal with Iran on their own terms, Iranian history may also have followed a dramatically dissimilar course.

The situation in Chile was significantly different from that of Iran. The Chilean case had deeper roots over a longer time frame, and was a major concern with a number of successive administrations in the White House. The progression from problem

definition to eventual *coup d'état* took a number of years, and the Chilean coup that took place in 1973 was not directly orchestrated by the CIA as was the 1953 coup in Iran. An analysis of the entire Chilean operation from start to finish is very revealing for the insights it provides into policy analysis of this kind. In the words of the Church Committee:

The Chilean case raises most of the issues connected with covert action as an instrument of American foreign policy. It consisted of long, frequently heavy involvement in Chilean politics: it involved the gamut of covert action methods, save only covert military operations; and it revealed a variety of different authorization procedures, with different implications for oversight and control. As one case of U.S. covert action, the judgements of past actions are framed not for their own sake; rather they are intended to serve as bases for formulating recommendations for the future. (Church Committee 1975)

This chapter will attempt to provide overview and analysis into the methods used in Chile, as well as attempting to rationalize why they were even used in the first place. Evaluation of the various types of covert action will be undertaken, as was performed for the Iranian case in the previous chapter. Finally, the results of the Chilean operation will be viewed in terms of both short-term and long-term outcomes. It will hopefully be gained from this chapter that the use of covert action can often do more harm than doing nothing at all, and that what is originally intended to be covert can easily defeat itself by being very public indeed; and those actions which are undertaken covertly can have unforeseen consequences which can be very difficult to mend.

Background to Chile

Unlike most countries in Latin America, Chile for some time had been a hallmark of political stability. Its last coup had taken place in 1925, and a long series of democratic and civilian governments had been elected since 1932. In the early post-World War II era, Chile was a healthy democracy which resembled more developed

societies such as those in Western Europe or North America, and it also maintained cordial relations with the United States. The pressures of the Cold War, however, were to eventually put a damper on Chilean democracy – these pressures were not just internal but had also emanated from foreign sources including the United States government.

American involvement and interest in Chile was significant – copper was Chile's largest industry and American companies owned a major stake in the Chilean economy. Any mention of left-leaning policies by politicians during the Cold War drew a great deal of attention from policymakers in Washington, and Chile was no exception. The leftist policies of prominent Chilean politician Dr. Salvador Allende drew much criticism from the United States, and it was this Cold War paranoia – some would say fear – of an eventual victory by Allende that worried Washington the most. Strangely, it was Chile's healthy democracy and its free and reliable electoral system that posed a threat of unprecedented importance, for if a Marxist president were to be fairly elected in Chile it would be the first government of its kind in the world. US policymakers feared a freely elected Marxist head of state setting such a precedent, in addition to the prospect of a pro-Soviet government in South America as well as the actual nationalization of American-owned business interests in Chile.

Despite the long tradition of democracy in Chile, poverty and inequality still characterized the Chilean socio-economic condition. The top 2 percent of Chilean society in 1968 took in 45.9 percent of the national income, whereas the bottom 28.3 percent received only 4.8 percent. Furthermore, US copper giants Anaconda and Kennecott Copper owned some 80 percent of Chile's copper interests, which constituted

60 percent of Chile's exports (Hersh 1983: 259). Malnutrition had afflicted over half the country's population (W. Blum 1998: 212).

In the 1958 election, Salvador Allende came very close to winning the presidency of Chile – by just 3 percent. US intervention began by attempting to influence the outcome of elections in Chile. The Eisenhower administration approved the funding of specific newspapers and politicians starting in 1958. Later, programs in disinformation, propaganda, and the funding and organizing of groups opposed to Allende were undertaken by the CIA as well as the State Department. Beginning in 1962 under the Kennedy administration, the United States covertly supported Chilean candidate Eduardo Frei of the Christian Democratic Party. At this time, Frei was not aware that the source of these funds was in fact, the CIA. Covert funding continued well into the early 1970s, which by then had attempted to discredit Allende given that he held the office of the presidency in Chile. A former Director of Central Intelligence claimed that CIA interference in Chile in the period up to 1973 “was one of the most massive campaigns in U.S. intelligence annals” (Turner 1985: 79).

In the early years, these efforts appeared to be achieving success, as US-supported candidate Eduardo Frei won a majority in the 1964 presidential election. The CIA secretly boasted credit for Frei's victory, which helped to support future CIA covert action in Chile. Covert action was at the time seen as an effective buffer to the spread of international communism. Many critics of US foreign policy, however, have called the various US actions in Chile a *campana de terror* or scare campaign, designed to instill the fear of communism into Chilean minds through the use of publications, posters, and radio propaganda. True to its name, disinformation was meant to mislead – much of

what the CIA produced was specifically designed to appear to have come from the Chilean Communist Party itself, hence the term “black” propaganda, a term often used to describe this type of disinformation. CIA operatives also trained and organized locals to disseminate such propaganda, and even managed to influence important elements of Chilean society by establishing valuable contacts in politics, the military, the bureaucracy, trade unions, and the media. The prominent Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* was criticized as being a voice for the CIA.¹

In the eyes of Washington, covert activities appeared to work, at least until 1970 when Allende was finally elected president of Chile. To the Nixon administration, Allende became a major topic of foreign policy, and US covert activity escalated dramatically. Prior to Allende’s election, President Nixon and then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger both spearheaded initiatives by the US government to address the issue of Allende’s possible election in Chile.

Although the White House, the CIA, the National Security Advisor, the Pentagon, and the Department of State all played major roles in overseas covert action, mention must be made here of the 40 Committee. This elite group has been known by a variety of different names (under different presidents, during different administrations) such as the 54-12 Group, the Special Group, the 303 Committee, and the 40 Committee, and generally includes as members the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Advisor (as a representative of the president). In 1970, Henry Kissinger was the National Security Advisor and chaired, as it

was then known, the 40 Committee. The purpose of this interdepartmental group was to plan and oversee all high-risk covert action plans, such as those planned for Chile.

The Chilean issue was given a great deal of attention by the 40 Committee. Both Nixon and Kissinger believed that Allende's election would pose insurmountable problems for both the United States and for global security. In 1970 Kissinger proclaimed, "I have yet to meet somebody who firmly believes that if Allende wins, there is likely to be another free election in Chile" (cited in Szulc 1978: 721), and that "an Allende takeover in Chile would present massive problems for us, and indeed to the whole Western hemisphere" (cited in Hersh 1974a: 14). Kissinger feared that an Allende victory would result in other South American nations falling to communism, including Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia. Nixon agreed with this reasoning, known more commonly as the famous "domino effect" of the spread of international communism. President Nixon said in an interview with British journalist David Frost:

If Allende should win the election in Chile, and then you have Castro in Cuba, what you will in effect have in Latin America is a red sandwich, and eventually it will all be red. (Richard Nixon, cited in Powers 1979a: 48)

In his memoirs Henry Kissinger stated, "The record leaves no doubt that Chile was not a major preoccupation of the American government after Allende was installed as President" (Kissinger 1982: 374). The evidence, however, illustrates that Chile was of great concern to US policymakers both before and after Allende's victory in 1970.

Nixon's foremost preoccupation may have been with the US situation in Vietnam at that time, although Chile certainly commanded much of the president's attention as well. In retrospect, Kissinger's fears in 1970 that Chile would never experience an other election do appear to be unfounded, as elections continued under Allende's presidency unabated, including two general elections (April 1971 and March 1973), plus four by-elections.

It should be noted that not all players in Washington agreed with the Nixon-Kissinger perspective. The CIA was somewhat reluctant about further covert involvement in Chile. Then DCI Richard Helms believed that increased funding and propaganda in Chile would not produce results, and that it would eventually backfire when discovered by either the US or the Chilean media, or even by the Soviet KGB (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 13). When made public, the CIA's role, Helms believed, would only serve to aid Allende's image rather than the opposite. The Board of National Estimates within the CIA had determined in 1968 that "forces for change in the developing Latin nations were so powerful as to be beyond outside manipulation" (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 14). The State Department also did not believe that any CIA involvement was necessary, although the US ambassador to Chile Edward Korry was adamant in his opposition to, and fear of, an Allende victory in Chile.

Covert propaganda and CIA funding to oppose Allende nevertheless continued. Allende headed a coalition of parties known as *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity). His opponents included conservative Jorge Alessandri and Christian Democrat Radomiro Tomic, both of whom received covert US support in the 1970 presidential election in Chile. Plausible denial was maintained, as Nixon publicly denied any involvement in the Chilean election. He declared in a White House press conference several months later:

As far as what happened in Chile is concerned, we can only say that for the United States to have intervened in a free election and to have turned it around, I think, would have had repercussions all around Latin America that would have been far worse than what happened in Chile. (Richard Nixon, cited in Marchetti & Marks 1980: 16)

After Allende's election on September 4, 1970, US covert involvement in Chile escalated dramatically. In a September 15 White House meeting between Nixon, Kissinger,

Helms, and Attorney General John Mitchell, Nixon is recalled to have stated his priorities and means as documented in the following handwritten notes by Richard Helms:

One in 10 chance perhaps, but save Chile!
 worth spending
 not concerned risks involved
 no involvement of Embassy
 \$10,000,000 available, more if necessary
 full-time job – best men we have
 game plan
 make the economy scream
 48 hours for plan of action (cited in Church Committee 1976c: 227)

With Allende as president, efforts were now directed against the economic destabilization of Chile as well as the destabilization of his government.² Both overt and covert approaches were taken. Overtly, the United States stopped exporting to Chile and stopped economic assistance including funds from the US Agency for International Development. Aid from other sources was blocked by the US, including World Bank loans and funds from private sources.³ In addition, the US attempted to garner support of the Chilean military by increasing military aid – this was an effort to lure high-ranking Chilean military officials away from Chile's traditional position of constitutionally based impartiality in political life.

Chilean politics and society continued as arenas of US covert involvement, with funds spent on the 1973 municipal elections as well as the usual presidential elections. The United States supported any efforts within Chile that opposed the rule of Allende; this involved supporting strikes, anti-Allende demonstrations, and funding organizations such as trade associations and labour unions.⁴

A foreshadowing of military action in Chile can be seen in Nixon's increasing efforts against Allende. Track I and Track II were the collective names for the plans that were designed to put increasing pressure on Allende.⁵ Track I began with political and

propaganda action, and was approved by the 40 Committee. Immediately after the Allende victory in the 1970 election, the US made efforts to prevent Allende's confirmation to the presidency by the Chilean Congress (due to his plurality of 36 percent, rather than a majority⁶). These plans continued to the point where the Chilean military was to be given a possible role. Track II involved the inducement of a military coup through various initiatives spearheaded by the CIA. Henry Kissinger (1979: 674) described Track I as "the formal 40 Committee approach" whereas Track II was "the unilateral CIA approach." William Colby, who was later to become DCI, explains the significance of Track II:

Helms received another order direct from the President: Track II was to be told to no one outside CIA, not to the United States ambassador in Santiago nor to the Secretaries of State or Defense or their Departments, or to the Forty Committee....So CIA went to work to carry it out – sending a special task force of CIA officers to Chile for six weeks of frantic effort, independent of the station, reporting only to Washington headquarters, contacting and assessing political and military leaders to select those who might move against Allende, determining what financial, arms or other aid they might need, and discussing strategies as to how the inauguration [of Allende] could be stopped....The only hope seemed to lie with the Army. (Colby & Forbath 1978: 303-304)

Under Nixon's orders, the CIA was "to play a direct role in organizing a military coup d'état in Chile" (Church Committee 1975). Before Allende was finally confirmed as president, Washington made further efforts to counter him and his new administration. Given that all previous covert attempts at preventing Allende from assuming the presidency had ultimately failed, a military coup appeared to many to be the only real option remaining.

A major obstacle to any military involvement against Allende was then army commander-in-chief General René Schneider, who was firmly committed to upholding the principles of the Chilean constitution. General Schneider was himself assassinated in a failed kidnapping attempt on October 22, 1970, after Allende's victory in the election

and just prior to Allende being sworn in as president of Chile. His death was not directly at the hands of the CIA as many have speculated, but by a group that the CIA had dealt with but abandoned as being ineffective (Colby & Forbath 1978: 304).

An ill-fated coup was attempted on June 29, 1973, which was effectively stifled by commander-in-chief General Carlos Prats, a constitutional loyalist. Prats later resigned due to local right-wing protest, and was replaced by General Augusto Pinochet. (Prats, who remained loyal to the constitution, later fled Chile and was assassinated by a car bomb in Buenos Aires in 1974.)

The economic destabilization pressures that Nixon's administration had on Chile had been designed to promote conditions that would entice a military coup. They certainly supported this goal, and the eventual bloody coup occurred on September 11, 1973. It started in the port city of Valparaiso,⁷ and the capital Santiago was the scene of significant violence as the Presidential Palace was bombed by the Chilean air force while the army's tanks surrounded the Palace, fired tear gas, and stormed inside. Unrest also occurred throughout the country, particularly in factories and on university campuses. In all, some 3,000 to 10,000 people died in the entire event, many of whom were quickly executed while another 10,000 fled Chile altogether.

Unlike the coup in Iran in 1953, the Chilean coup was not carefully organized by the CIA. In fact, the CIA for many years denied any involvement with the coup, which was true to a certain extent. It was the Chilean military which organized and undertook the coup, while the death of Allende has been attributed to either suicide or his being killed in combat in a final defense of his administration. The CIA did not directly assassinate either Salvador Allende or General René Schneider – although this does not

necessarily exclude the CIA, or the United States, from involvement however, as the coup and the deaths of Allende and Schneider were in many ways made possible by US intervention, both covert and overt.

[T]he CIA's covert operations in Chile, the application of vast economic pressures, and military assistance to the Chilean armed forces, the United States government did without any question help to create a situation in which the anti-Allende coup became possible. In the famous phrase of a United States congressman, Washington did everything it could to "destabilize" Chile and make it ripe for the coup. (Szulc 1978: 720)

To this day, the role of US covert action in the affairs of Chile is the subject of considerable controversy. Much of this controversy is centred around the role played by the US government not only in the years prior to and during the coup, but also in the assistance of the US government to the Chilean junta in the years after the coup.

Chile: Key Policy Considerations

This section presents an analysis of the Chilean case in US covert action, with illustrations of the four major types of covert action: propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary. Each has been analyzed in terms of the four main categories of evaluation for usefulness as defined in Chapter 3. To sum up, very little that can be defined as useful emerges out of the Chilean case, save for the mix of overt economic policy instruments with covert economic policy instruments. The details are as follows.

Propaganda. The efficiency and effectiveness of propaganda operations in Chile is a debatable matter. Like many other types of covert operations, propaganda operations appear to have been successful in the short term, although this is arguable due to the difficulty of measuring such outcomes. Over the longer term, propaganda operations appear to have been unsuccessful, given that Allende eventually won the 1970 election.

Once Allende assumed office of the presidency, US propaganda operations did little to remove him from office. Operations of this kind eventually turned out negative.

There is always risk involved in any covert operation, and propaganda, while not the highest risk type of operation, is still no exception. In Chile it eventually became publicly accepted that certain media elements were being funded and controlled by the US government (e.g. the Santiago newspaper *El Mercurio*), which may have resulted in a certain degree of negative repercussion as some Chilean voters would have seen such US involvement as offensive to their sovereignty which could have strengthened internal support for Allende. The left-wing press in Chile certainly made this an issue. Issues of risk and repercussion also turned out negative in the Chilean case.

The legality and legitimacy of US propaganda operations in Chile are also questionable. Many of these propaganda operations occurred during the Eduardo Frei administration in the 1960s, with which the United States maintained friendly relations, and for the CIA to be engaging in covert operations such as these may be considered a breach of international and diplomatic protocol. For the US government to be covertly aiding certain privately owned interests in Chile is not only a danger to international relations, but represents the external and secret manipulation of Chilean public opinion and goes beyond the ordinary mandate of the CIA. The outcome of covert policy in this area is also negative.

The use of propaganda operations did not directly serve other, overt public policy instruments, thus any conclusion here is inconclusive.

Political. There is great difficulty in determining exactly how much money was spent by the US government over the years in Chile. Large amounts of US taxpayer

dollars were covertly spent on a number of covert activities, including some \$180,000 that was funneled through a third party nation to the Christian Democrats, which soon totaled \$3 million by 1964. Another \$175,000 was spent in 1965, plus another \$350,000 in 1968 (Szulc 1978: 353-354). Other sources cite much larger figures, including some \$20 million in 1964 for Frei's campaign, with a large bulk of these funds entering Chile via the US Agency for International Development (Hersh 1983: 260). Powers (1979a: 45) claims that half the total money spent by all candidates in the 1964 election campaign was spent by the CIA. The Church Committee (1975) cites some \$3 million in covert CIA funds spent on the 1964 election campaign, plus another \$8 million between 1970 and 1973. Given that Allende was eventually elected to office, these efforts ultimately turned out negative.

US covert efforts at funding Eduardo Frei's Christian Democrats in the 1964 election were claimed as successful operations by the CIA, although Frei might have been elected regardless. In fact, CIA efforts may have even backfired somewhat. Although not common knowledge in the United States, the left-wing media in Chile was aware of some CIA covert activity at the time, and accusations of US interference in Chile's 1964 election may have had some negative effect on Chilean voters (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 14). Supporters of Allende may in fact have used the allegations of US and CIA interference over the years to their advantage, at least to certain Chilean voters, which may have helped Allende to finally get elected in 1970. This is always a major risk in any covert political operation (as it is with propaganda), the repercussions here being the unintentional strengthening of the political target. Covert operations are, especially over the longer term, very difficult to keep covert. In the end, political action

is this sense was ultimately inefficient (as it was costly), and ineffective as it failed to keep Allende from being elected president.

Further political failures in covert action occurred in the manner by which the CIA administered funding. During the 1970 presidential election campaign, and at Kissinger's insistence, the 40 Committee covertly ran a \$400,000 propaganda program which effectively acted as a "spoiler campaign," that is, it was focused against Allende and was in support of both his opponents. Rather than supporting a single candidate that was running against Allende, which at that time could have been either conservative Jorge Alessandri or Radomiro Tomic of the Christian Democrats, the CIA erroneously and unintentionally ended up supporting Allende. Former DCI William Colby explains:

While this was certainly a cheaper tactic than supporting one of Allende's opponents, at a cost of less than half a million dollars, it also proved to be ineffective. As any of my good New York Democratic friends could have predicted, "You can't beat something with nothing," and the result was a disaster. Alessandri and Tomic split the democratic vote between them, and Allende slipped to victory with a 36 percent plurality.

Nixon was furious. He was convinced that the Allende victory meant a spread of Castro's anti-American revolution to Chile, and from there throughout Latin America. (Colby & Forbath 1978: 303)

These examples collectively illustrate negative outcomes in the areas of efficiency and effectiveness, as well as in risk and repercussion.

Covertly, the United States continued to secretly spend money on its own form of political destabilization for Chile after Allende's election to the presidency. This involved an initial \$5 million, followed by another \$1.5 million for the 1973 municipal elections, which appears not to have been money well spent as support for Allende's party rose in the polls despite these efforts (Borosage & Marks 1976: 84-87). Larger amounts of secret funding have been cited as well, such as the \$7.5 million spent between 1971 and 1973 (Prados 1986: 319), and the \$8,809,166 in covert support between 1970

and 1973 as approved by the 40 Committee to promote right-wing propaganda and political parties in Chile (Szulc 1978: 720-721). These expenditures, made during the Allende era, may or may not be linked to the eventual coup which took place in 1973 – the connection is difficult if not impossible to make. If a link exists, then this spending can be seen as a failure as the establishment of the Pinochet regime was not a goal of US foreign policy. If no link exists, the coup would have happened regardless, and this spending would have been in vain. In either case, the outcome is negative.

As with propaganda operations, the legality and legitimacy of US political operations are negative due to their questionable nature. This is even more the case with political operations, as US interference here is directly with the Chilean political system rather than being merely with the manipulation of public opinion. Also, with the case of propaganda operations, political operations did not complement any overt public policy instruments, thus the results here are inconclusive.

Economic. The United States government made several efforts – both overt and covert – at undermining the Chilean economy after Allende's election. As it happened in the early 1970s, large strikes prevented the ordinary flow of commerce in Chile, with the result that the economy of Chile eventually did "scream" as Nixon intended. Although US economic action appeared to work, it may have had little or no noticeable real effect in the end. The Chilean economy did suffer towards the end of Allende's tenure as president, but both internal and external factors were more likely the major causes rather than the actions of US policymakers. Allende's failed economic policies themselves played a major role in the poor economic showing of Chile in the early 1970s, as well as in the loss of credit from foreign sources who then saw Chile as a higher credit risk.

Many industries in Chile did suffer – the Chuquicamata copper mine for example incurred losses of roughly \$5 million in 1973, which was unprecedented, and as some authors contend, was brought upon solely by the US economic blockade (Rojas Sanford 1976: 150). Such occurrences, however notable, must be placed into their respective overall contexts, and the fall in the world price of copper during Allende's presidency probably had more effect on the decline of Chilean economic conditions at this time than anything developed by the Nixon administration.

External factors including the significant decline in the world price of copper (which Chile exported) and the rise in the worldwide price of foodstuffs (which Chile imported) had contributed significantly towards Chilean economic decline. The drop in copper prices from 61 to 40 cents (US) per pound in 1971 alone has been estimated at costing the Chilean economy some \$200 million (Roxborough et al. 1977: 100).

Economic indicators point significantly towards Allende's own mismanagement of the Chilean economy as an underlying cause for economic strife. A balance of payments crisis, inflation, and a consumption-based economic strategy (which lacked investment opportunities) did not lend itself towards a prosperous society in Chile at the time. Any impact that the United States had on the Chilean economy in this regard would have simply exacerbated a pre-existing problem – an act that is still questionable though, regardless of outcomes. The economic influence that the United States had over Chile was based on Chile's high degree of dependence on the United States for such things as manufactured spare parts, and credit from such agencies as the Export-Import Bank and the US Agency for International Development. The US government did everything it could to make life difficult for the Chilean economy under Allende, and at a time when

the Allende administration had inherited a considerable amount of foreign debt from the former Frei government. US government actions seemed to have expedited an already floundering economy.

Despite these occurrences, Allende's party achieved a positive showing in the March 1973 congressional elections. Allende's *Unidad Popular* coalition won 44 percent of the popular vote, including the addition of 6 seats in Chile's lower House and 2 seats in the Senate. In Chile, this was unprecedented – the party in power had never before increased its percentage of votes after a presidential election, as Allende's government had, up from 36 percent in 1970. This result is also very significant given the intensity of US efforts to subdue the Chilean economy.

US covert efforts to destabilize Chile later increased. Massive trucker strikes occurred throughout Chile, which not only helped to further decimate the Chilean economy but also helped to turn many working- and middle-class citizens against Allende's government. But of those who benefited from Allende's economic policies, support for *Unidad Popular* increased – the Chilean population was being polarized into pro- and anti-Allende factions. Much of the Chilean population was still considered quite poor at this time, and support for Allende was therefore not inconsequential. Although the US government publicly denied having anything to do with supporting these strikes, many wondered exactly how these truckers managed to support themselves throughout the extended duration of the strikes, given that the truckers' union alone lacked the financial capacity to do so.⁸ It was Ray S. Cline, former Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) at the CIA who admitted that “[s]ome of the money was intended for financial support of the small businessmen and the truckers in their resistance strikes against the

Allende Government” (cited in Hersh 1974b: 9). The *New York Times* reported that the CIA spent some \$8 million on Chile, over half of which was directed towards the support of strikers by providing them with benefits during the 18-month period which led to the 1973 coup (Kandell 1974: 8).

From this it can be gathered that the result of covert economic operations in Chile are essentially negative, with the impact of US covert operations themselves being inconclusive. It cannot be determined to exactly what effect US interference in Chile’s economy actually had – Allende’s failed economic policies, combined with global economic circumstances, appear to have contributed more towards Chile’s economic decline than both overt and covert action combined. If this is indeed the case, then US initiative in this area can be viewed as a tremendous waste of time, effort, and resources, as the desired conditions would have panned out eventually without US interference.

If, on the other hand, one argues that US interference here did have great effect, then covert economic operations can also be seen as ineffective (as they failed to unite the Chilean population against Allende or to remove him from office) and inefficient (as they were financially very costly). They were also negative in terms of risk and repercussion, as the Chilean population did not unite against Allende’s government, but rather polarized into pro- and anti-Allende forces. Rather than turning an overwhelming majority of Chilean society against Allende, the economic problems that Chile experienced only managed to polarize the Chilean population. Many of those who had previously been marginalized from the economic benefits of Chilean society but had benefited under Allende only continued to support Allende further throughout the time of crisis. US goals, both covert and overt, ideally were to have undermined rather than

strengthened any popular support for Allende, although the growing opposition to Allende's government as a result of economic failure ultimately proved essential to the success of the coup.

With regards to legality and legitimacy, the result is also negative. The CIA violated its own rules through its funding of truckers' strikes and other anti-government causes. The nature of US government interference in Chile's internal affairs, as with propaganda and political operations, is also highly questionable.

Finally, both covert and overt economic operations actually managed to complement one another, regardless of whether or not they resulted in any major discernible effect. The strikes that contributed to the decline in Chile's economy maintained the same goals as overt public policies such as the denial of bank loans to the Chilean government throughout Allende's tenure as president. The outcome here is thus positive in terms of the mix with overt policy tools.

Paramilitary. Unlike the CIA's Operation Ajax in Iran of 1953, the coup that occurred in Chile in 1973 was not of CIA making. It was a military operation – violent and dramatic – yet it was conducted by the Chilean military and orchestrated by disaffected Chilean military officers. Track II, the Nixon administration's plan of 1970 to overthrow Allende's government through the use of military force, is often confused with what really happened in 1973. Track II was essentially abandoned by the Nixon administration as being unfeasible, unrealistic, and far too risky, although that did not deter the US government from supporting the Chilean military throughout Allende's administration. In 1972, for example, the US government provided some \$10,000 for the Chilean air force's purchase of planes and equipment (*TIME* 1973: 33). Although the

Chilean military did not desperately require US financial assistance in order to stage the 1973 coup, it certainly leaned towards the direction of US foreign policy, thereby abandoning its traditional political stance of neutrality and constitutional observance. It is debatable, however, if US spending in this area had any major effect on the minds of Chilean coup plotters, as compared to events which occurred within Chile itself. The outcome here, for efficiency and effectiveness, is neutral, as no discernable benefit can be said to have evolved out of US covert action in these regards.

Although the United States government did not directly deal with violent activity in Chile, it nevertheless planned for, and indeed encouraged it. The Schneider assassination is a very telling event. The original goal of the 1970 CIA plan to kidnap General René Schneider had been to provoke a coup that would prevent Allende from taking the office of the Chilean presidency, which, as history demonstrates, was a failure. Some argue, however, that those who committed the act were not only in regular communication with the CIA, but had expected reward for doing it, thus “[I]f the CIA did not actually shoot General Schneider, it is probably fair to say that he would not have been shot without the CIA” (Powers 1979a: 54). Regardless of who actually did the killing, it was a dramatic act, and the first assassination of a Chilean political figure since 1837. It was also ineffective, as the military did the opposite of what the CIA might have expected by further supporting the constitution after Schneider’s assassination. This episode indicates a negative outcome in the analysis of risk and repercussions.

The coup itself must also be evaluated. The removal of Allende was part of the US goal for Chile, but his replacement by a repressive military government (at least over the long term) was certainly not. US policymakers desired a centrist democratic

government for Chile, similar to the administration led by Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei in the 1960s. Many in Washington simply assumed that Chilean politicians such as Frei would be given a lead role in Chilean politics immediately after any possible military takeover (including Frei himself, much to his own disappointment). The brutal 16-year regime of Augusto Pinochet was not an original goal of US foreign policy, and this chapter in history can be viewed as an unforgettable and enormous negative repercussion of overall US covert activity in Chile, particularly with respect to the paramilitary type.

US efforts in the paramilitary area of operations, although indirect, appear therefore to have been unworthy of note. Efficiency and effectiveness were neutral as no goals were achieved here. The negative repercussions of the Schneider assassination are worth noting for their effect on the Chilean military's subsequent support for the constitutional process. The legality and legitimacy of US government interference, as with other types of covert action, is also negative here. The reasons for such actions remain questionable for similar reasons as with propaganda, political, and economic operations, although the consequences of paramilitary and related actions are usually more severe. Overt paramilitary policies were not combined with covert paramilitary policies, thus this area of analysis remains inconclusive.

The four individual types of covert action performed in Chile, as discussed above, have been outlined below in the evaluation matrix for Chile, Table 5-1. Very little that can be labeled as positive comes out of overall US efforts in Chile, over the period that covert action took place. The only real exception to this is the combination of overt economic action with covert economic action. These efforts may not have proved as important towards the economic destabilization of Chile as the fall in international copper

prices or the policies of the Allende government, but covert and overt efforts of the US government complemented one another rather well in this regard. Both overt and covert objectives here seemed to support the same goals in foreign policy – they may not have been the most efficient, effective, or legitimate methods, but when combined with each other, overt and covert economic methods together served the same purposes.

Table 5-1: Evaluation Matrix – Chile

Criteria	(1) Propaganda	(2) Political	(3) Economic	(4) Paramilitary
(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness	<i>Negative</i> – Efforts at funding <i>El Mercurio</i> as well as other propaganda operations failed to keep Allende out of office (1970)	<i>Negative</i> – Anti-Allende parties funded, yet failed to keep Allende out of office (1970)	<i>Negative</i> – US efforts hurt the Chilean economy, although other factors did the same (Allende’s economic policies, world copper prices, internal opposition, etc.)	<i>Neutral</i> – No direct US paramilitary efforts, but no positive goals achieved through US contact with Chilean officers and military forces
(2) Risk & Repercussions	<i>Negative</i> – US propaganda was discovered by the left-wing press in Chile, thus helping forces which may have aided Allende in getting elected	<i>Negative</i> – CIA was suspected in Chile of covert political support of Allende’s opponents	<i>Negative</i> – Economic disruption effectively polarized the Chilean population into solid pro- and anti-Allende forces	<i>Negative</i> – Death of General Schneider (intended or not) backfired on US objectives, as the Chilean military then supported the constitution
(3) Legality & Legitimacy	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the private internal affairs of a sovereign state	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the internal affairs and political process of a sovereign state	<i>Negative</i> – CIA broke its own rules by funding truckers and other anti-Allende groups and supporting strikes	<i>Negative</i> – Questionable, US government interference in the internal affairs and military of a sovereign state
(4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to propaganda	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to political efforts	<i>Positive</i> – Both overt and covert economic action served the same purposes	<i>Inconclusive</i> – Overt tools not given adequate attention with respect to the paramilitary

Numerous other policy considerations surround the entire Chilean affair, from initial recognition of the problem and action starting to take place in 1958, to the years following the coup long after 1973. The first questions to ask are why US action was necessary in Chile and what level of threat did Allende's government pose to either US or international security?

The subject of significant scholarly debate, it can be argued whether or not Allende's government was such a threat, or that it even represented a Marxist or communist government in the first place. Policies involving the nationalization of large industries are not unique to communist states. The previous chapter revealed that Mossadegh's nationalization initiatives in Iran were those brought up by a moderate government that was often at odds with the communist Tudeh Party. Also, many nations in Western Europe had pursued social democratic agendas which involved considerable degrees of state ownership of industries and resources, and yet also maintained pro-American political and military policies that effectively countered the Soviet threat throughout the entire Cold War. Allende's government was itself neither communist nor Marxist in its entirety but a coalition (*Unidad Popular* or Popular Unity) of various left-leaning interests which included the Socialists and the centrist Radicals, as well as the Communists.

It was particularly common for North American observers to refer to Popular Unity as a "Marxist" regime. Western European observers tended to focus more on the "socialist" nature of the government and its proclaimed intent to use peaceful and legal means to achieve revolutionary change. Allende regularly insisted that while he himself, and many Popular Unity supporters, accepted one variant or another of Marxist theory, his *government was not Marxist*. (Farrell 1986: 251n1, italics original)

The previous Christian Democratic government under Eduardo Frei had also pursued economic policies which involved degrees of nationalization of specific industries,

although both their proposed and achieved goals in this area were not as comprehensive as that of Allende's coalition. The large agricultural landholdings which Frei attempted to break up and distribute amongst resident peasants, for example, had achieved only about one-fifth of the targeted goal of 100,000 peasant families (Roxborough et al. 1977: 55), although it was a goal of the US-supported Christian Democratic Party nonetheless. State intervention in the economy had not been a foreign concept in Chile, and Allende's policies appeared to be more of a radical extension of existing policies rather than a complete socio-economic revolution.

The threat assessment of a Popular Unity government in Chile by US intelligence agencies supports the notion that an Allende presidency was not a great cause for concern, and that national security would not be an issue. Both prior to and during the election campaign of 1970, the CIA reported that an Allende victory would affect neither the strategic situation nor the international balance of power, and that his odds at victory were some fifty percent (Prados 1986: 316). Just days after Allende's victory the CIA produced an intelligence memorandum entitled "Situation Following the Chilean Presidential Election" for the Nixon Administration with regards to the Chilean situation:

Regarding threats to U.S. interests, we conclude that:

1. The U.S. has no vital national interests within Chile. There would, however, be tangible economic losses.
2. The world military balance of power would not be significantly altered by an Allende government.
3. An Allende victory would, however, create considerable political and psychological costs:
 - a. Hemispheric cohesion would be threatened by the challenge that an Allende government would pose to the OAS [Organization of American States], and by the reactions that it would create in other countries. We do not see, however, any likely threat to the peace of the region.
 - b. An Allende victory would represent a definite psychological set-back to the U.S. and a definite psychological advance for the Marxist idea. (CIA Memorandum dated 9/7/70, cited in Church Committee 1976c: 229n)

The CIA itself appears to have supported the argument that the US government's actions in Chile were based not on strategic and security concerns, but rather on ideology and the psychological repercussions that accompany any conflict of ideologies.

Although Allende may have pursued an economic policy that was independent of the United States, he was seen by the Nixon administration as a danger to Latin American security due to his open relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union. But Chile's previous president, US-supported Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei, had also sought an independent path with similar relations to both Cuba and the USSR (Church Committee 1975), thus Allende's overtures to these two countries was hardly unique. US intelligence sources concluded that Allende was not a threat, although Cold War paranoia appears to have dominated much thought amongst US policymakers.

[T]he more extreme fears about the effects of Allende's election were ill-founded; there never was a significant threat of a Soviet military presence; the "export" of Allende's revolution was limited, and its value as a model more restricted still; and Allende was little more hospitable to activist exiles from other Latin American countries than his predecessor has been. Nevertheless, those fears, often exaggerated, appear to have activated officials in Washington. (Church Committee 1975)

Other interests may have played a part in Washington's decisions regarding Chile, as some major US multinational corporations have attempted to influence the political situation in that country. Several corporations in 1964 approached the CIA with an offer of \$1.5 million in assistance for the Frei campaign against Allende (Treverton 1987: 162), which the CIA rejected as infeasible. International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) alone offered for the 1970 campaign over \$1 million to the US government in their efforts to keep Allende out of office (*TIME* 1973: 33), which was rejected. This same company offered the CIA \$1 million for the bribing of senators in the Christian Democratic Party to vote against Allende in 1973 (Cusack 1977: 109), which was also

rejected. Despite these rejections, the CIA had still advised ITT on the Allende issue, an action which compromised its position – the CIA had maintained continual contact with ITT over a number of years. The overlapping of private corporate interests with those of the US government and the CIA became significantly blurred in the decade leading up to the coup.⁹

Despite the corporate connections, the major reason for the Nixon administration's actions against Allende appear to have been ideological rather than primarily for the support of US business interests. While the security of the United States may not have been compromised by an Allende victory, the presence of such a government in Chile was an affront to Nixon, Kissinger, and like-minded individuals¹⁰ in Washington at the time. An official who worked closely with Kissinger confirms this rationale.¹¹

Plausible denial was also severely compromised, at least for the president of the United States, as Nixon not only had knowledge of the Chilean operation but had also personally ordered a great deal of the specifics. In public, he maintained ignorance during the Chilean operation, and stated

that the United States did not accept doctrines “by which one power purports to abridge the right of other countries to shape their own destinies and pursue their own legitimate interests.” (Richard Nixon, cited in Szulc 1978: 336)

One of the specifics was that of dealing personally with the issue of Salvador Allende. Although Allende was not assassinated by the CIA, there was talk in Washington of “removing” him altogether.¹² Although orchestrated in secret, covert activities such as these have a tendency to permeate into the mainstream over time. Track II, for example, was intended to be so secret that US ambassador to Chile, Edward Korry was not even informed of its existence, yet it became public soon enough.

It is precisely this eventual discovery of covert activity that makes covert action such a questionable policy tool. In Iran, there was a high degree of secrecy for a number of years, and the Eisenhower administration was able to publicly deny any covert involvement in Iranian affairs. With Chile on the other hand, US-organized covert action became public knowledge much more rapidly. Chileans themselves had known of the CIA funding to anti-Allende parties since 1964, while most Americans had some expectation of CIA involvement in Chile in the early 1970s. Even if the CIA was not directly involved in every questionable activity that took place within Chile, the CIA soon became the scapegoat regardless – at least within public opinion and the mainstream Western media throughout the 1970s. When the coup did finally occur in 1973, worldwide outrage was directed against the United States and specifically towards the CIA. Immediately after the coup, for example, some 30,000 protestors marched down the streets of Paris in a demonstration blaming the coup on the CIA (*TIME* 1973: 28).

The question that ultimately needs to be asked is: what role and to what effect did the CIA have in the 1973 coup in Chile? Evidence demonstrates that the CIA was actively planning a coup against Allende starting in 1970, but that US government efforts never quite unfolded. The eventual coup that took place in 1973 was not directly a result of CIA efforts, but may have been precipitated through indirect efforts of the United States. The Church Committee (1975) made it clear that the “CIA attempted, directly, to foment a military coup in Chile” in 1970, and that the United States financially supported anti-Allende strikes including one known instance where “a small amount of CIA money was passed to the strikers by a private sector organization, contrary to CIA ground rules.” The CIA was also indirectly associated with questionable acts, i.e. terrorism:

The CIA gave support in 1970 to one group whose tactics became more violent over time. Through 1971 that group received small sums of American money through third parties for specific purpose. And it is possible that money was passed to these groups on the extreme right from CIA-supported opposition political parties. (Church Committee 1975)

The eventual 1973 coup that took place may have been predicated on the Nixon administration's support and key contacts with members of the Chilean military community. "Although there was talk of a coup in Chilean military circles, there was little indication that it would actually take place without active U.S. encouragement and support" (Church Committee 1976c: 233).

The role of United States in the affairs of Chile was very active before, during, and after the 1973 coup, but the degree to which covert and overt policies had an effect on the coup itself is indeterminable. US foreign policy remains highly questionable with regards to Chile. The US government did, however, play an active role in maintaining relations with the military government of Chile under Augusto Pinochet for a number of years after the coup.

Outcomes of the Chilean Operation

The coup of September 11, 1973 was a turning point in Chilean history. It represented the end of democracy in that country and the start of a military dictatorship which would take many years to yield once again to free democratic elections.

To American interests, the new junta in Chile represented a return to business as usual. Chile's position with regards to world financial markets was positive after the coup, and US interest and involvement in Chile's economy soared. Roughly \$150 million in commercial loans from American and Canadian banks entered Chile just two months after the coup. The US-based Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company for

example loaned some \$24 million to Chile's Central Bank, with another \$20 million in the offering (Kandell 1973: 53). In 1975, Chile received some \$57.8 million in direct investment from the United States, whereas all other Latin American nations received just \$9 million (Cusack 1977: 121).

The key policy consideration here is that the US government made a conscious choice to resume normal economic relations with Chile after the fall of Allende. The US government was greatly involved in the Chilean economy prior to the ascendancy of Allende, and there is no reason for this to have not been the case during the Allende years other than the implementation of a policy course of action which prevented it from happening. It was not a policy of *Unidad Popular* to cut itself off from the rest of the world, but it was a policy of the US government to Allende's Chile with every means that it had available.

US covert action in Chile continued even after the 1973 coup, although the emphasis was no longer oriented around the ousting of Salvador Allende.

The goal of covert action immediately following the coup was to assist the Junta in gaining a more positive image, both at home and abroad, and to maintain access to the command levels of the Chilean government. Another goal, achieved in part through work done at the opposition research organization before the coup, was to help the new government organize and implement new policies. Project files record that CIA collaborators were involved in preparing an initial overall economic plan which has served as the basis for the Junta's most important economic decisions. (Church Committee 1975)

The US government invested heavily in Chile, which received more economic aid from the United States than any other country in the Latin American region. The US government under Presidents Nixon and Ford had provided economic assistance¹³ to the Chilean junta in the amount of \$350 million in both loans and grants by September 1976 (America's Watch 1983: 111).

In Chile, dictatorship became the norm. The junta under General Augusto Pinochet declared martial law, closed the Chilean Congress, canceled future elections, censored the press, and banned opposition groups including political parties. State repression escalated in Chile to the point where thousands of citizens were jailed, tortured, and/or executed. Estimates of those killed by the military go as high as 30,000 (America's Watch 1983: 47). On the day of the coup (September 11, 1973) alone over 3,000 were killed, with another 5,500 killed in battle with the Chilean military between September 11 and 15 (Rojas Sanford 1976: 3).

Criticism of the new government in Chile became a criminal offense, arrest and detention became arbitrary, and a new secret police force was created to enforce the junta's new laws. The National Intelligence Directorate or DINA (*Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia*) was established in November 1973 and led by Colonel Manuel Contreras. DINA's powers and practices included arrest without warrant, torture, and the disappearance and murder of Chilean citizens. The military also took responsibility over the administration of much of Chilean society. Universities, for example, experienced severe censorship of scholarly pursuits as campuses were run by the military administration. University presidents and academic deans were replaced by military officers, university tuition rates were raised dramatically, Marxist, leftist, and critical thought were eliminated from the curricula, and any textbooks or teaching materials that were considered "questionable" were purged from the educational system at all levels of education.

The repressive junta even sought out targets for assassination outside of Chilean borders. Certain assassinations were carried out against former prominent Chilean

citizens who had remained loyal to the Chilean constitution and to the previous Allende government. Former commander-in-chief General Carlos Prats and his wife were killed in a car bomb explosion in Buenos Aires in September 1974. Orlando Letelier, the former Chilean ambassador to the United States and defense minister under Salvador Allende, was killed by a car bomb along with his associate Ronni K. Moffitt (a US citizen) in Washington, DC, in September 1976. Bernardo Leighton, the former vice-president, and his wife were almost killed in a machine-gun attack in Rome in October 1975. DINA's director Manuel Contreras had been recognized as the person ultimately responsible,¹⁴ although the CIA had kept Contreras as "paid asset" in 1975 for intelligence gathering due to his close access to Pinochet, and maintained relations with him after the Letelier bombing (National Security Archive 2000).

Targeted assassinations such as these were most likely a part of a larger operation known as Operation Condor, a joint project between the right-wing governments of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay that was designed to hunt down and kill terrorists and subversives, as well as anyone else critical of these South American governments.

None of the above occurrences were predicted by policymakers in Washington, and none of these were policy goals. In fact, the 1976 presidential election in Chile that was expected by US policymakers never happened – elections had been eliminated for the foreseeable future. All the covert efforts of the US government, as organized by the CIA or otherwise, had ended up with a situation over which Washington had very little control, and had a very difficult time dealing with for many years afterwards.

Nevertheless, the United States attempted to maintain positive links with the leadership of Chile long after the coup. Although the US government did not endorse the abuses being committed by the Chilean junta, they were aware of much of what was going on at the time. Numerous top secret documents, recently declassified, do establish US State Department knowledge of Operation Condor and other abuses. One illustrative example is that of a 1976 memo by Assistant Secretary for Latin America Harry Shlaudeman, addressed to then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, which described Operation Condor and stated that “[t]he broader implications for us and for future trends in the hemisphere are disturbing” (Department of State 1976: 2). Another declassified memorandum from the previous year describes how the National Security Council, when presented with a potential visit to New York by Chilean president Augusto Pinochet, was diplomatically attempting to “further discourage the possibility of such a visit” (National Security Council 1975). Although the United States did not establish and maintain a client state dependency with Chile as it had with Iran for a quarter-century after the coup, it still had difficulty in relations with post-Allende Chile, a fascist dictatorship which was not of its making. The problems as defined, and the actions taken, by Nixon and Kissinger created an association with the Pinochet regime in Chile that had repercussions that affected successive administrations in the White House – perhaps not the most desirable of policy choices.

The usefulness of covert action before, during, and after the coup of 1973 remains highly questionable. The massive amounts of US taxpayer funding spent on propaganda operations, establishing contacts with members of the Chilean military, aiding anti-Allende forces, and subsequently cooperating with the Pinochet regime in the years after

the coup, have not proved useful in terms of cost of resources spent on such activities. The original goal of keeping Allende out of office, after numerous efforts, eventually failed. When Allende was in office, US efforts on their own failed again. It required the efforts of the Chilean military to overthrow Allende, plus the efforts of the anti-Allende capitalist class within Chile to create the chaotic economic environment that encouraged illegal military intervention. The establishment of an extremely repressive, brutal, and anti-democratic military government, as accomplished by General Pinochet, was not originally a goal of US foreign policy. The goal in Washington was to stop communism, not encourage and promote fascism. The goal for Chile was the establishment of a centrist, democratic, and non-Marxist government. The US government after the 1973 coup found itself in the difficult position of supporting Pinochet's junta, a policy which compromised American principles of free speech, liberty, human and civil rights, openness, and the support of democratic elections.

It would appear that covert action, using the Chilean example, in many ways led to the opposite of US foreign policy goals. Covert action in its various forms was not the first choice of most policy analysts of the day, but rather those of Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and others within the Nixon cabinet. The CIA might have been used more effectively as an intelligence collection agency, but was instead used for the implementation of covert action, and in turn found itself on the receiving end of worldwide condemnation, some of which was deserved, and much of it undeserved.

Had the US government done little or nothing with regards to Chile over the years, the rise and fall of Allende and the rise of Pinochet may have occurred regardless, and the United States (and the CIA) would not have received the same form of

international condemnation for their attitudes and their actions regarding Chile. This is assuming of course that political and economic events in Chile would have unfolded as they did, although perhaps over a longer time frame without US interference. In this case, US covert efforts can be seen as being not very useful, and even more so as a tremendous waste of attention and resources, all at great cost. Assuming the opposite – that US efforts genuinely had a great deal of effect on Chile – the result has also proven a failure, as covert action did not remain covert for very long, and the ultimate result (i.e. the Pinochet regime in Chile) was an undesired consequence of US covert action. From these efforts, the US received much of the blame for what happened in Chile, even that for which it was not responsible, because of these covert associations. For these reasons, covert action in Chile has not proved useful.

Apart from economic policies, overt policy tools did not enter the Chilean picture the way covert action did. What was intended to happen through the use of covert action could have been attempted with more usefulness by other means, most of which were never given the chance.

Notes to Chapter V

¹ The CIA subsidized and controlled numerous publications in Chile, *El Mercurio* being the most prominent. As Santiago's major daily newspaper, *El Mercurio* had a great deal of influence on Chile's military, and often contained stories with references to communists and communist infiltration in Chile, including the expanding influence of nations including the Soviet Union and North Korea (W. Blum 1998: 212). Some \$700,000 of US funds were allocated to *El Mercurio* by the 40 Committee on September 9, 1971, with a further \$965,000 in April 11, 1972, resulting in a CIA memorandum which concluded "that *El Mercurio* and other media outlets supported by the Agency had played an important role in setting the stage for the September 11, 1973, military coup which overthrew Allende" (Church Committee 1975).

² The actual term "destabilization" was apparently not used by the Nixon administration, but was a term coined by US politician, Democrat Michael J. Harrington, according to DCI William Colby. Regardless of who first used the term, destabilization (both economic and political) was effectively what the US government was pursuing for Chile while Allende was president. This word best describes the Nixon approach, in both policy and practice, towards the Allende government between 1970 and 1973.

³ Unfortunately for Chile, its economy was heavily dependent on the United States. Chile received no World Bank loans at all between 1970 and 1973, while at the same time the US was supporting Chilean military officials by providing for their training in both Panama and the United States (W. Blum 1998: 211). During Allende's 3-year tenure, American exports to Chile fell some fifty percent (*TIME* 1973: 33).

⁴ The CIA helped to establish an organization called the American Institute of Free Labor Development, which trained 108 leaders in white-collar trade associations (Borosage & Marks 1976: 86).

⁵ Track II became known as Project Fubelt or Operation Fubelt within the CIA, and initially provided very little direction for CIA officers in Chile at the time (Gustafson 2001). Other authors attribute Fubelt to "the CIA's covert action to block Salvador Allende from becoming president of Chile in the fall of 1970" (Kornbluh 2004: xvii), which may by definition include elements of Track I. Regardless, there was at the time a great deal of bureaucratic fog which concealed or distorted exact definitions: Tracks I and II, as well as Fubelt, were all no doubt directed against Allende and his leadership.

⁶ Allende's plurality of 36.29 percent of the vote in the 1970 election compares with that of conservative candidate Jorge Alessandri (35.76 percent) and Christian Democrat Radomiro Tomic (27.95 percent). The issue is whether or not Allende is defined as a "democratically elected" leader of Chile. The legality of the election is not in doubt, however, just the significance of Allende's 36 percent. In any political system that has more than two major parties, obtaining a majority of the vote becomes considerably more

difficult in any election. In a parliamentary system such as that of Britain or Canada, the winning political party usually wins with only a plurality of the vote, often winning a majority of seats. Some observers criticize Allende's 36 percent as *not* indicative of a democratically elected victory. Henry Kissinger was one of them:

There was recurring reference to Allende as a "democratically elected leader," with nary a mention that he never had a majority mandate to impose the transformation that he was attempting... (Kissinger 1982: 411)

Such refutation of Allende's showing in the 1970 election displays a profound misunderstanding of Chilean politics. In the Chilean system, a plurality of the vote is quite often the case – this is how Chilean presidents are understandably elected. When conservative Jorge Alessandri won the 1958 presidential election with just 31.2 percent of the vote, Washington did not question his victory.

⁷ The presence of the American military during the coup was noticeable, as the US Navy maintained warships on alert status off the coast of Chile as they were in joint military exercises known as UNITAS with Chile's Navy at the time. The US Air Force base near Chile in Mendoza, Argentina was also on alert status (Prados 1986: 320-321; W. Blum 1998: 214).

⁸ Evidence that the Chilean truckers were being supported by the CIA is noted in *TIME* magazine's 1973 coverage of the truckers' strike. When asked where their generous meals of wine and steak came from, the truckers merrily yelled out in unison, "From the CIA" (*TIME* 1973: 34).

⁹ For example, former DCI (from 1961 to 1965) John McCone sat on the board of directors at ITT. It was McCone who made the million dollar offer to the CIA in 1970. Despite the CIA rejections, ITT was provided with assistance by the CIA that would allow them to channel these funds towards the National Party which opposed Allende, all the while with McCone retaining his paid status as a "consultant" by the CIA (Halperin et al. 1976: 20). Further to this, ITT PR executive Harold Hendrix had contact with a Santiago based CIA official, while ITT boss Harold Geneen met with the CIA Western Hemisphere division chief William Broe with the million dollar offer to be used in support of conservative candidate Jorge Alessandri, a meeting made possible through the efforts of John McCone and then DCI Richard Helms (Treverton 1987: 162). Also, Nixon's Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs John M. Hennessy worked towards the economic destabilization of Chile, and it was he who just several years earlier had worked for the First National City Bank in Uruguay at the Montevideo branch, which was used as a means of channeling secret funds from the CIA into Chile to aid Allende's opponents (Halperin et al. 1976: 19).

¹⁰ Other members of Nixon's staff who agreed with the Nixon-Kissinger position regarding Allende included Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. Both of these individuals are quoted below in a White House

memorandum of a conversation (NSSM 97) which took place on November 6, 1970.
This document was declassified in 2000:

Secretary Rogers: Dr. Kissinger has spelled it out well. There is general agreement that he [Allende] will move quickly to bring his program into effect and consolidate his position....Private business and the Latin American countries believe that we have done the right things up to now. If we have to be hostile, we want to do it right and bring him down. A stance of public hostility would give us trouble in Latin America. We can put an economic squeeze on him. He has requested a debt rescheduling soon – we can be tough. We can bring his downfall perhaps without being counterproductive.

[....]

Secretary Laird: I agree with Bill Rogers. We have to do everything we can to hurt him and bring him down, but we must retain an outward posture that is correct. We must take hard decisions but not publicize them. We must increase our military contacts. We must put pressure on him economically. He is in the weakest position now that he will be in; we want to prevent his consolidation. (White House 1970: 2)

¹¹ This same official is known to have stated Kissinger's thoughts regarding Chile. Apparently, Kissinger "never gave a shit about the business community....What really lay underneath it was ideology" (cited in Morris 1977: 241).

¹² One White House insider who worked as an aide and secretary on the National Security Council (NSC), recalled how the Allende problem was being addressed by the Nixon administration at the time, as well as his initial reaction to it:

I was stunned; I was aghast. It stuck in my mind so much because for the first time in my life I realized that my government actively was involved in planning to kill people....They were exploring ways to get Allende out of there....I don't know if they used the word assassinate, but it was to get rid of him, to terminate him – he was to go. (Charles E. Radford, cited in Hersh 1983: 259)

¹³ The US Congress initially limited, then altogether prohibited the sale of arms to Chile after the coup. Both Nixon and Ford circumvented these restrictions by providing funding in the form of economic aid to the Chilean junta, which was then used to purchase military equipment. The ban by the US Congress apparently did not include commercial matters (America's Watch 1983: 111-112).

¹⁴ Manuel Contreras, the head of DINA, was eventually blamed for the death of Orlando Letelier and was sentenced by a Chilean court to seven years in prison in 1993. He was also convicted for the death of Carlos Prats by a court in Argentina in 2002, although Chile turned down the Argentine request for extradition. The major unresolved aspect of these cases is the degree to which the United States government was involved, and how much they knew beforehand, as the CIA and the US government in general maintained open relations with, and support for, the Chilean junta for years after the coup.

Chapter VI

Comparative Analysis of Covert Action

The case studies of the previous two chapters have a great deal to offer the policy analyst. The lessons learned from actual outcomes in important and historically revealing cases such as these provide valuable data by which to evaluate public policy of this type. Covert action is not an easy policy tool to assess, and every method of research leads to further discoveries regarding its usefulness.

This chapter will undertake a comparative analysis of both cases, analyzing each of the four types of covert action systematically. It will also incorporate and analyze the data provided by a variety of different types of respondents who took the time and effort to participate in this study through semi-structured interviews. The first half of this chapter will analyze the data provided by these respondents. The second half will consist of the comparative analysis of all data provided by the two case studies, as well as

comparative analyses of long-term repercussions and the concept of plausible denial, which are both essential in any study of covert action.

Methodology – Respondent Interviews

The research methods utilized thus far in this study have consisted of historical research techniques and document analysis. This chapter incorporates another type of qualitative research method: the semi-structured interview. The subject matter of covert action is one that lends itself rather well towards the use of qualitative research methods, and the interviews undertaken in this analysis complement the research undertaken in the two case studies.

Those individuals who participated in this study have been referred to as “respondents.”¹ Here, there are three main types of respondents: (1) those based in the United States who work (or have worked) in an area which necessitates knowledge and expertise in covert action and intelligence; (2) Chileans; and (3) Iranians.

The US-based respondents who took part in this study are themselves employed in different sectors of society, and all have some expertise, familiarity, and/or experience with the issues outlined herein. These respondents ranged in background from well-known scholars involved in the study of covert action, to members of foreign policy think tanks and non-profit institutes, to personnel formerly employed in different branches and departments of the US government, including the intelligence community.

The other respondents – those from Chile and Iran – represent the opinions, observations, experiences, and attitudes of individuals from those nations on the receiving end of US foreign policy. Most of these respondents actually lived through many of the events described in this study, and provide valuable insights into what was

being experienced on the opposite end of US covert action policy as it was happening. These individuals offer a unique perspective and reveal how much was actually covert at the time, regardless of any claims otherwise by US government officials. These same individuals also provide insightful data as to the long-term effects of US foreign policy, from a Third World perspective.

For the purposes of confidentiality, and in order to adhere to the required principles of standard ethical academic practices, none of the respondents will be identified in any specific way (although all respondents will be referred to in the masculine gender, regardless of actual gender, for the purposes of uniformity and convenience, and to prevent the possible identification of any female respondents who may have been involved). The actual number of respondents in this study is not large, and strict ethical guidelines at the University of Victoria prohibit the identification of this number. Due to the controversial nature of the subject matter involved (e.g. secrecy and intelligence communities, covert CIA activities, illegal and unethical government operations, repressive Third World governments, etc.), the ethical standards imposed upon this research project by the University of Victoria were extremely high, and very little personal or professional information can be revealed about the respondents themselves.

On the whole, the data provided by the various respondents do appear to concur with the findings of the two case studies. Although there was some disagreement as to which types of covert action actually work, work best, and in which specific situations, the consensus appears to be that covert paramilitary operations were by far the least useful, least productive, least covert, and most controversial. It was also generally agreed

upon that covert action overall was not useful in either Iran or Chile, and that covert action in general is not always the best policy tool for the pursuit of foreign policy goals. Covert action remains a questionable choice for peacetime use, and this is something which must be realized before it is ever to be used at all.

Analysis of Interview Data

This section will analyze the four main types of covert action – propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary – in light of the data garnered from the respondents themselves in the interviews conducted for this study, as well as other sources which have deeper backgrounds into the US intelligence community. These four types of covert action have been analyzed in greater detail below.

Before each type is discussed separately, though, a general overview of covert action will be provided here.

Covert action appears to offer, on the whole, relatively little to offer US foreign policy. To one respondent, “it is rarely efficient or effective” and is always high risk, and is “illegitimate in the eyes of the rest of the world” outside the United States. Although this respondent stressed the reality of covert action’s illegitimacy, he also expressed some support for specific use of some covert action, generally of the quieter and less violent variety. Some policy goals, he felt, may be achieved through covert means, although these same goals may also be achieved through overt methods.

One US-based respondent involved in covert action policy analysis put the Iranian operation rather bluntly, as useless, “unnecessary and also leading to a brutal autocracy.” Long-term effects of covert action in Chile were negative on the whole and completely “unnecessary and leading to much suffering of the people of Chile,” as stated clearly by

one US-based expert. This conclusion may in fact be seen as an understatement by other respondents, however, particularly Chileans themselves.

In both cases, although the immediate outcome was that of having a government which was friendlier towards the United States, this result is not only superficial but not very informative or revealing. One US-based respondent stressed that in Iran the benefit was actually

limited in part because we really didn't succeed in using Iran in any particular kind of way. Not until Nixon did we come up with the regional power or "policeman" in the Persian Gulf region – the Nixon doctrine didn't exist in 1953. Iran did not really serve much of a useful purpose to the United States apart from being a friendly vote in the UN. Iran was therefore not of much use. (Interview 2005)

In Chile, a great deal remains a mystery as to what might have occurred, given the lack of initiative regarding any approach to the Allende government that was not adversarial.

...the US never really attempted to foment friendly relations with the Chilean [Allende] government at the time. The answer is not known – we didn't really try the option of diplomacy. (Interview 2005)

In the words of another respondent, "the lesson of Iran and Chile is: don't use covert action unless absolutely vital to US interests." How US interests are defined is a matter of significant debate, although the consensus appears to be that neither Iran nor Chile were of vital importance to the interests of US national security at the time, and covert intervention in either case did not serve any useful purposes apart from teaching the policy analyst and policymaker some valuable lessons in the use and misuse of covert action as a policy tool.

The opinions of respondents in this study varied to some extent with regards to the four specific types of covert action. Propaganda, political, and economic operations appear to be most supported by those within the United States who have an interest in covert action, although those who actually lived through CIA propaganda, political, and

economic operations in the developing world do not appear to agree entirely with this assessment.

One respondent in this study, a former employee within the US intelligence community, stated that “it is hard to decide on which type of covert action is the best....it depends on the individual circumstances.” With reference to propaganda and political operations, he emphasized that

before 9/11, most of these types of covert action could be done openly through the NED [National Endowment for Democracy], but now it is much harder because the Muslim world is more hostile....the transition to democracy is made more difficult due to this. (Interview 2005)

This is not to suggest that covert operations are now any more useful as a result, in fact they remain as complex and questionable as ever before. This also does not support the use of covert paramilitary operations either, as one respondent claimed that “paramilitary operations are not going to be covert anyway.” This appeared to be the consensus among the various respondents, particularly those from the Third World.

All four types of covert action, however, have a tendency to become public over time, although they differ in certain respects. Given this, much emphasis was made by some respondents on the use of overt over covert action, for achieving the same policy goals. As one respondent put it, “there is really no magic formula here.” Covert operations are not to be used as ordinary policy tools on a regular basis.

[W]hat are overt operations can be done, but should be done before covert operations....we need other ideas, apart from covert action....There is no silver bullet....you can't separate the efficiency and effectiveness from the legitimacy and the accountability. (Interview 2005)

The notion that the four major evaluation criteria cannot in any real way be separated led some respondents towards the support of other, more conventional and overt policy tools.

Covert action seems to produce some results which more diplomatic methods do not. Respondents, particularly the Chileans and Iranians, expressed great interest and concern over the long-term negative repercussions of US covert action as well as non-diplomatic methods which have the same or similar approaches to those used in covert action. For example, the negative repercussions that were brought upon the United States as a result of their role in ousting Mossadegh were not just a result of US covert activity in Iran (and elsewhere), however, but the result of many factors, covert action simply being one of them. The aggressive and interventionist approach taken in much US foreign policy has resulted in noticeable long-term effects, which most Iranians take very seriously. When asked if the 1979 Iranian revolution was a direct result of US covert action in 1953, one respondent noted:

Of course, but it was not the only reason....other American influences, and the British, were all a part of it....people in the United States, in Canada, they do not know anything, they don't know any of this and they would never think about it; but in Iran, every single person from the youngest age up – they all know about Mossadegh, and the Americans behind the coup, and the CIA, and the Americans in general....this is common knowledge. (Interview 2005)

The Chilean respondents in this study, as well as average Chileans in general, appear to be very well aware of their own history, as are the Iranians. Some of the Chilean respondents even knew about the Iranian coup in 1953. One Chilean respondent explained it as follows:

I know about Mossadegh, and the CIA in Iran, and the British and the oil companies, and the nationalization of the oil industry in 1953....Eisenhower won the US election and instigated a coup – the first time that the CIA overthrew a country. They used this same sort of model in other countries around the world....There is a certain affinity between people from countries that have been the victims of CIA-sponsored coups....my own nationality has led to my interest in countries where the CIA has played a significant role. (Interview 2005)

Other Chilean respondent also mentioned Mossadegh and Iran. Conversely, some of the Iranians mentioned Chile and Allende as a topic of discussion whenever speaking about

US foreign policy, the CIA, and military coups which topple democratically elected governments in developing nations. As a policy tool, covert action seems to have created a group of “alumni,” so to speak, of those citizens from countries that have had their governments overthrown in the name of US foreign policy. In terms of propaganda operations, for example, this can be viewed as an absolute failure of US foreign policy, as US propaganda operations were not designed to create international antagonism against the United States.

The data provided by the respondents with respect to the four main types of covert action – propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary – is very revealing. Each type is outlined in further detail as follows.

Propaganda. The aim of propaganda is persuasion. Covert US propaganda efforts should ideally cause citizens of developing countries to support the United States and its allies while at the same time deterring identified opponents of US foreign policy such as the Soviet Union and internal communist parties during the Cold War.

Respondent data appears to demonstrate that this has not been the case, particularly over the long term. Short-term efforts are also somewhat mixed.

One of the Iranian respondents who participated in this study expressed that over the long term, US propaganda operations overall – either covert or overt – did very little to tarnish the image of Mohammed Mossadegh in the eyes of most ordinary Iranians. To this day, “Mossadegh remains very much admired in Iran...admired by everyone except the ayatollahs and the Americans.” This same respondent actually lived through the 1979 revolution in Iran, and stated that the current repressive Islamic theocracy is essentially no different from its predecessor regime, only that it is not supported by the United

States. The success of any short-term propaganda operations in Iran do not appear to have lasted over time. The popularity of Mossadegh continued in Iran immediately after his fall and had to be brutally suppressed by the Shah and SAVAK for decades, and then further by the reactionary theocracy of the ayatollahs until this day. Most Iranians do appear to revere Mossadegh and identify his image with that of democracy, freedom, and Iranian independence.

In Chile, the different types of propaganda used were seen as being negative on all counts, save for their combined efforts with overt policy instruments which resulted in an inconclusive finding. What had initially appeared as successful propaganda operations in Chile eventually became seen to be a complete failure, as Salvador Allende was finally elected president in 1970. Even in the short term, public knowledge of the CIA's involvement in Chile became greater and greater, until the role of the United States was common knowledge among most average Chileans. As one Chilean respondent stated, "the CIA had operatives with open wallets and were controlling the media."

The short-term success of covert US propaganda operations was acknowledged by another Chilean respondent in this study, but the overall propaganda effect was limited. Although such operations managed to prevent Allende's ascent to office in two presidential elections, they ultimately failed in 1970. The respondent explains the effects of propaganda through an illustration of his own personal situation:

I remember – as a young boy – seeing the poster in the streets when Allende was running for president. It was a big, full-size poster depicting an airplane from Aeroflot, from Russia, with the hammer and sickle, with children being taken away by force without consent of the parents. The message here was: "If you don't want this to happen to your children, don't vote for Allende." But my mother knew it was just propaganda anyway. She said, "fine, then let them take my children to some place where there is health care, education, and so on." This didn't convince people that already knew that this was a propaganda plot. It had a lot of effect on women, though. In Chile, you can tell who

votes for whom. The decisive vote was that cast by women. But there was no propaganda effect on my household. (Interview 2005)

He claimed that “at first, people in Chile were not really aware of the US government’s operations, but political parties on the left were bringing up these issues.” This appears to confirm the historical accounts of US covert operations gradually becoming more overt and therefore common knowledge over time, and particularly being used as anti-American propaganda when discovered by the local left-wing media. When asked if this was the case, the respondent continued:

Oh yes, we knew all about Jack Anderson’s articles regarding ITT and other US companies, like the copper companies – Braden, Kennecott, Anaconda – we knew all about it, and we knew what was going on at the time....the press – except for the right wing press – the rest of the press certainly published all these stories, and with quite a few details as well....the incident with [General] René Schneider was public knowledge at the time, there was certainly an awareness....there was a definite link to the CIA, oh yes....we were aware of all of this when it was happening. You could hear all of this from the average person in Chile, even back then. (Interview 2005)

Another one of the Chilean respondents who participated in this study commented that he would regularly read two newspapers everyday – one right-wing and one left-wing – and that this was common practice in Chile prior to Pinochet’s takeover.

In Chile up to Pinochet, there were many national newspapers....it was very diverse, politically, as you had papers that were socialist, communist, Christian Democrat, right-wing, and so on, and it was very common for many Chileans to read both left- and right-wing newspapers all the time. (Interview 2005)

The CIA influence in the right-wing media did appear to become more commonly known among average Chileans, particularly as the US government spent more time and effort on increasing the intensity of their propaganda operations. If ordinary Chileans customarily balanced out both political extremes using any of the various freely available media sources at the time, then any propaganda that the CIA produced may have been balanced out with that from other sources. It might have been the case in which the more

that was produced by the CIA, the less impact (on a per dollar spent basis) it would have had on overall Chilean thinking and public opinion, or that is, diminishing returns.

The message that the populace of any foreign nation actually receives, as a direct result of US propaganda efforts, is difficult to predict. It may have some of its intended impact, or conversely it may become obvious to the average person in that country where these propaganda efforts emanate, making covert operations into efforts which are essentially overt in nature. If this was the case, such overt propaganda may have been better (and more efficiently) disseminated through non-intelligence organizations such as the US Information Agency or the Department of State.

One former intelligence officer with both the CIA and the NSA concludes that propaganda operations are essentially not useful on populations overseas:

In propaganda operations the means *are* the end. That is another way of describing “operations for operations’ sake,” or operations without careful prior reckoning of the result. For propaganda, for deception, there is no way to predict accurately the effect on an uncontrolled audience. How can an outcome be measured? How does one enter the minds of the proposed targets of the operation? How can the expenditure of resources be justified or reconciled on a balance sheet? I think the honest answer is that there is no way. (Beck 1984: 90, italics original)

The sheer difficulty of covertly attempting to alter the manner in which large, foreign audiences collectively think is not an easy task. Past experiences show that overt commercial enterprises can manipulate groupthink in developing nations – such as creating preferences for American consumer products like Coca-Cola or McDonald’s – more effectively than the CIA can dissuade the same people from the evils of international communism. Overt approaches may in certain cases be more effective than covert approaches. At least with overt approaches there is very little danger regarding negative consequences when discovered by the target population.

One US-based respondent, however, felt that propaganda operations, although not at all successful in the Iranian or Chilean cases, could still be used today in the campaign against terrorism. “Propaganda can be quite effective in winning the ‘ideas’ war against extremists in the Islamic world.” The degree of covertness was not elaborated upon, but the emphasis on psychological persuasion as opposed to the use of force emerged as a very important theme.

Another respondent claimed that “propaganda and information are done efficiently,” although economic operations are probably the most effective. The CIA, rather than any other branch of government, is best positioned to engage in covert propaganda operations, unless the choice is to engage in overt information dissemination, in which case the CIA is not required to have a role. Propaganda may best be performed overtly, which at least presents itself in a more honest and less questionable manner.

Political. The historical analyses of Chapters IV and V supported the notion that covert political action can in fact have some usefulness, at least as demonstrated by short-term outcomes in the Iranian experience. This appeared to be supported to some extent in the data provided by certain respondents. A preference for the use of covert political operations emerged as being useful for today’s situation, and when used properly:

Yes, covert action can be useful today, especially judiciously applied propaganda and political covert action against terrorist organizations....Political is the most useful, helping fellow democrats seek stable democratic regimes. (Interview 2005)

The emphasis here being on “judiciously applied” rather than on that which has been utilized in the past, particularly with respect to both Iran and Chile. There is no universal definition of exactly what constitutes judicious use of propaganda or political covert action, however, or under which specific circumstances.

The main argument against any form of covert action lies within its very identity as a covert undertaking. Provided that covert operations remain covert, those within the recipient country have no knowledge of the means being used against them, or in manipulation of their political system and/or media.

Maintaining such covertness is not an easy task to accomplish, particularly over the long term. Another US-based respondent claimed that political covert action is the one type which does not blend well with overt policy instruments.

...the only one that does not mix with overt policy tools is political action...there is a necessity for the US hand not to be revealed, the foreign hand can't be revealed in the domestic political environment. It will invite a direct political negative; the likelihood of retaining secrecy is relatively small; it probably will be covert over the short term, but not over the longer term. (Interview 2005)

The fact that the US public may not be aware of its own government's activities elsewhere in the world does not bode well for covert political action. The conflict between these activities and the customs normally followed by the US government is one that pertains highly to covert political action.

Outright bribery of foreign elites and involvement in their electoral processes also cuts sharply into the quick of American values, whether the bribery involves Chilean legislators or oil potentates in the Middle East...we are painfully aware of the frequency with which our leaders have kept secrets from the American public which the rest of the world already knew. This is indicative of the extent to which our actions have unnecessarily violated our norms. (Lowi 1979: 162)

The knowledge held by citizens of countries on the receiving end of US covert action, in this case Iran and Chile, are all too aware of many activities of the US government in their respective countries, as well as many others. In fact, one of the Chilean respondents in this study stressed that the pattern of US activities in his country had been seen in others within the region. The example of Argentina's military takeover in 1976 and the ensuing national perception of the United States is revealing:

...ordinary Chileans knew that the Argentina coup was coming, as they had already seen the entire pattern in Chile....Chileans now associated Pinochet with the United States, absolutely....the CIA and the United States were now associated with murder, not just in Chile but all over Latin America. This was the big difference between our perceptions of the United States in the 1960s, and then in the 1970s. (Interview 2005)

One Iranian respondent felt similarly with regards to his own country. He stressed that US intervention, both covert and overt, was highly detrimental:

...Iran was a democracy....other countries in the region could be democracies, only the Americans got in the way....we see this in many countries. (Interview 2005)

As with propaganda, covert action of the political type has its drawbacks, although they tend to be more severe than those brought on solely by propaganda operations in that those with real influence in the political structure of the recipient country (i.e. politicians) are being controlled from Washington, rather than simply the media.

Economic. Covert economic operations included, most famously, the trucker strikes in Chile in the early 1970s. Although it had its political effects as well as economic, the CIA funding of Chilean trucker strikes is covered here under economic covert action as the major impact of these strikes was to economically paralyze Chile. Trucker strikes helped to debilitate an already battered Chilean economy in 1973 (although the degree to which US efforts actually had in this matter remains the subject of significant debate). One Chilean respondent who lived in Chile during the 1960s and 1970s commented that the US presence in Chile at this time was obvious to anyone and everyone, simply because of all the US dollars which suddenly appeared from nowhere. "Everyone in Chile was wondering where these US dollars were coming from," as truckers were being supplied and funded by the CIA. Average Chileans began to associate these dollars with the CIA's intervention in their country. Another Chilean respondent commented that with regards to

the truckers' situation, people understood what was happening....we'd notice some people suddenly getting a full set of tires for their truck, at a time when you couldn't even get a spare part for your bicycle. (Interview 2005)

Some scholars have speculated that a similar situation – local public knowledge of US covert operations – existed in 1964, when the CIA massively funded Eduardo Frei's successful campaign for the presidency, although this was not economic covert action and the national economy was not in dire straights at the time. In 1964, public knowledge of any exposed CIA activities (which were then restricted to propaganda and political) in Chile appeared to have remained relatively low-key, with the result that the average Chilean was not personally affected to any great extent. Only the local left-wing press made an issue out of it at the time. By the early 1970s, however, US covert intervention in Chile had become household news.

In Chile, as the analysis for covert action based on the evaluation framework suggests, both overt and covert economic action appear to have complemented each other as they sought the same policy goals – this was the only positive outcome for Chile using the evaluation framework developed in Chapter III. It was overt economic action, however, which helped to make the covert economic action into something less than covert. Regardless of how “successful” economic covert action may have appeared at the time, it essentially loses its impact when it becomes publicly known. It also has a tendency to turn public opinion against the sponsor country and the organization(s) implementing such policies.

The role of the CIA in Chile's internal affairs was generally not publicly known during the 1960s, although it became common knowledge to most Chileans by the early 1970s during the Allende era, as a result of escalated US activity in Chile. It was overt

economic action against Chile by the United States which appears to have confirmed this to some extent. As noted by one Chilean respondent:

...before Allende, most Chileans thought the USA was good, Chileans were a bit naïve, so was Allende....the US boycott of Chile started with Allende – it was then that we realized the Americans were bullies, and started to wake up.... the US and the CIA were becoming more aggressive. (Interview 2005)

The US boycott aided in producing a situation in which most store shelves were empty, although goods were still readily available to those with money. Just two to three days after the 1973 coup, the stores were suddenly “packed, from the warehouses to the shelves.” In Chile, the name of Augusto Pinochet became associated with the United States, and with the CIA, whether such associations were deserved or not.

Such an analysis would suggest that covert economic action – the only positive outcome that emerged from the Chilean case study due to its complementary mix with overt economic policy – actually results, quite conversely, as a negative. Engaging in economic action against Chile may just as well have been overt only, as *covert* economic action here not only failed to live up to its name, but also helped to create the image of the United States as “bullies,” who were “becoming more aggressive,” perhaps without American policymakers even realizing it at the time.

One US-based respondent did, however, feel that covert economic action was probably the most useful, although he stated that *overt* economic action was also useful, if not more so. This same respondent felt that it was a question of both agency and necessity, that is, which agency of the US government should best deal with the implementation of economic action, and how necessary is it for this operation to remain covert? It was made clear that the State Department or another branch of the US government may have a role to play in this matter, perhaps more than the CIA.

“[O]rganized trade sanctions are probably more effective,” although covert economic action can also be employed at times.

Another respondent, one who was once employed within the US intelligence community, felt that “economic covert action has been an empty catalog in recent years – we don’t do this anymore.” Not that it is necessarily ineffective, but not as common as in years past, although it may have some value in certain highly specific situations, although none which pertained to either Iran or Chile, or apparently to today’s world order.

Paramilitary. In both cases, the US military was not involved directly in paramilitary operations. In Iran these efforts were efficient and effective, and in Chile they were essentially counterproductive. In both cases, paramilitary action was viewed as the least useful of the four main types.

These findings were supported by the respondent data. The consensus among respondents appeared to be that paramilitary covert action was the highest risk, the most expensive, and most difficult type of covert action to deal with in foreign policy. The emphasis that the current George W. Bush administration in Washington has on using the armed resources of the Department of Defense (rather than the CIA) for the implementation of covert action policies, was an issue that respondents found highly questionable. The Pentagon has not had a successful history of experience with covert action, or with covert capabilities in types other than the paramilitary, and even its paramilitary functions are not likely to remain covert (particularly in the short term). One US-based academic expert in covert action policy stated:

I think it’s a disaster to allow the Department of Defense into covert action, which is supposed to be small and quiet – qualities quite unknown to the Pentagon. (Interview 2005)

Another US-based respondent noted that the current emphasis towards placing further covert capability in the hands of the Defense Department was not a good idea:

I am troubled by this trend....if you put paramilitary capabilities under the authority of the military it would be more disvalued, and more easily discovered....I think that in the present context the assignment of the paramilitary function exclusively to the military is not positive because they haven't demonstrated the kind of creativity and imagination which is required in this type of work. (Interview 2005)

The CIA, despite the procedural restrictions placed on it as a result of abuses made highly public in the 1970s, remains the best equipped US government organization in dealing with covert action of any type. The Department of Defense may in fact repeat all the mistakes made by the CIA decades ago. The intrusion of the Defense Department into a traditional CIA area of operations is also likely to create even further bureaucratic tension and conflict within the United States government, something which is hardly necessary at the current time. As a former Director of Operations at the CIA stated recently:

If it's the first step in an effort to duplicate what already exists in the [CIA's] clandestine service, I don't think we as a nation need it, and I don't think we can afford it. (Jim Pavitt, cited in Miller 2004)

As an organization within the Defense Department, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) is also not well equipped to engage in paramilitary covert action, nor, as a former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence (DDCI) has stated, for covert action or clandestine operations in general:

Heavy involvement by the Defense Intelligence Agency in clandestine operations is a mistake – not just for the nation but for DoD [Department of Defense]. The clandestine operations business is filled with pitfalls, requires a major infrastructure, and oversight. Protection of overseas facilities and preparation of the battle field are legitimate areas, but it is not hard to imagine CIA, DIA, and the FBI running into each other on a regular basis only to acquire marginal information. It also is easy to imagine the Secretary of Defense spending a lot of time on the Hill explaining what went wrong. (Kerr 1995)

The purpose of paramilitary covert action appears to be a form of support for overt war, as it was used successfully during World War II by the OSS. Given that such operations are extremely risky, and highly detrimental to diplomatic relations when discovered, war appears to be the best opportunity to put paramilitary covert action to use. As one respondent put it:

Paramilitary operations can be done with some degree of quietness as adjuncts to war, they are okay, they support specific causes...it makes sense if they support war, but are never really covert. (Interview 2005)

With paramilitary action, appearances can be deceiving. “[E]ven paramilitary covert action in the short term may seem effective but will reveal long-term negatives,” as claimed by one respondent who used the example of Afghanistan and its relationship to today’s problems regarding terrorism and long-term threat to US national security. As a whole, covert paramilitary operations are “low on the usefulness scale.”

Comparative Analysis of the Two Case Studies

This section will provide a comparative overview of the lessons learned from analyses of the two case studies, based on the evaluation framework developed in Chapter III.

The Iran case study taught that propaganda, political, and paramilitary covert operations can indeed be efficient and effective to a certain extent, at least in the short term. Propaganda was the only type of covert action which involved an acceptable outcome of risk and repercussion, also in the short term. On all other counts, covert action proved to be either negative or inconclusive. The overall outcome of US covert action policy in Iran is also revealing, as the long-term effects of covert action proved negative on the whole.

In Chile, only economic operations proved positive, and even then only in their support of overt economic foreign policy. As an element of covert action, economic operations proved negative on other counts. Propaganda, political, and paramilitary operations proved to be either negative (most common), neutral, or inconclusive in their outcomes. These results apply to the short term. Long-term effects of covert action in Chile were negative on the whole.

For comparative purposes, an overview of the results of the two case studies, and their usefulness with regards to the four different types of covert action, is presented in Table 6-1 below. These findings were originally presented in the evaluation matrices (Tables 4-1 and 5-1) in Chapters IV and V respectively. The table below incorporates the main points from both of these previous tables.

Table 6-1: Comparative Analysis of Case Studies, Iran and Chile

Type	Iran	Chile
Propaganda	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Positive</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Positive</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Negative</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>
Political	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Positive</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Negative</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>
Economic	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Inconclusive</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Inconclusive</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Inconclusive</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Negative</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Positive</i>
Paramilitary	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Positive</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>	(1) Efficiency & Effectiveness – <i>Neutral</i> (2) Risk & Repercussions – <i>Negative</i> (3) Legality & Legitimacy – <i>Negative</i> (4) Mix with Overt Policy Tools – <i>Inconclusive</i>

Each of these four types of covert action, with respect to their evaluation as summarized in Table 6-1 above, are discussed in greater detail as follows.

Propaganda. The evaluation for propaganda is mixed. The different types of propaganda used in Iran have been evaluated in this study (based on the evaluation framework) as being efficient and effective, with little risk and repercussion, but with no real legal or legitimate basis, and not undertaken in conjunction with similar overt efforts.

Much of the propaganda effort during the Ajax operation had been based on the existing structure established under Operation BEDAMN, which started in 1948. Effective application of both print and broadcast media were used during the final days of the coup in the manipulation of public opinion at that time. The CIA practice of paying locals to create “false” demonstrations and riots was also useful. Many of these operations, however, were performed at the last moment, and may not have resulted in the outcome which actually occurred. The element of chance figures into the success of Ajax to a large extent, and this must not be ignored.

In Chile, propaganda efforts originally appeared to be efficient and effective in the short term, but were later proved to be quite costly and were also exploited by the left-wing media against the United States. Ultimately, US covert action in this area was not effective in preventing Salvador Allende from taking office. These efforts were also ineffective in achieving the US goal of replacing Allende’s government with a centrist-democratic government over the long term.

The lessons to be learned from this comparison are that propaganda efforts, if performed covertly, involve a great deal of uncertainty. What may appear to be effective at first may result in failure over time. Such efforts may not incorporate the same degree

of risk as paramilitary operations, but involve risk nevertheless. One major risk is that propaganda may backfire, and the comments provided by the Chilean and Iranian respondents attest to this. The risk of covert methods being discovered and exposed overtly is ever-present and prone to repercussion. The financial costs of propaganda also add up significantly over time, which reduces efficiency. Such methods are also questionable in the areas of legality and legitimacy, as well as being inconclusive their potential to mix with overt policy instruments.

Political. The only positive outcome of political covert operations in either Iran or Chile involved the efficiency and effectiveness of operations in Iran, at least in the short term. All other political outcomes were negative, with the exception of those that mixed with overt policy instruments, which resulted inconclusively in both cases.

In Iran, despite all the problems and delays (especially with regards to the employment and cooperation of the Shah and General Fazlollah Zahedi), political operations eventually worked. These are short-term results, however, and the long-term implications are another matter altogether. Political operations were used in Iran as an important element of Operation Ajax, which was directed at overthrowing the government of that country.

In Chile, political operations were first aimed at preventing a government from assuming power. In the long term, both cases result in primarily negative outcomes from the use of political operations.

Both cases were also (ultimately) major, large scale operations based on dramatic regime change. On a smaller scale, political operations may have some value in certain cases, but it is not clear exactly how. Based on the data gathered from some US-based

respondents, political covert action had some degree of support, although the emphasis remained on smaller scale and “quiet” operations. Political covert action which is based on governmental overthrow is unlikely to remain (or perhaps ever be) small in scale or quiet in operation.

Political covert action also involves a great deal of risk and repercussion, as well as in legality and legitimacy, even more so than with propaganda, as there is excessive reliance on forces which rely beyond the control of the US government. The CIA can purchase a newspaper or radio station in a developing country, but it can only bribe politicians for so long, and it certainly can't purchase all politicians. If attempted, such political actions amount to huge expenses over time (i.e. inefficiency), and when exposed (which is very likely in foreign politics) result in negative repercussions. Such actions may or may not mix well with similar overt policy instruments, as a definite outcome here can not be obtained from this study.

Economic. The results on economic covert action based on the two case studies are inconclusive for Iran and mostly negative for Chile. The only positive evaluation in the Chilean case study was the mix of economic covert action with that of overt economic policy.

As the interview data reveal, covert economic action is likely to be exposed over time. When intensified, such actions are bound to become public knowledge as large operations become impossible to conceal. The Chilean experience demonstrated exactly this, and what at first appeared to be a success in one area (i.e. mix with overt policy instruments) eventually turned out negative. From this study it would appear that economic action of the overt sort, rather than covert, may be more useful in the end.

Paramilitary. In Iran, the only positive outcome of covert paramilitary operations was that of efficiency and effectiveness. No US armed personnel were used, which of course resulted in no US casualties. Only a small handful of actual CIA employees were involved, who themselves were aided by an elaborate network of local agents originally established and maintained by British intelligence. The use of officials within the Iranian military, however, was in many ways based on luck, as the necessary cooperation of officials within the Iranian army was not ensured, and those essential participants were highly unreliable. In fact, it was the action of officials who remained loyal to Mossadegh which caused the coup plot to fail originally, before it was eventually salvaged by Kermit Roosevelt.

No positive outcomes in paramilitary covert action resulted from the Chilean case study. In fact, paramilitary action in Chile was entirely counterproductive – the death of general René Schneider resulted in a strengthening of constitutional conviction (the opposite of that which was desired by the United States government), while the coup by General Augusto Pinochet resulted in the establishment of a brutal dictatorship rather than the Christian Democratic government that was desired by US policymakers in Washington.

Paramilitary action of this sort was the least preferred method by all of the respondents in this study – American, Chilean, and Iranian. All of these respondents agreed that this method was rarely (if ever) covert, the most contentious, and certainly the least useful. Such actions involve the greatest degree of risk of any of the four types of covert action, and are the least sound when viewed on grounds of legality and legitimacy. Finally, covert paramilitary operations do not appear to offer reveal any findings with

regards to their mix with overt policy instruments, although overt paramilitary operations would tend to suggest the use of outright war as a policy tool – which is perhaps the only useful option for the employment of paramilitary force.

Plausible Denial

A major theme which consistently emerged throughout the research and analysis process in this study was that of plausible denial. This concept underlies the effective use of *all types* of covert action. Regardless of the results obtained within the evaluation criteria, a brief discussion of plausible denial is therefore in order.

The actual “covertness” of covert action is often very fragile. Covertness depends to some degree on upon the concept of plausible denial, which itself may (unfortunately) promote the tendency to support even more covert operations. In both the Iran and Chile case studies, US intervention eventually became public (particularly quickly with regards to Chile), and plausible denial was eventually impossible at the national level. The United States, at a certain point in time, was no longer able to plausibly deny its covert involvement in either Iran or Chile.

Plausible denial for the US presidency alone is a slightly different matter. The president may or may not openly declare his knowledge of major covert operations and be able to escape public scrutiny by denying any knowledge and blaming such operations on his respective bureaucracies, such as the CIA. The concept of plausible denial for the presidency, at least for Operation Ajax, was maintained much more effectively than with any covert operations that took place in Chile. President Eisenhower did not generally sit in on the meetings at which Ajax was discussed, only the Dulles Brothers and other key figures in Washington at the time were a part of the planning for Ajax.² With Chile, on

the other hand, President Nixon was at the forefront of any discussion relating to the removal of Allende. Ajax was kept secret for many years after the fact, even though the CIA planned and executed the entire operation, yet the CIA's involvement in Chile became public even before the actual coup, even though the CIA was not as directly responsible. In fact, on the day of the coup in Chile (September 11, 1973) many critics were already blaming the CIA, which ended up taking much of the blame for the entire operation. The concept of plausible denial is, however, for many critics and scholars, not a valid one. A former CIA employee explains:

One red herring that the Senate Committee's final report has introduced into the issue of presidential control is a gross misreading of the doctrine of plausible denial. It suggests that the President might be purposefully kept in ignorance of a covert operation in order that he might honestly deny it. This is nonsense. No President can willfully choose ignorance in order to absolve himself from being responsible for the acts of his subordinates. (Rositzke 1977: 240)

Regardless of the length of time in which a president can officially deny any knowledge of covert operations, the United States is still suspect. This was the case in both Iran and Chile. Any argument over who knew exactly what within government, is ultimately counterproductive.

Long-Term Repercussions

Although the evaluation framework in this study analyzed covert action policy primarily in terms of short-term outcomes, some of the most compelling reasons for being wary of covert action as a policy tool are those of long-term outcomes. These can rarely be predicted with any degree of certainty, and almost always appear over time.

In Chile, the negative repercussions took far less time to appear than was the case in Iran where the US-supported Shah wasn't overthrown until a quarter century later.

Although most US citizens were, and still are, not aware of their own government's

involvement in the 1953 Iranian coup, most Iranians are. The following quotation, from an older citizen of Iran, poignantly summarizes much of the thought among ordinary Iranian citizens, and their perceptions of the United States:

Why did you Americans do that terrible thing? We always loved America. To us, America was the great country, the perfect country, the country that helped us while other countries were exploiting us. But after that moment, no one in Iran ever trusted the United States again. I can tell you for sure that if you had not done that thing, you would never have had that problem of hostages being taken in your embassy in Teheran. All your trouble started in 1953. Why, why did you do it? (cited in Kinzer 2003: ix).

The Iranian respondents who participated in this study appeared to agree with this assessment to a great extent, while the Chileans felt similar with regards to their own country's situation.

The long-term effects of US intervention in Iran had devastating consequences for the development of political, social, and economic institutions within that nation. As an underdeveloped country being exploited by Western powers, Iran in 1953 was on the verge of becoming a more highly developed and democratic nation, one which may have very well been not only friendly towards the United States and its interests, but could have also served as a model for other newly independent Third World nations.

When Mossadeq was named prime minister in 1951, the modern middle class seemed poised to establish hegemony over the state. Moreover, it continued to grow in the following decades and probably would have succeeded if exogenous structural factors had not intervened. The creation of a highly autonomous state not only interrupted this process but actually reversed it, facilitating the co-optation of much of the modern middle class and virtually destroying the political organizations that represented it. (Gasirowski 1991: 223)

The major lesson to be learned from the use of covert action is that there is a great deal which cannot possibly be foreseen by the use of covert action policies. The long-term effects of such policies are the most profound, and they may outweigh the original problem that covert action was initially designed to address. Furthermore, the maintenance of a repressive regime such as that of the Shah's, by the United States,

proved not only costly in terms of resources, but also never really managed to achieve the kind of distance from the US, which would have altered public perception among most Iranians for many years after the 1953 coup.

...Iran is a dramatic example of the fruits of cold war interventionist policies in strategically vital Third World countries...

The lesson of Iran is clearly applicable elsewhere: Any regime considered by its attentive public to be an American creation, or at least a dependency, will be fundamentally fragile. An effective remedy to cold war-initiated policies requires a dissociation strategy, conducted in a period of domestic stability that is designed to counter perceptions of American control. (Cottam 1979: 14)

To think that if the United States had done absolutely nothing in 1953 with regards to Iran, rather than intervene, the current toxic relationship between Iran and the United States might not even exist as it does today. The Iranians interviewed in this study appear to agree to a great extent with this conclusion.

The Chilean situation is different in that the Pinochet regime did manage to create some constancy out of the political and economic chaos that occurred under Allende. One Chilean respondent in this study claimed that “those 16 years [under Pinochet] did stabilize the economy....as a result, Chile has been identified as a tiger in Latin America,” even though much economic growth in Chile occurred in the post-Pinochet era. Of course, the United States is recognized more as an unwanted interferer in Chilean politics rather than a source of stability, especially when one takes into consideration the many attempts by the United States at destabilizing Chile’s economy in the early 1970s. Chile’s situation is similar to that of Iran in that the same perceptions are often held of Americans and US foreign policy in general. In this sense, covert action has had little long-term success in Chile as well as in Iran.

Not only is covert action essentially undemocratic to begin with, but it effectively discourages democracy in the long term as well. The practice of democracy appears to be

a form of weakness in certain Third World states when the CIA has an eye on these same states. CIA covert intervention in both Iran and Chile reflects a pattern in other parts of the world, that is, the United States tends to effectively overthrow governments in developing countries which allow for such practices as free speech and freedom of expression, open and fair elections, and dissent of all types.

The irony, of course, is that the CIA succeeds only in situations where the left-oriented regime has not moved in a totalitarian direction and allows political opposition to operate and mobilize its forces. Allende, for instance, was vulnerable to CIA tactics precisely because he upheld the human rights of his opposition. (Falk 1976: 148)

In this respect, refusing to brutally crack down on dissent can be considered a form of “weakness” in both the Mossadegh and Allende administrations, which eventually led to their demise. Many years after the 1953 coup, members of the Iranian theocracy which forcibly took power in that country in 1979 made it clear that democracy was to be avoided as something which would make them vulnerable to future US intervention. Ayatollah Khomeini’s eventual heir to power, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was quoted as stating that “[w]e are not liberals like Allende and Mossadegh, whom the CIA can snuff out” (cited in Kinzer 2003: 203). Thus it would seem that covert action discourages democracy in many other ways, rather than promoting it.³

The Future of Covert Action?

During the Cold War, the United States was able to posit that its covert operations had acted as a counter measure to the covert (and overt) aggression of the Soviet Union. Former US intelligence officer Melvin Beck (1984: 90) makes the claim that the United States was involved in a “dollars to rubles” campaign when it came to the use of covert action propaganda. The two case studies – Iran and Chile – presented in this study both

represent classic Cold War operations, those being US reactions against the perceived threat of international communism.

Today, with the non-existence of a rival global superpower, the role of covert action (if there is to be a role) by the United States is ill-defined. Without a Soviet menace to contain, exactly how does a policy tool used primarily as a means to support US containment strategy work? With international terrorism as the main target of covert action, exactly how is terrorism contained?

Covert operations, despite all other factors, remain negative on the legality and legitimacy criteria scales. In both the Iran and Chile case studies, no type of covert action resulted in a positive evaluation for legality and legitimacy. None of the respondents (American or otherwise) who participated in this study claimed that covert action was entirely legal or legitimate, or that it would have been seen as such by those nations on the receiving end. Even when covert action may have appeared to be useful in other areas, it was still seen by US-based covert action experts in this study as a controversial and potentially counterproductive choice of action. Those on the receiving end of covert action – the Iranians and the Chileans in this study – also confirm the limitations of covert action. As stakeholders essentially without a stake in the course of their own national politics, they attest to the lack of usefulness of covert action as it was practiced in Iran and Chile.

Today, there is growing support for paramilitary covert action which, as the analysis thus far has demonstrated, is the least useful type of covert operation. Covert paramilitary operations remain the most contentious and the most legally questionable, and are also the type most synonymous with war itself. There currently appears in

Washington to be more emphasis on agencies other than the CIA for the implementation of covert operations, which doesn't properly reflect the reality that the CIA is the one agency best equipped to engage in such activities.

Public investigations into the affairs of the various agencies and departments of the US government – with regards to covert action – appears to be something which is definitely not confined solely to the history books and media archives. The potential for abuse of power and authority remains to this day, and the lessons learned in Iran and Chile may have to be learned once again in other parts of the world, or perhaps even in the *same* parts of the world.

The data garnered from the various respondents in this study have shed some new light on the details that took place with regards to the Iran and Chile operations, but, more often than not, these details have supported the findings in the analyses of the two previous chapters. On the whole, covert action has essentially not been a useful policy tool for furthering US foreign policy goals. It has been a policy choice which not only fails to produce positive results – in either the long or short terms – but also produces some serious and seemingly insurmountable negative results.

Notes to Chapter VI

¹ The term “respondent” is used throughout this study to indicate individuals who participated as interviewees. This term has been chosen over the term “informant” due to the subject matter involved. In much qualitative research practice, “informant” is used over “respondent” as it better describes the richness of the data gained through interviews, as opposed to a participant who merely “responds” to a more structured but much less flexible survey questionnaire. Although the participants in this study were certainly more of the “informant” variety, as they contributed a great deal to the data collected and added much value through the richness of their experiences, the term “respondent” has nevertheless been used. In the clandestine world of covert action and intelligence, the term “informant” is often used to describe spies, secret agents, and collaborators – none of which describe the participants involved in this study. All participants spoke freely and, as a result, have been referred to as “respondents.” Their identities, however, have been kept secret due to the strict ethical standards of academic conduct and research at the University of Victoria.

² In his account of Operation Ajax, Kermit Roosevelt mentions that President Eisenhower did in fact sit in on the final briefing which he made after the successful ousting of Mossadegh. This occurred in the White House on September 4, 1953 (Roosevelt 1979: 208).

³ In defense of the CIA, former CIA employee Cord Meyer (1980: 66-67) presents the case that the CIA had normally supported left-wing parties as they were the parties most likely to compete with the further-left and extremist parties (i.e. communists, Marxists) in their respective countries. This can be said to be the case to some extent in Chile, for example, as the CIA-supported Christian Democrats had pursued certain left-oriented policies. The reality remains, however, that regardless of which party had received support from covert US sources, democratic institutions were still destroyed in the end, and very much through the “assistance” of US covert intervention.

Chapter VII

Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation framework developed and defined in Chapter III and utilized for the two case studies in Chapters IV (Iran) and V (Chile) has allowed for an in-depth examination of each of the four major types of covert action – propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary. The data provided by the respondents who participated in this study, as outlined by the analysis provided in Chapter VI, has also contributed greatly towards an evaluation of covert action and its usefulness as a policy tool.

From all of this, a great deal has been learned about the use (and abuse) of covert action. This seventh and final chapter will provide conclusions based on the previous analyses, as well as providing some brief recommendations as to how it can be used (or not used) in the future.

Conclusions

Various scholars, critics, and policy analysts have arrived at their own conclusions regarding the use of covert action, based on a number of different considerations. Often these considerations have been based on the questionable legal basis for covert action, or on the negative ramifications of the use of this type of foreign policy. One such conclusion reads as follows:

Covert action should never be deemed routine. Hence, routine Cold War propaganda operations should be terminated. Covert action should be undertaken only in support of publicly articulated policy and only when overt means are unavailable, insufficient, or judged too costly in human life. Even then, it should be undertaken on the presumption that it will become public knowledge, probably sooner rather than later and perhaps well before the action is over – the *New York Times* test.

To say that covert action should be undertaken only as a last resort when other means will not do is not to imply that it should be used only *after* all else has failed. That almost surely consigns the covert action to failure....This test of means is analytic, not temporal: Is there no other option and, in particular, no other overt option? (Treverton 2001: 173-174)

Often, conclusions regarding covert action are not necessarily grounded in whether or not it has actually succeeded in getting the job done by accomplishing specific goals. Even if the various types of covert action were legal and legitimate, and had no serious negative repercussions of which to speak, do they at least achieve foreign policy goals in an efficient and effective manner?

The overall conclusions of this study reveal that covert action, more often than not, does not produce many positive results in any of the four major evaluation criteria. Paramilitary operations are rarely successful, and do not even appear to be covert on most occasions. The one relatively successful use of paramilitary covert action, in Iran in 1953, depended a great deal upon factors which lay outside of US control, and relied excessively on chance. Covert economic operations also do not appear to be of much use, and like paramilitary are also questionable in their very covertness. Both

propaganda and political covert operations tend also to be of limited use, the only positive examples from this study being from Iran, those which normally consisted of the quieter operations. There was no positive result in the criteria of legality and legitimacy in any of the four major types of covert action.

Even when covert action appears in the short term to have obtained small degree of success in achieving certain goals, there is usually some element of failure involved. Although the long-term implications of using covert action as it has been used in the past are impossible to fully foresee, there are certainly some general conclusions that can be made regarding its use. They are outlined in the following list of six broad principles. Examples from the two case studies will be used to illustrate each principle.

(1) *Covert action is usually unreliable.* Due to its secretive nature, covert action relies too heavily on that which lies beyond the immediate control of the government that is using it. Those parties involved in covert action may or may not be willing to cooperate with any given covert plan, may also be prone to changing their minds at any given time, and may or may not take part based on some very different terms. The case of Operation Ajax is revealing. The Shah was a personality not at ease with the United States and its covert endeavours to overthrow the government of his country. Despite the fact that he was one of few individuals to benefit most from Operation Ajax, he did not at first have confidence in the CIA or British intelligence, and fled Iran as quickly as possible upon hearing the news of Ajax's initial failure. Even the Shah's most important supporter, General Fazlollah Zahedi, at first also lacked confidence in the plan and went into hiding outside of Teheran (despite the fact that many elements of the Iranian military traditionally had been and were also then in support of the Shah). If either of these two

individuals had decided not to continue with the Ajax plan as encouraged by Kermit Roosevelt, the plan would have failed completely.

In Chile, the botched kidnapping of commander-in-chief General René Schneider is another illustration of effects which lie beyond the control of the US government. Those who killed Schneider believed they were doing the business of the US government, and did not act without incentive from the CIA. Although the CIA had officially not committed the act, they nevertheless conceived, planned, and promoted it. The fact that it actually happened, even the manner in which it did (i.e. assassination rather than kidnapping) should not come as a surprise to anyone. Employing a third party to undertake these kinds of covert operations (particularly illegal operations such as kidnapping) is a choice in which one must learn to anticipate the unexpected and even the counterproductive.

This applies of course to the most controversial of covert operations, that is, those of the paramilitary variety. Even with less controversial methods, however, the reliability element is suspect. Covert funding of propaganda in Chile managed to keep Salvador Allende from office for a set number of years, but in the end these operations failed. The negative result from the discovery of US covert influence in Chile, by Chileans, may have even proved counterproductive (at least as demonstrated by the left-wing media in Chile). This lack of reliability in covert action as a policy tool suggests that it should be used sparingly, if at all, and only after considerable analysis based on solid intelligence collected over the long term.

(2) *In the end, covert action is rarely ever completely covert.* Time has a way of revealing hidden truths, and sooner or later (often sooner, as was the case with Chile)

covert action loses its lustre of non-attributability, and any semblance of plausible denial that is believable therefore vanishes. In fact, paramilitary covert action is never really covert in the first place.

In the “success” that was Operation Ajax, the media took many years to discover that the US government was behind the Iranian coup. This secret was not kept forever though, and eventually Ajax became public knowledge. Although Eisenhower constantly denied any such involvement, it wasn’t until the Clinton administration that the US government accepted responsibility when then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright admitted to the US sponsorship of this operation, as reported in the *New York Times*:

In 1953 the United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran’s popular prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. The Eisenhower administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons. But the coup was clearly a setback for Iran’s political development. And it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs. (Madeleine Albright, cited in Sanger 2000: A5)

Although this event may have evaporated from the public consciousness of the American public, the Iranian respondents interviewed for this study made reference to this same speech by Secretary Albright as an example of how long it took the US government to come to terms with its own covert history in the Persian Gulf region. It therefore took decades for the US government to finally admit exactly what the rest of world, particularly the people of Iran, had already known. The resentment of which Secretary Albright spoke is difficult to measure, but is nevertheless not without its effects on international relations.

If covertness is desired (and it should be, in order to maintain usefulness), a quiet, low-key functioning of operations is absolutely necessary. In Iran, the CIA’s Operation BEDAMN’s propaganda efforts worked in a low-key manner until efforts were increased

under Operation Ajax, which eventually made all US-based covert operations in that country public knowledge in due time. The bribing of politicians by the CIA was also fairly low profile until Ajax turned violent.

In Chile, the propaganda and political efforts undertaken by the CIA in the 1960s did not become public knowledge until US covert efforts were dramatically increased in the early 1970s. Covertiness itself was sacrificed as a result. These examples further illustrate the necessity of covert operations as quiet operations. Those actions, when increased in intensity of their operations, therefore become self-defeating to a great extent.

(3) *Contrary to popular belief, covert action is rarely ever cheap.* In the short term, covert action can, in fact, appear as an inexpensive option. Over the longer term, however, what is achieved through covert action may require ongoing maintenance.

An excellent example is that of Iran. The relatively inexpensive sum of between \$10,000 and \$20 million,¹ the usually quoted range, which was used to fund Operation Ajax should not be viewed in terms of its initial costs only. The billion-plus dollar figure that was necessary in keeping the Shah in power for a quarter of a century must also be part of the financial accounting process. The decades of both covert and overt support of the Shah's regime eventually resulted in a failed program, as his rule collapsed in 1979 – a very expensive cost, ultimately. The costs of continual US focus and efforts on Iran since 1979 have yet to be fully tabulated.

In Chile, the financial costs of covertly supporting the Eduardo Frei government added up over time as well, and yet they still failed in the end. The backfiring of covert action on the local population, such as the left-wing press capitalizing on the discovery of

US efforts in Chile, do certain damage to overall US government efforts to persuade the population, yet these costs are financially indeterminable.

In fact, history of the CIA and its covert activities overseas has shown that covert action can become highly “addictive,” as the following quotation suggests, in that use of such a policy tool requires only more of it (plus further overt action), in order to sustain itself.

Indeed, covert operations were addictive. One State Department historian suggested that, once the CIA had destroyed the natural balance of politics in a country...its artificially stabilizing presence was permanently required thereafter. (Jeffreys-Jones 1989: 97)

Both covert and overt support were made by the US government to Chile, and with particular regards to Iran, to the point where the overall expenses of covert action far outweighed any benefit which may have been achieved. Benefits achieved may also have been obtained through overt and far less costly policy tools, most of which were never actually tried at the time.

Furthermore, it is very difficult also to determine how much product one gets for each dollar spent, as funds have a habit of vanishing quickly. The clandestine nature of covert action prohibits any sort of extensive paper trail, making accountability virtually impossible anyway. Although we do know that great amounts of US taxpayer dollars have been spent, we do not know if that spending has actually resulted in any attributable and concrete positive result.

(4) *Covert action can very easily be counterproductive.* The unreliability of covert activity can often create more problems than it actually solves. The problem-solving efforts of covert action may even lead to only more covert action being used (i.e. the unwanted escalation of covert efforts). The ultimate failure of political and propaganda efforts against Allende, for example, led to increased covert efforts of the

economic and paramilitary variety. The kidnapping/assassination of General René Schneider in Chile produced not a military coup, which was the CIA's intention, but a governmental commitment to the constitutional process in Chile, something which only furthered anti-Allende efforts in that nation. The eventual discovery by most Chileans of US covert activity in their nation, which was essentially counterproductive, led to further use of covert action of various types, which collectively and ultimately led to the 1973 coup and long-term dictatorship under Pinochet, which was not itself a goal of US foreign policy.

A policy tool that serves itself more than its objectives is unwise. One which creates more problems than it solves is, of course, not the best policy tool. Contrary to the statements made by US public officials, covert intervention does not always work out according to plan. Henry Kissinger stated it well nearly a decade after the coup: "We believed then – I am convinced, correctly – that democratic institutions in Chile would have been destroyed without our assistance" (Kissinger 1982: 383). The irony of such a conclusion, being that democratic institutions in Chile were destroyed very much with US government assistance, is often lost on those who are not on the receiving end of US foreign policy.

(5) *Covert action remains anti-democratic and legally questionable.* Covert action policies secretly affect the lives of many people, without them ever knowing it. Those citizens on the receiving end of US-based covert action policies may not at first know of the various covert operations being used against them and/or their government, but usually find out in due time. The Iranian and Chilean respondents in this study illustrated all too well the fragility of covertness, and the ability of such citizens to defend

themselves against such actions, both before and after they discover them, is minimal. They are essentially key stakeholders without a say in their own destinies.

Such action by any government sets a poor example for international relations. Covert paramilitary operations are in essence, acts of war, undeclared and not made public, waged against a populace not well able to defend itself. Propaganda, political, and economic operations are similar, although less violent, but nevertheless circumvent democratic processes which may or may not exist in the recipient nations. Democracy was basically destroyed in both Iran and Chile through the covert endeavours of the United States government. Given that the overt claims of the United States government in spreading the concepts of “democracy” and “freedom” throughout the world are both loud and frequent, covert action in practice essentially nullifies these claims. The democratic freedoms of both Iranians and Chileans was eradicated through US covert action, while the legal rights of citizens of both nations also vanished as a result.

(6) *Covert action can compromise the traditional role of espionage.* Intelligence agencies are the best organizations for gathering useful data on unstable regimes and situations around the world. The espionage function of agencies such as the CIA is compromised as a result of covert action undertaken by the US government.

Effective covert action is not possible without accurate intelligence, as demonstrated by Kermit Roosevelt’s planning and implementation of Operation Ajax. He admitted the absolute necessity of having the proper intelligence in order to be able to undertake such an operation.² Without such intelligence, no successful covert operation is possible. Although intelligence gathered through espionage is not specifically designed for covert action, it certainly does support other elements of both domestic and

foreign policy. In other words, espionage is highly necessary and valuable, while covert action is not. Covert action is also extremely dependent upon espionage, whereas the reverse is not true. The espionage function is therefore more important in the realm of foreign policy.

Effective covert action normally utilizes the same intelligence assets and agents as espionage operations. Traditional espionage is normally quiet and when discovered often results in a politically embarrassing diplomatic indiscretion rather than violent confrontation or *coup d'état*. Covert operations therefore threaten those same assets used in intelligence collection, upon which they ultimately depend. Covert action compromises the impartiality, neutrality, objectivity of intelligence collection. Espionage is collection-oriented, unlike covert action which by nature is action- and change-oriented. If performed by the same case officers and agents overseas, intelligence collection is then in danger of becoming subservient to the more politicized policy goals of covert action.

Covert action obviously has its own goals, which have been pre-determined by policymakers. Intelligence collection should not be policy-oriented in this sense. Ideally, intelligence is supposed to consist of raw data which allow policymakers to come to the best possible conclusions, free of bias and untainted by pre-existing policy. Sound intelligence takes a pragmatic approach. Intelligence experts must thoughtfully analyze and evaluate all essential considerations relating to national security issues. Use of covert action threatens the quality of the intelligence itself, which in turn may adversely affect the policies made thereafter.

Recommendations

If used during times of war, covert action may prove to be useful. But if used during times of peace – which has been the focus of this study – the very topic of covert action should be approached with caution. The following list includes some general recommendations regarding the overall use of covert action, based on the analysis outlined in this study.

(1) *Covert action should not be used in the place of other policy tools without full consideration, given that other tools are usually available.* In both Iran and Chile, there existed a number of alternative approaches, diplomatic or otherwise, which were not used to their fullest extent, if at all. In Iran the diplomatic efforts of the Truman administration were not given the opportunity as Eisenhower rather rapidly dealt with Mossadegh and the Iranian oil problem in a covert manner. In Chile, any meaningful diplomatic efforts weren't even considered by the Nixon administration as a means of dealing with Allende, either before or after his election in 1970. As one former senior CIA official and supporter of covert action operations put it:

None of the techniques of covert action or paramilitary operations are substitutes for policy. They are not panaceas. They are, collectively, an option. Uncontrolled, they can confuse and even distort a democratic country like the United States. (Shackley 1981: 7)

This potential for distortion is the greatest threat posed by the use of covert action, although in both cases, the worst effects of the Iranian and Chilean operations occurred in those countries respectively.

(2) *If used, covert action should be used as a complement to other policy tools.*

The best example is that of war. During times of overt warfare, covert goals should match overt goals, otherwise covert action might conflict with other policies, potentially resulting in counterproductivity and therefore a waste of time, effort, and resources.

During times of peace, however, the use of covert action is less certain. Those efforts which appear to function most effectively are those that are of the low-key variety, and this of course does not include paramilitary operations. It must be remembered that the use of covert operations may publicly highlight similar overt operations, or that intensified covert operations will become overt anyway, as was the case with covert and overt economic action against Chile in the 1970s. Covert action may nullify its overt counterpart, creating more problems that it ultimately solves.

In the case of propaganda operations, what can be done covertly may in fact be accomplished in a more overt manner, through such organizations as the United States Information Agency (USIA) or the US Agency for International Development (USAID). In such cases, covert action may not be necessary, but if used, it should serve the same goals and objectives as the efforts of these other organizations.

(3) If used, covert action should be performed by those organizations that are best equipped for it. If covert action is deemed necessary, it should not be sought through the military. In the United States, the CIA is best equipped to deal with covert activity,³ although this will certainly interfere with its prime function of intelligence collection. Given that covert action itself threatens the espionage function of intelligence agencies, it is not a policy choice that is one readily embarks upon. This is simply a reality of covert action that must be taken into consideration whenever considering its use. Likewise, the government of the day, as well as succeeding governments, must account for and deal with the negative repercussions which can and will result from the use of covert operations. Other branches and agencies of the US government have not demonstrated an

ability to successfully apply covert action policies, and neither do they have the same level of experience as the CIA.

(4) Respect the independence of your intelligence agencies, while at the same time maintaining accountability. There is a delicate balance between interfering excessively with intelligence agencies by policymakers, and with giving such agencies far too much independence as with the “rogue elephant” hypothesis once coined by Senator Frank Church.⁴ There is a requirement that intelligence agencies not become overly politicized at any time, especially during periods of national crisis. Intelligence agencies, as with all bureaucratic functions, should strive to achieve as much impartiality as is possible.

Given this, the CIA is still the best organization within the United States government for engaging in intelligence and other related activities. The failure of the Eisenhower administration in this regard was the absence of a demand for meaningful data from the CIA that demonstrated a genuine Soviet or communist threat to either Iran or to the Persian Gulf region. Important decisions are based on such data, which in many ways sounds like somewhat of an understatement, given the final result and the outcome in world history. In Chile, the decision to counter Allende appears to have been made regardless of CIA reports claiming that he was not in a position to threaten the security of the United States or the South American region overall. The CIA and its case officers in the field certainly knew more about the situation in Chile at the time than either Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger, and the various interests within such an organization do help to ensure greater objectivity in intelligence reporting as opposed to the blatant ideology which may otherwise guide public policy.

Intelligence should be kept strategic, rather than political, and as obvious as this may sound it is often rarely adhered to with regards to major intelligence-based decisions.⁵

(5) *Keep long-term goals in mind, and how incremental changes can contribute towards these goals.* As difficult as this may sound, it is also absolutely necessary. Any action today may create further problems, i.e. “blowback” in CIA jargon, which could jeopardize future national security or damage foreign relations. How prepared are policymakers for these unforeseen consequences? As with other forms of public policy, large and revolutionary alterations rarely work out effectively in the long term. Such large scale operations, including overthrow of foreign governments, often result in fragile creations which are bound to evolve into some form of disturbance at some time in the future. Covert operations should remain as covert as possible, and when publicly exposed should not be on such a scale that irreparable damage is done to US government agencies, the current administration in the White House, or to foreign relations. The smaller, more incremental operations are those which tend to work best in the end. In both Iran and Chile, those operations which actually had some degree of success were exactly these types of operations.

Policymakers should evaluate the impacts and outcomes of such operations and how they contribute towards the big picture, rather than attempting to radically change the big picture overnight through such means as a *coup d'état*.

(6) *Be wary of the “success” of covert action.* What originally appeared to be a success in 1953 in Iran ended up as a major form of failure in 1979, a problem which has persisted to the present day.⁶ Those successful covert political and propaganda

operations in Chile in 1964 escalated into something much bigger and far more disastrous by 1973, that being a brutal and undesired dictatorship which lasted until 1989. Covert action is essentially unsuccessful if it only leads to further use of covert action, especially if it grows into the use of very large covert operations. The larger the operation, the less covert it will be, as demonstrated by the two case studies. Successful policies should reduce the number of existing problems, not increase them.

On the whole, covert action appears most often to be a high-risk proposition with an enormous degree of uncertainty, a great potential for negative repercussion, and a relatively low rate of positive return. This applies to the use of covert action during the Cold War as this study has demonstrated, but is also applicable to current global affairs and foreign policy, perhaps today more so than in the past.

The world today is in many ways unlike the world during the Cold War. The present uni-polar world order, with the United States as the only remaining superpower, poses new challenges to the realm of foreign policy and the possible use of covert action. If allowed to go unchecked, without regard for international concern, covert action can very well lead to a major form of abuse by policymakers in Washington. The presence of the Soviet Union was a major counterbalance to this threat throughout the Cold War, however, this counterbalance no longer exists. The degree of secrecy by which covert action is undertaken is another threat to democracy and stability, as major decisions are kept from public scrutiny. Covert policies should ideally serve the same purposes as overt policies, but with such secrecy how can this even be determined? The long-term implications of covert action, from the creation of dependencies including despotic regimes like that of the Shah's, to the violent upheavals that result when such despots are

deposed, are all part and parcel of the covert action tool kit. Events such as the 1979 revolution in Iran should not come as a surprise to anyone, given the nature and the history of covert action. In the realm of foreign policy, the United States is best advised to proceed with caution – covert action may be more trouble than it is worth.

Notes to Chapter VII

¹ The range of \$10,000 to \$20 million for Operation Ajax may seem rather excessive, even unrealistic (particularly the reference to \$10,000, which, even in 1953, was unbelievably low). These figures were cited earlier in Chapter IV (p. 106), with William Blum (1998: 69) citing the lowest figure, and Freemantle (1983: 168) citing the highest. Regardless of the actual numbers, the range remains extreme, with the actual figure being unknown. Such an example very effectively illustrates the imprecise nature of the total expenses involved in any covert action operation, as well as illustrating just how much money can in fact be spent.

² Intelligence *collection* is the foundational basis of secret operations, not covert action. Covert action is subsidiary to collection, as its success is entirely dependent upon it. Kermit Roosevelt underscores the importance of having the correct assessment of any given nation, the kind of which can only be obtained through diligent intelligence collection. After he undertook Operation Ajax, he summarized the entire situation as follows:

On Friday, September 4, 1953, I reported at the White House to President Eisenhower, the two Dulles brothers, Secretary of Defense Wilson....Admiral Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Andy Goodpastor....So I closed my presentation an a warning note.

“Gentlemen, there is one thing I want to make very clear. We were successful in this venture because our assessment of the situation in Iran *was* correct....

“If our analysis had been wrong, we’d have fallen flat on our, er, faces. But it was right.

“If we, the CIA, are ever going to try something like this again, we must be absolutely sure that people and army want what we want.

“If not, you had better give the job to the Marines!”

But Foster Dulles did not want to hear what I was saying....Within weeks I was offered command of a Guatemalan undertaking already in preparation....I declined the offer. Later, I resigned from the CIA – before the Bay of Pigs disaster underlined the validity of my warning. (Roosevelt 1979: 208-210, italics original)

Roosevelt’s reference to the disastrous Bay of Pigs operation in 1961 deftly illustrates an undertaking that was in severe lack of proper intelligence. Covert action without the necessary intelligence to necessitate and support it is ultimately doomed to failure.

³ In a recent article in the *New Yorker*, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh explains some of the rationale by which the current US government has been placing greater emphasis on the Department of Defense, and less on the CIA, for covert operations:

The President’s decision enables [Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld to run the operations off the books – free from legal restrictions imposed on the C.I.A. Under current law, all C.I.A. covert activities overseas must be authorized by a Presidential finding and reported to the Senate and House intelligence committees. (The laws were

enacted after a series of scandals in the nineteen-seventies involving C.I.A. domestic spying and attempted assassinations of foreign leaders.) “The Pentagon doesn’t feel obligated to report any of this to Congress,” the former high-level intelligence official said. “They don’t even call it ‘covert ops’ – it’s too close to the C.I.A. phrase. In their view, it’s ‘black reconnaissance.’ They’re not even going to tell the CINCs” – the regional American military commanders-in-chief. (The Defense Department and the White House did not respond to requests for comment on this story.)... The legal questions about the Pentagon’s right to conduct covert operations without informing Congress have not been resolved. (Hersh 2005)

This would essentially amount to a circumvention of legal procedures which have been established for the purposes of avoiding the kinds of public uproar which took place in the 1970s regarding the CIA and its covert activities overseas. History may indeed repeat itself, only with the Pentagon in the lead role rather than the CIA.

⁴ The idea of the CIA acting on its own behalf, regardless of oversight or White House control, had been put forth by Senator Church as one possibility, although it has been generally agreed upon by the Church Committee and other critics that the CIA has in most instances (but certainly not all) acted with authority and direction from the White House. The “rogue elephant” hypothesis is a term that was misused and sensationalized by the major American media throughout the 1970s. Even Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, noted critics of the CIA and its covert activities, note that the CIA is essentially a tool of executive foreign policy with origins in the White House:

For the CIA is not an independent agency in the broad sense of the term, nor is it a governmental agency out of control. Despite occasional dreams of grandeur on the part of some of its clandestine operators, the CIA does not on its own choose to overthrow distasteful governments or determine which dictatorial regimes to support. Just as the State Department might seek, at the President’s request, to discourage international aid institutions from offering loans to “unfriendly” governments, so does the CIA act primarily when called upon by the Executive. The agency’s methods and assets are a resource that come with the office of the Presidency. (Marchetti & Marks 1980: 18)

⁵ Many Directors of Central Intelligence have been political rather than bureaucratic appointees, and when the leadership of the CIA is either too friendly or too compliant with the administration in the White House, the intelligence function is compromised. CIA veteran Harry Rositzke (1977: 241-242) notes that in the past the CIA has at times been overly politicized and has had to “give the Man what he wants” so to speak, which fundamentally alters the quality of the intelligence. Some authors have termed this instance of agencies producing pre-concluded intelligence specifically desired by government as “intelligence to please” or “backstopping” (Hastedt 1991: 10). Rositzke also claims that the CIA has often assumed the blame and thus become the “fall guy” for the White House, given that part of the purpose of covert action is to “avoid official responsibility” (1977: 239).

⁶ With regards to the “successful” Iranian operation, CIA Middle East bureau chief Kermit Roosevelt provides us with some valuable advice, the same type of which he provided to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in 1953. According to Roosevelt, Secretary Dulles felt that

by giving clandestine support to a group of your choice, you could accomplish whatever you wanted in a country, which was in my mind totally ridiculous....You get carried away by one operation and that makes you think you can do that same kind of thing wherever you want. And you forget to analyze carefully why the first one succeeded. (Kermit Roosevelt, cited in Scheer 1979: 7)

Glossary

Blowback – a term used by the CIA to describe negative repercussions that come as a result of CIA-instigated covert actions. Such blowback may take place many years or even decades after the fact. Also, the term blowback can refer to the deliberate planting of disinformation in a foreign nation by an intelligence organization, which later “blows back” to the country of origin as news or the truth. This is done to purposely mislead the media of the nation in which the intelligence agency originates.

Case Officer – an employee of the CIA within the Directorate of Operations (DDO), whose function it is to gather intelligence for a specific region, or work in covert operations or counterintelligence. Case officers often make valuable contacts in foreign states, and use these contacts for the purposes of intelligence gathering, and even covert action.

Church Committee – established in 1975, the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, more commonly known as the “Church Committee” in reference to its chairman Senator Frank Church (Democrat – Idaho), was an official governmental group which seriously investigated the US intelligence community. It produced numerous reports on various aspects of US intelligence agencies, including abuses of authority by agencies such as the FBI and the CIA, as well as US covert action in other countries. Apart from Senator Church, its membership included the following: John G. Tower (Republican – Texas) as Vice Chairman, Philip A. Hart (D – Michigan), Walter F. Mondale (D – Minnesota), Walter Huddleston (D – Kentucky), Robert B. Morgan (D – North Carolina), Gary W. Hart (D – Colorado), Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R – Tennessee), Barry Goldwater (R – Arizona), Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. (R – Maryland), and Richard S. Schweiker (R – Pennsylvania).

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency, established in 1947 under the *National Security Act* from the remnants of the World War II-era Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the immediate post-World War II Central Intelligence Group (CIG).

CIG – Central Intelligence Group (established in 1946, dissolved in 1947); the successor of the OSS and the immediate predecessor of the CIA.

Counterintelligence – any action that counters the activities of intelligence organizations originating from foreign sources. This includes such efforts as spying on the intelligence operatives of other nations, or countering anti-US propaganda operations overseas.

Covert Action, Covert Operation – (also: special activities, special operations, clandestine operations); activities operated by an intelligence organization that are not meant to be traceable to their origins, or to their nation of origin. Covert action operations are of four general types: propaganda (i.e. psychological), political, economic,

and paramilitary. Unlike espionage, which merely attempts to collect information, covert action actively attempts to make changes which may be large or small in scale.

DCI – Director of Central Intelligence; the official head of the CIA as well as the director of the various other organizations that make up the US intelligence community. The DCI originated before the CIA, as it was also the position that headed the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) from 1946 to 1947.

DDA – Deputy Director of Administration; also Directorate of Administration (established in 1950), the branch of the CIA that serves as an organizational arm to the other directorates. The DDA deals with such ordinary issues as the CIA budget, human resources, logistics, and other common concerns.

DDCI – Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; the second highest position in the CIA, which is subordinate to the DCI.

DDI – Deputy Director of Intelligence; also Directorate of Intelligence (established in 1952), the branch of the CIA that engages in overt intelligence collection, analysis of raw intelligence, and the production of finished intelligence reports using intelligence collected by other directorates.

DDO – Deputy Director of Operations; also Directorate of Operations (established in 1952 as the Directorate of Plans and renamed the Directorate of Operations in 1973), the clandestine wing of the CIA that engages in covert action, clandestine intelligence collection, counterintelligence, and related activities. The DDO is sometimes called Clandestine Services by CIA insiders, and also as the “Department of Dirty Tricks” by CIA outsiders and critics.

DDP – Deputy Director of Plans; also Directorate of Plans (established in 1952 and renamed the Directorate of Operations in 1973), the branch of the CIA that deals with covert action, clandestine intelligence collection, counterintelligence, and related activities. This directorate resulted from a merger between the Office of Special Operations (OSO) and the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC).

DDS&T – Deputy Director of Science and Technology; also Directorate of Science and Technology (established in 1963), the branch of the CIA that is responsible for intelligence relating to scientific and technological matters, including research and development of technical intelligence collection systems.

DIA – Defense Intelligence Agency (established in 1961); the agency of the Defense Department (as created by then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara) dealing with military intelligence and its collection; responsible to the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

DINA – *Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia*, or the National Intelligence Directorate, which acted as Chile’s secret police force under General Augusto Pinochet. Created in

1973 and led by Colonel Manuel Contreras, DINA strictly enforced the rule of the junta and became notorious for its use of harsh methods against ordinary Chileans.

El Mercurio – a prominent daily newspaper in Santiago, Chile. It had been known for acting as a voice for the CIA and US interests in Chile, and was funded by the US government as approved by the 40 Committee.

Executive Action – a euphemism within the CIA for assassination. DCI William Colby, in the 1970s, confirmed that the CIA had an executive action capacity.

Executive Order No. 12333 – a document drawn up during the administration of President Gerald Ford which attempted to redefine and limit the role of US intelligence agencies. It included a section which outlawed the use of political assassination by US government employees.

Forty Committee (40 Committee) – also known as the Special Group 54-12 (or 5412/2), Special Group 10/2, the Special Group, and the 303 Committee, it received its original name from a directive on covert action, NSC 5412/2. This committee planned covert operations but purposefully excluded the president in order that he could maintain plausible denial of covert operations. The name generally changed with successive administrations. Membership usually consisted of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Advisor (as a representative of the president).

Health Alteration Committee – a euphemism within the CIA for those individuals who dealt with the covert activities involving the incapacitation or death of specific human targets, such as political figures.

Hughes-Ryan Act (1974) – this legislation was passed in December of 1974 as a result of the criticisms regarding the CIA's covert actions in Chile. It was an attempt to establish some limits on the practices of the CIA as well as to improve accountability, particularly with respect to the president. Named after Senator Harold E. Hughes of Iowa and Representative Leo J. Ryan of California, it required that the president report non-intelligence operations to relevant Congressional committees, of which there were originally three (later four) in the both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Intelligence Accountability Act (1980) – also commonly known as the Intelligence Oversight Act, this required that Congress be informed of proposed covert actions. It established that there would exist one such committee each for the House of Representatives and the Senate, i.e. their respective Intelligence Committees. This act also demanded that all covert actions be reported to Congress, rather than just those initiated by the CIA.

Majlis – the Iranian parliament.

National Security Act (1947) – the legislation that established the CIA and the NSC. It was enacted by the Truman administration on July 26, 1947.

NED – National Endowment for Democracy (established in 1983); an organization which defines itself as a non-governmental or “nonprofit” organization, although it receives most of its funding from the United States government. It is dedicated towards the promotion and support of democracy and democratic institutions worldwide. The NED has been criticized, however, for its rather dubious history in foreign affairs, due to its funding of certain controversial political and media organizations overseas.

NIC – National Intelligence Council (established in 1979); an organization which provides intelligence analysis, strategic reports, and national intelligence estimates to better serve senior level policymakers within the intelligence community in the United States government. Its membership includes both governmental and non-governmental experts in intelligence and related fields.

NSA – National Security Agency (established in 1952); the US government organization that deals with the interception of communications transmissions, decoding, and related data collection, as well as the protection of US communications and secret coding systems. It is the largest and the most secretive of the US intelligence organizations.

NSC – National Security Council (established in 1947); the council of the executive branch of the US government which acts as the highest policymaking entity for intelligence-related operations in the United States. Its main members (by statute) include the president, the vice president, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense, while the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Central Intelligence serve in advisory roles. The president’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (i.e. the National Security Advisor) serves as the head of the NSC staff and is responsible directly to the president. The NSC serves advisory functions, and is not meant to have an operational capacity as do other agencies such as the CIA.

OPC – Office of Policy Coordination (established in 1948); the branch of the CIA that dealt with covert action operations. In 1952 it merged with the Office of Special Operations (OSO) and became the DDP.

Operation Ajax, Operation TPAJAX – the official name of the covert plan to overthrow Iranian prime minister Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh by the CIA in 1953. Mossadegh was replaced by Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, i.e. the Shah of Iran (1919-1980), who as a close ally of the United States ruled Iran from 1953 to 1979. Operation Ajax was the first major covert operation in the Third World and was considered an enormous success by officials in Washington, DC, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The letters “TP” refer to a CIA code which was specifically designated for Iran.

Operation BEDAMN – started in 1948, Operation BEDAMN was a CIA operated, anti-communist propaganda program based in Iran, which produced pamphlets, books, newspaper articles, and comics which countered the efforts of the Tudeh and the Soviet Union.

Operation Condor – a jointly operated international project involving the governments of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It was designed to hunt down and kill opponents and critics of these particular South American governments.

Operation Mongoose – the official name of the covert plan to assassinate Cuban president Fidel Castro and topple the Communist government in Cuba. Operation Mongoose was a failure, and had been initiated in 1961 as a reaction to the earlier failure of the Bay of Pigs operation to overthrow Castro's rule in Cuba.

Operation Success, Operation PBSUCCESS – the official name of the CIA plan to overthrow Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz by *coup d'état* in 1954. As the name suggests, the operation was indeed very successful, and gave the CIA as well as the White House much confidence in the covert action capabilities of the CIA. The letters "PB" refer to a CIA code which was specifically designated for Guatemala.

OSO – Office of Special Operations (established in 1946); the branch of the CIG and CIA that dealt with espionage, counterespionage, and other related functions. In 1952 it merged with the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) and became the DDP.

OSS – Office of Strategic Services (established in 1942, dissolved in 1945); the agency of the US government that dealt with foreign intelligence collection, research and analysis, espionage, covert action, and other related functions during World War II. It was the predecessor of the CIG and the CIA.

Paramilitary (PM) – the covert and often violent operations of the CIA, which include such operations as secret war (e.g. as was experienced in Laos in the 1960s and early 1970s), assassination, and the aiding of guerillas or resistance forces in other nations.

Plausible Denial – the claim made by the US government, its departments and agencies, and its employees (including the president) towards the non-attribution of covert activities or any knowledge thereof.

Proprietary – also propriety corporation; a CIA term for a company that is basically a wholly-owned subsidiary of the CIA. Proprietaries masquerade publicly as civilian business enterprises yet are both controlled and financed by the CIA. Some past examples include airlines such as Civil Air Transport, Southern Air Transport, and Air America, as well as radio stations such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

SAVAK – *Sazman-e Ettela'at Va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, or the Iranian State Intelligence and Security Organization. Created in 1957 with the assistance of the CIA and Israel's

Mossad, it functioned as the Shah of Iran's secret police, and was known for its brutal methods and its deep penetration into all elements of Iranian society.

SOD/SOG – Special Operations Division/Group (also “special ops”); an organization within the Directorate of Operations of the CIA which engages in paramilitary operations overseas. It essentially acts as the armed forces wing of the CIA. It operates on a semi-independent basis and has a budget of over \$4 billion (2002).

Special Activities – see: Covert Action.

Special Group – see: Forty Committee.

Third Way, Third Option – (also: quiet option); i.e. covert action.

Track I, Track II – names attributed to the approaches taken by the Nixon administration to prevent Chilean politician Salvador Allende from assuming and maintaining the office of the Chilean presidency. Track I referred to the use of covert political and propaganda operations, whereas Track II dealt with the promotion of a military coup against the Allende government by the Chilean armed forces as organized by the CIA.

Tudeh – (literally, “the masses”), i.e. the Iranian Communist Party.

Unidad Popular – Popular Unity, a coalition of various left-wing political parties in Chile, led by Salvador Allende. Its membership included such major parties as the centrist Radicals, the Socialists, and the Communists.

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