Agency without an adversary: The CIA and covert actions in the nineteen-eighties and beyond

Edward Alexander Gibbs

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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AGENCY WITHOUT AN ADVERSARY
THE CIA AND COVERT ACTIONS IN THE NINETEEN-EIGHTIES AND BEYOND

by

Edward Alexander Gibbs

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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The Thesis of Edward A. Gibbs for the degree of M.A. in Political Science is approved.

Chairperson, Andrew C. Tuttle, Ph.D.

Examining Committee Member, Jerry L. Simich, Ph.D.

Examining Committee Member, Steven Parker, Ph.D.

Graduate Faculty Representative, George F. Mauer, Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate College, C. L. Bowles, Ph.D.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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ABSTRACT

The CIA and its covert actions have been oft criticized. After serious Congressional oversight was established in 1976-77 (The Year of Intelligence) covert actions by the Agency tapered off. Did this mean the loss of a powerful tool because of Congressional meddling in foreign affairs or simply the retiring of outmoded practices? Have covert actions conducted in the 1980s including Afghanistan and Nicaragua been successful and will they need to continue now that the United States has become the sole superpower? Proposals to drastically restructure the CIA such as those of Daniel Patrick Moynihan are examined. The methodology will include a definition of covert actions and an examination of the definition of success in covert actions. The success of covert actions will be looked at from several perspectives including short, medium, and long term time frames.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER I A DEFINITION ...................................................................................... 1
  Legal History ........................................................................................................ 1
  A Question of Definitions ................................................................................... 10
  A Final Operational Definition ......................................................................... 13
  Endnotes ............................................................................................................ 16

CHAPTER II MEASUREMENT .................................................................................. 18
  The Perfect Covert Action ................................................................................ 18
  Defining Success ............................................................................................... 22
  Goals: Foreign Policy and Operational ......................................................... 24
  Time Frames ..................................................................................................... 26
  "Covert" Operations ......................................................................................... 29
  Meeting American Standards ......................................................................... 31
  Bang for the Buck ............................................................................................. 33
  Perspectives ...................................................................................................... 34
  Final Notes ....................................................................................................... 36
  Endnotes ........................................................................................................... 39

CHAPTER III NICARAGUA ..................................................................................... 41
  Foreign Policy Goals ....................................................................................... 46
  Operational Success ......................................................................................... 50
  Long Term Success .......................................................................................... 57
  Covertness ....................................................................................................... 61
  Democratic Standards ...................................................................................... 62
  Efficient Expenditure ....................................................................................... 65
  Benefit to Population ....................................................................................... 67
  Conclusions ...................................................................................................... 69
  Endnotes ........................................................................................................... 71

CHAPTER IV AFGHANISTAN "A Soviet Vietnam" .................................................. 75
  Foreign Policy Goals ....................................................................................... 80
  Operational Goals ........................................................................................... 82
  Long Term Success .......................................................................................... 87
  Covertness ....................................................................................................... 92
  Democratic Standards ...................................................................................... 95
  Efficient Expenditure ....................................................................................... 97
  Benefit to Population ....................................................................................... 98
  Final Conclusions .......................................................................................... 100
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Chapter I

A Definition

Covert actions did not suddenly come about with the creation of the CIA in 1947. The attempt to affect political goals by covert means goes back much farther. Spy craft goes back to revolutionary days and "the United States' achievement of independence owed much to espionage and covert actions." Though modeled after the older Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the CIA would approach covert actions and intelligence functions as a bureaucratic institution, an institution under more direct control of the executive and much less aligned with the military.

The surprise at Pearl Harbor is generally credited with convincing the nation's policy makers that a permanent coordinated intelligence agency was needed. The OSS was a war time intelligence unit with a fair degree of success at small scale covert actions. It was not clear at first if the newly created CIA would engage in covert actions at all, but under the pressures of a rapidly forming Cold War there was little doubt.

Legal History

The statutory history of covert action covers about half a century. The actual legal authority to conduct covert actions comes from a small section of the National Security Act of 1947:
... to perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct.

Covert actions themselves, as the "other such functions" came to be defined, were not spelled out until 1948. Covert actions lacked an actual definition. The entire justification for the CIA to engage in secretive political actions was tied to an ambiguous clause. "Other functions" could easily have supported simple clandestine intelligence operations without giving any provision for more elaborate measures such as influencing Italian elections in 1948 or overthrowing governments in Iran and Guatemala.

The first general counsel for the CIA had doubts about any justification of covert operations under the National Security Act. Directive NSC 4 indicated a need for using covert psychological warfare. According to Lawrence Houston, the general counsel, there was "nothing in the specific language of the legislation that specifically gave us authority for such activities." Houston went on to assert that "either [propaganda or commando type] activity would be an unwarranted extension of the functions authorized by" the act. He did not believe "that there was any thought in the minds of Congress that the Central Intelligence Agency under this authority would take positive action for subversion and sabotage." Still the young CIA was being directed to engage in covert psychological warfare, essentially propaganda, in an attempt to defeat strong communist parties in Italy and France.

After some analysis Houston found that as long as "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." Essentially the CIA's entire authority relied upon executive orders and the tacit consent of Congress to allow them to engage in covert actions. While this was a great power for the President, it allowed almost no role for Congress, a situation which would only be corrected in the mid 1970s. Basically the President was allowed to wage covert wars and propaganda campaigns without needing assistance from Congress. A wonderful tool, it would only seriously
begin to be questioned with the dramatic failure at the Bay of Pigs. For a time the Cold War made it a perfectly acceptable situation. Still the argument that there was no authority for the CIA to engage in covert actions has been overturned largely by precedence.

NSC 10/2 was to contain the first true definition of these "other functions" in June of 1948. The "vicious covert activities of the USSR" prompted the U.S. to follow suit. Covert actions were finally defined as:

5. As used in this directive, "covert operations" are understood to be all activities (except as noted herein) which conducted or sponsored by this Government against hostile foreign states or groups or in support of friendly foreign states or groups but which are so planned and executed 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. Specifically, such operations shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda, economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world. Such operations shall not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations.

There is an obvious emphasis on plausible deniability. To be truly covert an operation would have to be completely secret from the targeted state or group. Even a relatively uninvolved paramilitary operation in Guatemala could be easily assigned to the United States. Before any covert action is taken there is generally already an air of hostility between the two states. When the U.S. undertakes an operation against some small Latin American country, it is easy for the country to blame the U.S. Thus any covert action especially involving paramilitary style campaigns or large amounts of money and agents will be exposed eventually. Thus for the U.S. government the key was to be able to deny the operation with a straight face, knowing that no indisputable evidence would be presented. As long as the covert action could plausibly be denied, it was "covert" under this definition.

The line between covert and overt begins to fade out at this point. It no longer has to be a secret operation at all. Full scale wars can be carried out by proxies without invalidating the covert status. As long as the operation cannot be directly traced to the
U.S. government it is for all practical purposes covert. Obviously the doctrine of plausible deniability was largely held to protect the President. Angelo Codevilla refers to covert actions as merely denoting "some of the less-then-blatant ways in which it was interfering in the internal affairs of other countries." In many ways it was a sort of undeclared warfare option for the President.

This definition of covert actions contains only political actions while not including covert intelligence gathering operations. The distinction between intelligence and covert actions is often overlooked. Obviously covert collection was to be considered a proper role for the CIA, but it had little to do with covert actions, beyond the nature of secrecy, a secrecy that was often much more important in small covert collection operations than large paramilitary adventures that were impossible to hide.

Importantly, counter-intelligence functions are specifically dropped as well. The only relation is the relative secrecy in which they must be pursued. Their object is not to influence any foreign government beyond removing foreign spies. While these spies may be providing important intelligence, their elimination is not meant to influence foreign governments. Obviously leaving a foreign nation in the dark by discovering many of their spies, could have large effects on a state's foreign policy, but the intent is specifically to protect U.S. intelligence.

Finally, the military is cut out of any covert actions pursued by the CIA. The last sentence states in plain language that "such operations shall not include armed conflict by recognized military forces, espionage, counter-espionage, and cover and deception for military operations." The CIA alone would be in charge of covert actions. Obviously any actual military involvement would significantly up the ante upon exposure of an operation. If U.S. military officers or soldiers were killed and found by an enemy, that state could easily consider this an act of war by the U.S., a significant raising of the stakes. The military's exclusion does not keep them from conducting operations, but the military is largely separated from covert operations.
Any missions conducted by the military would be overt or at least not subject to plausible denial by the President.

NSC 5412 made small changes in the definition of covert actions. Covert actions were defined as:

- Propaganda, political action; economic warfare; escape and evasion and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile state or groups including assistance to underground movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups; support of indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world; deception plans and operations; and all activities compatible with this directive necessary to accomplish the foregoing.

This definition is considerably shorter than that of NSC 10/2. Some of the listings such as preventative direct action have been dropped, but the list of activities is generally similar. The emphasis is on supporting paramilitary groups, specifically "indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world."

The grip of the Cold War still clings to the definitions of covert actions. Finally, to make up for a lack of inclusiveness, and to provide a measure of ambiguity, there is the last clause, "all activities compatible with this directive necessary to accomplish the foregoing." This catch all phrase justifies almost any covert action, plausibly even assassination or other more extreme measures.

The Hughes-Ryan Act offered the first limitations of covert actions. It was passed as an Amendment of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act. The pressure for Hughes-Ryan had come from publication of allegations of massive CIA interference in Chile. It would be only the first of many steps to rein in the CIA in the next few years. Section 662 reads:

Limitation on Intelligence Activities--No funds appropriated under the authority of this or any other Act may be expended by or on behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency for operations in foreign countries, other than activities intended solely for obtaining necessary intelligence, unless and until the President finds that each such operation is important to the national security of the United States and reports, in a timely fashion, a description and scope of each operation to the appropriate committees of Congress...

Obviously it was intended to attack the notion of plausible deniability. If the President had to authorize every covert operation then he could no longer plausibly deny
knowledge of a particular operation at least to the members of Congress that had to be informed. Unfortunately the phrase "in a timely fashion" has been open to debate. The Act also follows the narrow definition of covert actions. Covert operations whose sole purpose was to gather intelligence were excluded from these findings, and there was no need to report them to Congress.

Hughes-Ryan also marked the first time Congress had tried to define covert actions since 1947. It expanded on the "other functions" definition while remaining quite inclusive. In doing so it also reaffirmed its acceptance of covert actions which Congress had never explicitly authorized in law. Covert operations were any operations conducted in foreign countries that had a purpose other then intelligence gathering. It is still unclear if these operations were to have a political purpose in terms of influencing some other nation, though it can almost be assumed.

Executive order no. 11905, issued by Gerald Ford and reaffirmed by Carter and Reagan, defined the limitations on covert actions further. The order stated that "no employee of the United States Government shall engage in or conspire to engage in, political assassination." Obviously there were some limits to covert operations, though there truly had been no limits through the fifties and sixties when Congress looked the other way. Ford eager to deflect criticism from the Agency issued the order largely as a gesture towards Congress that the executive could keep the Agency in check. The order meant little since the CIA had already abandoned assassinations. As it stands the ban on assassinations could be overridden by any President willing to issue an executive order. Both Reagan and Bush have also engaged in what amounted to assassination attempts against Colonel Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein, though Bush attempted such after receiving Congressional support for the Gulf War.

After the establishment of both the Senate and House Intelligence committees Carter issued an executive order in January of 1978. This executive order, No. 12063, outlined in detail many restrictions on the CIA. The order deals mostly with
intelligence, but there are some mentions of covert actions, which are referred to as "other matters" in the document. Plausible denial is dealt another blow by Section 1-808 which allows the CIA to "conduct special activities approved by the President and carry out such activities consistent with applicable law." The CIA is given sole authority for special activities under Section 2-306, except for "the military services in wartime." The order also sets up another advisory board, this time named the President's Intelligence Oversight Board. Finally specific restrictions on the CIA are mentioned. According to Jeffreys-Jones "the prohibitions--on assassination, drug experiments, and other malpractices--were not new, but their restatement served notice to the CIA that restraint was still required."6 The executive order was merely to reaffirm some of the lessons learned in the "Year of Intelligence."

The 1980 Intelligence Oversight Act fleshed out the new relationship between Congress and the CIA. It once again required reporting of covert actions in a timely fashion, but to only the House and Senate Intelligence committees. "Illegal intelligence activities" were to be reported, but there is little mention of any new definition of covert actions. Had the Act passed in 1977 or 1978 it likely would have been quite a bit stronger on intelligence oversight. By 1980 the consensus that the CIA need to be reined in had largely disappeared and conservative critics were successful in watering down the Act. The restricting of reporting to only two committees also helped to solve the problem, or at least the perceived problem, of leaks. Many critics had attacked the reporting policies. They claimed that reporting to eight separate committees was an attempt to do away with covert actions altogether. Indeed they "charged that Hughes-Ryan had severely curtailed foreign cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies."7 By making the possibilities of leaks large, any effective covert action would have to be capable of surviving public exposure.

Reagan followed in December of 1981 with yet another executive order on Intelligence, No. 12333. The Reagan order did little to change covert actions. It
retained the ban on assassination, a ban that had obtained momentum, since any withdrawal of the ban would be a public relations disaster. The relevant section was Section 1.8 (e):

Conduct special activities approved by the President. No agency except the CIA (or the Armed Forces of the United States in a time of war declared by Congress or during any period covered by a report from the President to the Congress under the War Powers Resolution (87 Stat. 855)) may conduct any special activity unless the President determines that another agency is more likely to achieve a particular objective.

This reinforces the death of plausible deniability. It also reflects Reagan's acceptance of "overt" covert operations. Gregory Treverton remarks that "by the middle of the 1980s, what was striking about major covert actions was how little about it was secret; American operations--from Nicaragua to Angola to Cambodia--were openly debated."8 Reagan was not worried about denying any operations, except perhaps in the case of Iran-Contra, he wished to use covert actions to educate and underscore American concerns. In an interview in 1987, the new Director of Central Intelligence, William Webster, stated that in his view "Congress has intended that the president be on the line for any special activities in the intelligence field beyond mere collection of intelligence."9 Plausible denial was no longer an important policy, now giving merely a possibility for the U.S. government to distance itself from a given action.

The order also includes two notable features in relation to the Reagan presidency. First, Reagan mentions the War Powers Resolution in his order. Reagan had an interest in denying the War Powers Resolution any legitimacy, arguing that it was inherently unconstitutional by infringing on the rights of the Executive as the Commander in Chief. Second, is the reiteration that the CIA was the only agency that could conduct covert action unless the President decided another agency was more suited to the task. In the wake of the Iran-Contra affair and the activities of the National Security Council this statement seems almost omniscient, even though at the time it was merely seen as a reiteration of the standing practice to assign all covert actions to the CIA.
The key policy of the Intelligence Authorization Act of 1991 was to define the "timely fashion" statement of the Hughes-Ryan Act. The decided time frame was 48 hours, but pressure from the Bush administration almost kept the statement from making its way into law. Bush pocket vetoed the measure arguing that interpreting "in a timely fashion" as within a few days "would unconstitutionally infringe on the authority of the president and impede any administration's effective implementation of covert action programs." It would pass the next year in a similar form. With regard to intelligence functions the President was advised to "keep the intelligence committees fully and currently informed of all intelligence activities." The language is slightly stronger than the prior "timely fashion," but it is not completely restrictive. Covert action would be held to a higher standard, the lessons of Iran-Contra still in the recent past.

The "timely fashion" statement of Hughes-Ryan had obviously been abused, so Congress finally set about limiting the time frame. The finding could be "made and shall be reduced to a written finding as soon as possible but in no event more than 48 hours after the decision is made." Obviously any large scale operations could not be hidden from Congress, besides a possible rescue attempt. There would be a written record of any covert activities conducted against a foreign nation.

For the first time since Congress had inadvertently created covert actions in the 1947 National Security Act, the 1991 Act defined covert actions. The definition is essentially a negative one, of what did not constitute a covert action:

(e) As used in this title, the term 'covert action' means an activity or activities of the United States Government to influence political, economic, or military conditions abroad, where it is intended that the role of the United States Government will not be apparent or acknowledged publicly, but does not include--

1. activities the primary purpose of which is to acquire intelligence, traditional counterintelligence activities, traditional activities to improve or maintain the operational security of the United States Government programs, or administrative activities;
2. traditional diplomatic or military activities or routine support to such activities;
3. traditional law enforcement activities conducted by United States Government law enforcement agencies or routine support to such activities; or
activities to provide routine support to the overt activities (other than activities described in paragraph (1), (2), or (3)) of the United States government agencies abroad.

The definition remarks on the supposed secrecy of covert actions with the terms "not apparent or acknowledged publicly." Obviously the experience of the 1980s had convinced Congress that covert actions, especially large ones, were not hidden affairs, but took place in front of the world even if the U.S. Government officially denied them. Counterintelligence and intelligence operations are of course dropped. An interesting inclusion is the mention of traditional law enforcement activities, probably to give leeway to agencies such as the DEA who have conducted programs abroad in order to slow the flow of illegal drugs to the United States.

A Question of Definitions

Intelligence is a broad area in itself. Covert actions come underneath the large umbrella of intelligence in many cases. For some it is natural to "include intelligence, covert actions, and counter intelligence" under the definition of intelligence. This conclusion is easy to reach by a simple cursory examination of the structure of America's premier foreign intelligence agency, the CIA, which is involved in all three areas.

Intelligence and covert actions are both foreign policy tools but one is active and the other passive. Intelligence is the process of observation, clandestine or overt, whereupon one may return with useful raw data on which to base future decisions. For Sherman Kent, it is "high-level foreign positive intelligence," since there is no need to know U.S. intentions, and low level intelligence is largely useless. Covert operations are almost the antithesis of intelligence in setting out to change the political realities of a given situation. Covert action is a form of foreign policy while intelligence
"was universally to be the CIA's central mission."13 The two lead an uneasy existence within the confines of a single agency.

The term covert itself is not merely replaceable with secret. According to W. Michael Reisman and James E. Baker "the factual property conveyed by the word covert is that the action is accomplished in ways unknown to some parties (not necessarily the targets)."14 This is much different than a truly secret mission, in that it may be known to much of the world and even its targets without making it overt. Especially in the last decade there has been little emphasis on secrecy within the large scale actions conducted by the CIA in places such as Afghanistan and Nicaragua.

Of course covert actions can be defined by a simple listing of all included functions, very much the dictionary definition. According to NSC 10/2 covert actions include: "propaganda, economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world." This serves to define the possible actions that can be accomplished covertly. The Twentieth Century Fund lists the various functions as fitting under six areas: "paramilitary operations, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, political action programs, economic warfare programs, special operations in support of foreign governments, and maintenance of a secret infrastructure."15 Loch Johnson in "Reflections on Covert Actions and Its Anxieties" lists a broad spectrum of covert actions from "the giving of instruction and security equipment to enhance the personal safety of friendly foreign leaders against threats to their lives"16 to "the spreading of biological, chemical or other toxic substances to bring about widespread death in the target nation."17 Still obviously these listed definitions can easily be classified to see if they contain covert collection of intelligence along with more politically oriented operations.
Covert actions have never been simple to define. They are "by definition, a foreign policy instrument based upon secrecy and deception."\textsuperscript{18} In the largest sense they can be anything that is done covertly. This is the broad definition of covert action. Under this definition a spy overhearing a dinner conversation and a large scale paramilitary operation such as the Contras in Nicaragua are essentially the same thing. The broad definition of covert actions appears valid from a structural standpoint in the CIA since " covert action on the one hand and covert collection or espionage on the other are both carried out by the operations directorate."\textsuperscript{19} Still the definitions in Executive orders, National Security Council Directives, and Acts of Congress seem to provide a basis for a narrow definition of covert actions.

A narrower definition of covert action excludes those operations or activities whose primary or sole purpose is the collection of intelligence. This is not an unusual position to take and indeed is reflected in NSC 10/2 which first set out an actual definition of covert activities. Nowhere is intelligence gathering mentioned as a part of covert actions. The Hughes-Ryan act also explicitly leaves out any intelligence gathering functions. Still the initial National Security Act of 1947 mentions an assumed link between intelligence and covert actions referring to "other functions and duties related to intelligence." Thus the common notion that intelligence and covert actions are intimately related is not so easily dispelled.

The primary difference between the broad definition which includes all sorts of clandestine collection activities is one of goals. The express purpose of propaganda, assassination attempts, and paramilitary operations is to change the political scene. Clandestine collection operations aim simply at conventional spying, gaining information illicitly without detection. The difference between overt collection and covert collection is minor, especially for the CIA. The goal is to provide substantial finished intelligence, not to change the political atmosphere of a foreign nation. Indeed
the information gleaned from clandestine intelligence operations is often used to provide tactical intelligence for covert actions intended to change the political scene.

By separating intelligence gathering operations from covert operations, the most controversial part of the CIA can be separated and examined more closely. John Horton, an Operations officer, argues that "what makes people uneasy or indignant is the use of secret agents for political purposes, such as secret political war, commonly referred to as covert action." Covert actions are where the vast majority of the serious complaints about the CIA arise from. Indeed Jeffreys-Jones argues that "the CIA's foreign covert operations have frequently alienated foreign opinion," though these same nations often look the other way when they approve of the objectives. There are problems on the intelligence side of the agency, primarily with projections into the future, but these are understandable. Covert operations involve tactics that are often hidden for fear of criticism should they be exposed. Obviously massive election spending in Italy was likely to meet with public disapproval if exposed. Open interference in foreign elections would likely never be tolerated by a foreign government or its citizens, at the very least subjecting an aided party to massive criticism. It is these covert actions which generated the controversies that led to the "Year of Intelligence" and still cause debate today.

The separation seems quite natural despite the tradition of uniting operations and intelligence under one agency in the U.S.—the CIA. Early on the Agency more strictly separated operations from intelligence, though the Office of Policy Coordination was finally dropped. The combination has often led an uneasy existence.

A Final Operational Definition

There are plenty of reasons to finally choose one definition of covert actions over another. Maurice Tugwell and David Charters find difficulty with the definitions
of another euphemism for covert actions, special operations, finally concluding that
"some concepts defy precise definition, and it must be admitted that "special operations"
may be just such a concept."\textsuperscript{22} Loch Johnson also finds that the term "covert action"
remains a complex--and sometimes--slippery phrase."\textsuperscript{23} Thus any single definition of
covert actions will never truly suffice. All that remains is to pick an operational
definition and stick to it.

A listing definition of covert actions seems somewhat appropriate, but hardly
inclusive or concise. A true list describing all possible covert actions in detail would be
entirely unwieldy. Just such a list is partially attempted in Loch Johnson's article "The
Bright Line of Covert Actions," though the list is truly an attempt at setting up a
moralistic scale of covert actions. Still even this list with its forty or so "rungs" is a bit
unwieldy. Also the list could easily mix in counter intelligence functions as well since
they must often be conducted in secrecy.

The broad definition includes covert actions merely as part of the larger
intelligence picture. Missions based solely on intelligence gathering are mixed with
large scale paramilitary adventures. This definition especially within the scope of a
single paper seems most unworkable. Essentially the two different goals of collection
and intervention make this broad definition a less than perfect choice.

A final narrow definition of covert actions seems the most plausible of choices.
Covert actions which have as an intent mere intelligence gathering are not much
different from overt intelligence gathering from a variety of open sources. Covert
intelligence gathering remains much closer to overt intelligence gathering then it does to
other covert actions with political goals. Thus the exclusion of covert intelligence
gathering and even counter intelligence operations can be easily justified. This
distinction serves as well to concentrate the focus on covert activities which are
controversial.
Covert action within the scope of this paper will be taken to be: An action undertaken in secret which will not be declared publicly, with the express goal of influencing another nation's political personnel or structure, and whose primary purpose is not intelligence gathering or counterintelligence. It will generally involve paramilitary operations or election interference campaigns. Obviously this will narrow the realm of covert actions down to the most controversial, including large scale paramilitary operations and election projects, some of which will be examined in case studies.
Endnotes


4 Ibid., 115.


17 Ibid., 291.


Chapter II

Measurement

Having arrived at a working definition of covert actions, the real question is how to analyze covert actions, specifically success. Success itself cannot be measured quantitatively. Unlike defining covert actions by narrowing the definition, success has to be measured using normative standards along with some quantitative measures. These standards can obviously be disputed, and many successful covert actions might be seen as unsuccessful using the admittedly limited criteria that will be employed.

The Perfect Covert Action

A perfect covert action is indeed an impossibility, but theoretically one can define what would make up such an operation. It would have to succeed on a number of levels beyond simple attainment of operational goals. CIA planners would need demigod like wisdom to project into the future all of the possible implications of even a moderate operation. Such an operation would have to meet the following criteria:

1. Mission must stay covert.
2. Any operational goals set in the planning stages must be met.
3. Foreign policy goals must be met.
4. The action must not violate America's democratic credentials, must meet international standards of morality.
5. The end result must benefit the general population in the target nation.
6. The operation must produce positive effects even far into the future.
7. There must be an efficient expenditure of funds.

If such operations could be pulled off then the CIA would hardly elicit a whisper of controversy. The problem is that such perfect operations do not exist.

Indeed many of the goals of an operation work at cross purposes. In order to keep an action covert there must be an air of secrecy. Mere secrecy violates the spirit of openness in the American republic. Certainly keeping an operation secret makes a covert action a less than perfect option in the eyes of the international community. Thus the very first criteria for a successful covert operation tends to violate the criteria that an operation shouldn't violate American standards or those of the world community.

In order to build a more acceptable set of criteria, hierarchy can be introduced. These criteria can be listed in order of importance. Obviously this is somewhat arbitrary, but it can still be attempted:

1. Foreign policy goals must be met.
2. Operational goals must be met.
3. The operation must produce positive effects even far into the future.
4. The operation must stay covert.
5. The action must not violate America's democratic credentials, and should try to meet international standards of morality.
6. There should be an efficient expenditure of funds.
7. The operation should benefit the general population of the target country.

The focus here is entirely from a U.S. perspective. For a U.S. policy maker this would not be an unusual way to order the earlier list. The highest priority is given to U.S. foreign policy goals. Even a botched covert action can serve foreign policy goals effectively. An assassination attempt that is discovered and foiled can still warn the leader of a country that the U.S. is very serious in its opposition to his/her policies and quickly convince the leader to modify those policies. The attack on Libya in 1986, "a veiled assassination attempt," helped to modify Qaddafi's terrorist support and to convince him that the American threat to his rule was serious if he continued on his present course. The lowest priority is given to
the general population in the target nation. Many covert actions in the past have benefited
the elites of developing countries while doing nothing for the general population or making
their conditions more miserable. Still these covert actions have very often been deemed
successful in spite of this.

Ordering these criteria from the perspective of a target nation is very simple. The
highest priority would be given to increasing the welfare of the general population followed
by the need for the covert action to stay within the bounds of acceptable U.S. and
international morality. The rest the U.S. government's goals would mean very little to a
target nation. Unfortunately for these nations they are not in charge of planning at Langley.

The next step is to assign values to the various criteria. This serves to make
analysis a more definite process, and as well it enables future researchers to employ a
similar scale and compare the various final rankings in each category. All seven different
areas will be ranked according to importance and then be assigned values based on how
well their conditions were met. The rating system will remain relatively simple.

Each area will be assigned a positive or negative score. Foreign policy goals being
the most important will be assigned a score from +7 to -7. Operational goals will be
assigned a score from +6 to -6 and so on. This will result in an aggregate score for each
covert action from -28 to +28. A +28 score would indicate a perfect covert action. A -28
score would reflect an abysmal failure. For example a covert operation to defeat President
Xiter of Commoland might be ranked as so:
Table 1 Sample Operation

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy goals</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational goals</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term effects</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covertness</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic standards</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient expenditure</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit general population</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for CommoLand operation: +13

A +13 indicates a generally successful covert action. Such a scoring system makes it possible to compare several different covert actions and conclude whether they were successful or not based on some defined standards. By studying a number of cases using such a scale a general grouping of operations could be set up from the most to the least successful and including operations which hover near the zero score indicating a rather mixed result. A larger study done of all significant covert actions dating back to the CIA's founding would produce a wealth of data from which to decide just how successful the operations side of the Agency has been.

There are, however, a number of problems in creating such a scale. It can be argued that many criteria have been left out, that foreign policy goals are underweighted, or that items like democratic standards inherently add negative scores to the total. All of these are valid criticisms. While the criteria set forth are not exhaustive they do seek to actively measure the success or failure of covert actions and include all the major criteria such as the meeting of operational and foreign policy goals. Many consider the meeting of foreign policy goals as defining a successful operation despite any amount of "dirty tricks" and general corruption or mismanagement of an operation. Assigning perhaps a weight of +15
to -15 to foreign policy would be to simplify the notion of success or failure in a given covert action. As well, there are plenty of examples of successful operations that met foreign policy goals that now seem less than complete successes, Iran and Guatemala being the obvious examples. Lastly, there are arguments that it is unfair to consider items such as the meeting of democratic standards or how the general population of a target nation benefited from a covert action. The insistence on secrecy in a democracy and the use of anti-democratic measures to install democracies are some of the CIA’s inherent contradictions. Despite these contradictions the CIA has survived and grown for the last fifty years. So while a given action may succeed the use of extreme measures such as assassination may come back to haunt the U.S. later, thus the need for measuring success and failure of maintaining democratic standards. So while there are problems with such a scale they do not outweigh the usefulness of the scale.

**Defining Success**

The difficulty in deciding whether a given covert operation was successful or not is not new. Even models of success such as the Iran operation in 1953 have been reevaluated in light of more recent developments. Revolutionaries in Iran in 1979 "vividly remembered the 1953 coup and the CIA’s role in it. The acronym "CIA," displayed on so many of the street demonstrators' placards, encapsulated Iranian anti-Americanism."² There is also the commonly asserted position within the Agency that many of the CIA’s successes have never come to light. Whether this is a factual statement is debatable. The likelihood of large scale successful operations never coming to light seems quite small.

Small scale tactical operations in wartime are quite easy to assign success or failure to. The goals are limited and well defined. The scope of these operations is often quite small with easily obtainable goals. A single operation is unlikely to dramatically influence
the course of a war. In larger strategic operations success must be defined as meeting a number of criteria.

Success can easily be expanded beyond operational goals. Foreign policy goals can be ascertained. An unsuccessful operation can still have important intended foreign policy effects. Did the operation succeed from this standpoint? Was U.S. foreign policy advanced or hindered by a blundered operation or even a successful operation that became exposed? And no matter how controversial and exposed the covert action may become, were U.S. policy goals served?

One definition of success from the U.S. perspective is whether or not it met U.S. foreign policy goals. Since most covert actions set forth goals that will influence foreign nations, the government necessarily expects these actions to bring about a more favorable climate. Thus if a covert action is operationally successful, it is likely to be successful as well from a foreign policy standpoint. Only rarely do successful operations cause problems for the U.S. government and often it is merely disapproval at the domestic level with the means or goals of an operation. Raising costs for the enemy as in Angola and in Laos are cynical ventures never very popular since there is no chance of victory for the proxy guerrillas.

Part of success is secrecy. In succeeding has the covert operation become revealed to the world? Admittedly most covert actions of a large scale nature can be attributed to the U.S., but it is important to note if incontrovertible evidence comes to the fore. A covert operation that has not succeeded in staying covert is merely a U.S. operation. This may be less important if the goal of the covert action is actually more for education or as an example to other parties.

Within the realm of cost-benefit analysis is the decision of whether the money spent on a covert action was actually worth the effect produced. Was the overthrow of a government worth the millions spent considering the relative importance of a small Third World country? Were funds spent efficiently, or was money handed out like candy? After
defining success more broadly and picking a number of criteria, one can get a better measure of whether an individual covert action was indeed successful.

Goals: Foreign Policy and Operational

Goals in operations and foreign policy are often easy to enumerate. Operational goals simply define what will be considered a successful mission. Foreign policy goals are usually stated openly, and commonly covert actions are used to support those foreign policy goals. There are times when the stated foreign policy of the nation is undermined by covert actions, however, the Iran-Contra affair being the most recent example.

As long as there are clear operational goals it is easy to measure success or failure. Usually covert actions can be narrowed down to one single goal. Often it is to increase the effectiveness of guerrillas merely to make things more expensive for the Soviet Union. Possibly it is to overthrow the current government of a nation and install a friendlier new government. If the single goal is achieved then operationally it can be deemed a success even if several other factors point to failure as with the Kurds in Iraq in the mid seventies. Unfortunately for the CIA, operational success isn't equivalent to a successful covert action.

Foreign policy goals are more difficult to define since there can be some confusion in exactly what U.S. foreign policy is at any given time. Policies such as the Monroe Doctrine are relatively straightforward. Still the Carter administration claimed to be following a human rights based foreign policy while often remaining allies with major human rights violators. Policy is often left undefined in some areas merely so foreign nations can't be sure where the U.S. stands and thus have to be very wary about actual U.S. interests. Recent policies in Bosnia-Hersogavina point to an undefined U.S. foreign policy.
Assigning numbers to the attainment of expressed foreign policy or operational goals is a rather straightforward task. Obviously an operation which meets its foreign policy objectives would receive a +7. An operation just short of ultimate success might score a +6. In the case of election interference suppose the U.S. is supporting a certain party in a foreign nation's election. Within that party the U.S. is hoping to install the party leader as President. Now say that the U.S. succeeds in helping the party to win the election, but before the favored party leader can be inaugurated he has a heart attack and dies. His successor is not as favorable towards the United States, but still basically supports U.S. goals in the country. In this situation a score of +6 or +5 would be assigned depending on how favorable the new party leader and president towards U.S. wishes. An operation which partially achieves its foreign policy goals would score lower possibly +2 or +1. Say the U.S. wishes to defeat a certain party and their are two competing parties: Party A and Party B. The U.S. may support one of the competing parties to the exclusion of the other say Party A, but Party B actually wins the election. At least the offensive party is out of the picture, but actual U.S. goals were to install a specific competing party. Party B is not the perfect answer, but they certainly are better than the original ruling party. A failure or negative score would be assigned for failing to meet foreign policy goals. One dictator might be defeated, only to be replaced by a slightly more benign new dictator. Such a situation would receive a -5 or -6 score. A -7 would be assigned to absolute failures where no amount of foreign policy goals are reached, the Bay of Pigs being a good example.

Operational goals score by a similar standard. A +6 operation would be one in which very little went wrong. The election interference campaign run in Italy in 1948 would be one example of a near flawless operation which achieved its goals. For a less successful undertaking one might look at the support for the Kurds in Iraq in the mid 1970s. The CIA was supposed to aid the Kurds in their rebellion. Because of political reasons the funding ended, but it was generally a rather successful venture from an
operational standpoint earning a +5 or possibly +4. Other operations which only partially succeed in their goals would score in the +1 to -1 range. One possibility would be an election project in which rumors of CIA involvement leak out to the general population. Because of this and possibly other factors the CIA supported faction loses the election. This example might score a -1 since the operation failed, but the failure may have only partially been due to mistakes made by the CIA. An operation scoring a -5 might be an ill trained paramilitary force which despite causing a lot of destruction never actually wrests control of the country away from the government. A total failure, a -6, would denote an operation such as an election where CIA funding of an opposition party was exposed because of sloppy work and the opposition party goes on to lose badly while the government becomes even more shrill in its anti-American rhetoric.

Taken together operational and foreign policy goals make up the two largest factors in deciding the success or failure of a given operation. If the CIA manages to meet its operational and foreign policy goals, very often the operation will be a success in spite of negative scores for excessive spending or relative little secrecy. Without successfully meeting either operational or foreign policy goals the covert action is generally accessed as a failure by the government and the CIA.

Time Frames

The question of time is essential to deciding issues of success or failure. In the short term the immediate goals of an operation can quickly define success or failure. In the example of a coup d'état, the target is effectively removed or the attempt fails. Success here is a simple definition based on the status of the target. The problems come later with defining success.

At even a slightly later date, a coup may generate unwanted effects. It takes a sophisticated effort of planning to pull off a successful coup. "Assassination, in short, is
no work for amateurs." Perhaps the rebellious faction kills the head of state in the coup attempt and the country is plunged into chaos and violence instead of the hoped for effect of a stabilized nation with a friendlier set of leaders.

At an even later date even if a new leader, more to the liking of the U.S. government, comes to power perhaps he proceeds upon a course of terror and subjugation which alienates large sectors of the population and negatively affects world opinion. Certainly the initial situation of a successful coup is becoming more difficult to assign as a success.

Now suppose that after many years of brutal rule the U.S. installed leader is finally overthrown. Because the population is well aware of the U.S. government's role in assassinating a former leader, there is a justifiable hatred for the U.S. The newly formed government is hostile to the U.S. government and its interests. The successful coup of so many years ago has to be reexamined in a different light. Indeed the Iranian example follows this model pretty thoroughly. "The CIA-installed shah of Iran was ultimately overthrown in a revolution that gave rise to the extremely anti-U.S. Islamic fundamentalist regime headed by the Ayatollah Khomeini, ..., suggesting that perhaps the United States would have been better off (or at least no worse off) siding with the country's democratic, albeit leftist, regime." In the long term even an extremely successful operation can become a serious error. Thus covert operations cannot be examined simply from an initial time frame, but must take future events into account. The difficulty also lies, however, with asserting too much historical importance to a single covert action which may or may not have a significant effect on the future course of a single nation.

Examining covert operations in a time frame is not a new idea. Loch Johnson states that ideally "one would also like to know before judging the appropriateness of a covert operation what its effects will be on the future of the target nation, its people, and their relationship toward the perpetrator of the covert operation." Some like B. Hugh Tovar even argue that some successful operations look like failures taken in a long term context:
Guatemala in 1954 was operationally successful, an example of what might be called brash technical virtuosity. But was the game worth the candle? We played into the endemic pattern of Latin American history, military ouster of objectionable civilian governments. Our success was short-lived. It is difficult not to wonder if the planners had read the history of the region before plunging in.\textsuperscript{7}

Seeing into the future may be an impossible task for planners, but the option of hindsight makes evaluation over a period of time much easier to accomplish.

For the cases that will be examined, both of which took place almost entirely in the 1980s, a less then ideal time frame will be used. The examination of the cases will use three relatively distinct time frames. There will be a short, medium, and long term time frame as follows:

- **Short**: less than 1 year
- **Medium**: between 1 and 5 years
- **Long**: more than 5 years

Time is measured here from the end of an operation until the present. If the cases had occurred further back in time it would offer a longer look at the effects of the operation. Operations from the "Golden Age" of the Agency such as Guatemala and Iran offer a proper long perspective. Still when examining more current cases there is little one can do.

As for assigning values, the task is relatively simple. A +5 would denote an operation that had no ill effects far after the operation. Italy makes a pretty good example of such an operation though some would argue the interference in the 1948 elections have led to some of the instability of Italy's many governments since the operation. A +2 operation might be one that had some ill effects afterwards such as the creation of a proxy army which takes over a country and then in later years becomes belligerent towards an adjoining U.S. ally. A score of zero would denote a country where the population is generally given to anti-U.S. sentiments by the revelation of the CIA's interference in their country either successfully or unsuccessfully. A score of -2 is exemplified by Guatemala. After a successful operation there in 1954 the country has lived through a military dictatorship ever since. While this has not been directly harmful to the United States it has raised questions about the original adventure and its worth. Surely even under a slightly
leftist elected leader Guatemala would be a much better nation today. A score of -5 would denote a country that had collapsed after a CIA operation. That country would then have become a dire U.S. enemy launching terrorist attacks or selling dangerous weapons or even pursuing nuclear weapons. At this point Iran would now score a -5 for the long term effects caused by installing the shah. In these cases the worth of even a successful CIA operation becomes questionable over the long run. Short term gain can often be reversed by negative long term effects.

"Covert" Operations

Defining success based on whether an operation maintained its secrecy is quite simple. Either the action went on without knowledge of the U.S. role or the operation was exposed to the world. Seemingly this is a simple definition of success, but ascertaining the relative secrecy of any covert action, as defined earlier, can be difficult.

Large scale operations are always going to operate above ground. Paramilitary actions cannot be hidden, like covert intelligence gathering. Obviously the target is going to know that someone is pursuing a violent course of action. Thus covert actions are not truly secret. What is supposed to stay secret in CIA operations is the role of the U.S. government in the operation. The citizens of a nation are not to know that the CIA heavily funded the campaign of the winning party. Such a revelation would lead to an extreme lack of confidence in the government and completely wipe out the operational goals.

Some operations require less secrecy especially when the intent is to educate the target. In Afghanistan there was no question that the Soviet Union knew that the U.S. was funding the Mujahideen. It was simply an educational exercise to inform the Soviets that the U.S. was willing to help contest their invasion. The problem is obvious. If the primary intent is to educate the target then the operation should not be conducted covertly. Without the need for secrecy there is no need to have the CIA conducting these operations
since they were never meant to pull off open interventions. If there is little to hide then why can't the operation be done above ground, overtly? John Stockwell assumes a cynical answer to this question when speaking of the "secret" bombing of Cambodia:

> The Cambodian people knew they were being bombed. Unfortunately, there was nothing on the face of the earth that the Cambodian people could do to stop the bombing. However, the people of the United States could stop the bombing or at least raise an effective protest of it. Hence it was vital to President Nixon that the bombing remain secret here at home.⁸

Obviously keeping things secret can be quite important if the action involves tactics which would be abhorrent to a significant part of the U.S. population. This is exactly how the CIA is sometimes drawn into operations which by all rights should be conducted overtly with a stated U.S. role and policy.

Covertness is also ranked as a factor from +4 to -4. A +4 operation is simply never revealed. This could include operations such as the 1948 Italian elections. A +3 operation is one that stays almost completely secret. Guatemala is an example of this level of secrecy where the operation was never revealed until afterwards and only hinted at in a few accounts. It was only many years afterwards that the Guatemala operation was ever widely revealed. A score of zero would be assigned to an operation that was partially revealed with little actual negative effects. An operation of this type would meet basic U.S. standards and would not be considered out of the ordinary realm of allowable foreign policy options. A score of -2 would be assigned to an operation which was not kept secret on any large scale. Everything but the basic details of the operations leaks. The Bay of Pigs would score a -2 as the operation was generally known to Cuba before it took place as well as many citizens of Miami. A -4 would be assigned to an operation that was completely exposed including unfortunate and embarrassing details. Since secrecy is essential to any covert action, negative scores are usually indicative of failed operations although some operations may be partially revealed and still manage to be successful. Keeping an operation hidden or at least plausibly deniable is essential.
Meeting American Standards

Democratic principles tend to be invoked when intervening in the affairs of other nations. Often it is declared as an attempt to bring democracy and freedom to a nation. The principle is no different in covert operations, it is simply not a publicly announced reason for intervening. "Americans tend to construe their blessings as a special virtue in themselves that makes them unlike others."9 Should a covert action become exposed much of the justification often centers around how it was in the interests of democracy. Often arguments are made that the dirty tactics involved are worth the ends. As well it is often stated that Americans hate war. There is an aversion to violence itself which stems from the liberal ideals of Christianity and the Enlightenment.10 Thus any resort to warfare, even covert warfare, must be justified in terms of high idealistic purposes. Seemingly then an acceptable covert action must at least live up to high standards of morality and righteousness even if never exposed.

Still there are strong critics even within the U.S. of such democratic ideals in interventions. Michael McClintock argues that using tactics like assassination violates any claims of bringing democracy to a nation. He refers to the discussion of whether the ends are worth the means as an "exercise in quantum ethics" and that "the argument epitomizes the Cold Warriors' blind faith that the just cause of America suffices to purify virtually any act of outrage carried out in its name."11 Other critics such as Noam Chomsky are also critical of American attempts to whitewash interventions and blame the American media for perpetuating the myth of an always virtuous United States:

With appropriate interpretations, then, we can rest content that the United States and its clients defend democracy, social reform, and self-determination against Communists, terrorists, and violent elements of all kinds. It is the responsibility of the media to laud the "democrats" and demonize the official enemy: the Sandinistas, the PLO, or whoever gets in the way. On occasion this requires some fancy footwork, but the challenge has generally been successfully met.12

Thus the entire idea that the United States is intervening according to American principles is not universally accepted. Still there is an assumption even if it is merely propaganda that
U.S. covert actions take place in order to advance American ideals such as democratic pluralism, free speech, and greater freedom for the general population of a target nation.

Generally in order to measure such a nebulous thing as democratic standards one can look to the national government. The government should be advancing towards some more benign form after a successful covert action. Even if this means merely installing a less brutal dictator at least it can be justified as an improvement. Simple things such as jury trials and the rights of women and minority ethnic groups in a society also point out whether a nation is advancing towards U.S. ideals. This also overlaps with the later criteria for whether the target nation has advanced the welfare of the general population.

Scoring for democratic standards is not a matter of great difficulty. A hypothetical operation scoring a +3 might involve support of a rebellious majority. The elected government has been supplanted by a vicious coup. With CIA aid the rebels are able to get rid of the coup leaders and reinstate democracy holding elections soon after. Such an operation if conducted with a minimum of violence would certainly meet democratic standards as well as the spirit of international law. A +1 operation could also involve supporting a rebellious democratic faction, but involve a large deal of bloodshed to accomplish its goals including many innocent civilians. A -1 operation would involve support of rival parties to the communist party in Italy in 1948. While not completely defensible in the context of the Cold War it was an understandable operation. A -3 operation would involve supporting a corrupt and cruel group of rebels attempting to overthrow a democratic government. Guatemala is a classic example of a -3. While it is not essential for an operation to score well on democratic standards, negative scores can have multiplying effects especially if the operation is conducted in a less than secret manner.
Spending in the CIA is not a penny pinching affair even today with the calls for cutbacks in defense spending and intelligence. Some missions were well noted for their cheapness especially versus military intervention. The sponsorship of a coup in Iran took "a team of five Agency officers, equipped with a one-million-dollar slush fund in five-hundred-rial ($7.50) notes, organized the coup from a Tehran basement, according to CIA mythology."\(^\text{13}\) Such an operation was obviously a great bargain for installing a new government with very close relations to the U.S.

**Table 2 Covert Action Spending Since 1980\(^\text{14}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>3,420,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>240,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>85,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>546,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others, est.</td>
<td>5,200,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously any covert action which fails is a waste of expenditure, at first glance. Still, certain operations such as the support of the Kurds in the mid 1970s have as their goal a temporary rebellion brought about to bring one side around. As soon as the shah "reached a satisfactory understanding with the Iraqi with the Iraqis, the CIA was called off and it abruptly abandoned the Kurds, leaving them helpless, unable to defend themselves against bloody reprisals from the Iraqi army."\(^\text{15}\) Henry Kissinger was reported to have said that "one must not confuse the intelligence business with missionary work."\(^\text{16}\) Other missions are also used as bargaining chips and to increase costs for aggressor nations. Missions such as these cannot be considered failures automatically since they do not set out to achieve some form of victory. Still missions which fail can be judged to have been worth the risk. Failures such as the Bay of Pigs, which contained many flawed assumptions in the planning stages and a severe underestimation of Castro and his
popularity, were simply a waste of funds. However, well planned covert actions can fail as well.

Failure of a covert action that was well planned and executed cannot be defined simply as an inefficient use of funds. There is necessarily some risk of failure in any covert action, similar to the risk inherent in the intelligence side of the Agency in predicting future events. As long as the extent of the risk is known spending funds on what may be a botched operation is not irrational.

Finally, there can be inefficient use of funds even on successful covert actions. There is always the possibility that an operation could have been run cheaper. Still the real question is often how much of the operations budget ended up simply being pocketed by the local military leaders instead of being used to pursue a coup d'état or to fight guerrillas.

Efficient spending takes place across a small scale from +2 to -2. A +2 operation would be conducted very cheaply with large results. Iran is one example. A +1 operation is generally conducted with very little corruption and a reasonable amount of spending given the objectives. A -1 operation is one in which there is some substantial amount of fraud or a huge expenditure considering the desired results. The CIA campaign to keep Allende from power in Chile in 1958 and 1964 involved a huge amount of spending given the economy of Chile simply to keep Allende out of power. This campaign would have scored a -1 for efficient expenditures. A score of -2 involves widespread corruption.

**Perspectives**

There is an obvious bias when examining CIA operations to simply consider the perspective of the U.S., specifically the U.S. government. It is easier to examine CIA operations and their success or failure as a matter of U.S. policy. More difficult is looking as well at the perspective of other nations targeted by CIA operations.
Do covert actions help to advance the interests of target nations? Obviously the interference by the U.S. is rarely welcomed and often is a violation of national sovereignty and often international law. And when talking about a target nation, one whose politics are being intimately affected, is it correct to consider the effect on the country's population as a whole, or merely on the elites?

Much of traditional realist theory would focus on its effects on the elite of the country. Traditionally it has been much easier to deal with the relatively few powerful elite and rulers of a given country. U.S. foreign policy does not often focus on the plight of the masses in a country unless there are grave humanitarian concerns and often even these are overlooked as in cases like East Timor. Since the U.S. perspective is covered largely already by foreign policy goals and operational goals, a separate factor is needed for the target nation.

The easiest way of accomplishing this is looking at several aggregate figures as well as some qualitative factors. Since most of the target nations are developing nations there may already exist an air of contempt for human rights. In at least some cases of intervention the newly installed rulers of a country literally turned the country into a blood bath in order to quell any hint of dissent. Of secondary importance beyond simple security is the need for economic goods, shelter and sustenance. Has the covert action improved the lot of the general citizen or has it widened the gap between rich and poor?

A short list of these factors can be prepared in order to decide whether the welfare of the nation has been served by a particular covert action. These factors would include:

1. GNP
2. Per capita income
3. Basic level of political violence and respect for human rights
4. Attainment of democratic values and form of government

Obviously these various factors can be expanded on in some cases. A respect for human rights can include freedom from torture, a right to dissent, a lack of disappearances, lack of discrimination by sex, and freedom of religion. Factors like GNP are self explanatory and simple enough to calculate. It is assumed that simple economic development is an
improvement for the body of citizens and that what are often labeled as "Western" values are upheld as a standard. Some Third World Scholars argue that imposing even basic human rights may be an example of cultural imperialism though "some features of traditional life deserve to go, because they conflict with justice and equity: the low status of women everywhere and of untouchables in India and so on." Still by combining economic improvement with political and social rights a generalized conclusion can be drawn on whether the lot of the masses has improved.

The benefits accrued to the population are taken to be the least important of the criteria. They range from only +1 to -1. A +1 operation would be an operation which succeeds in substantially improving the lot of the common person within the country. A +1 operation might involve the overthrow of an unpopular dictator and the establishment of a democracy with a new respect for human rights. An operation scoring zero would involve a generally unchanged situation for the target population, possibly the trading of one dictator for another. A -1 operation is exemplified by CIA involvement in Zaire. The CIA helped to oust Patrice Lumumba in 1960. Lumumba was a popular elected leader. Installed in his place was General Joseph Mobutu. Even today 40% of the national revenue goes into Mobutu's pockets while the average Zairian makes $190 a year.

Final Notes

Essentially this study is a mere beginning at examining the relative success or failure of covert actions over the years. The analysis of the case studies will provide some hint at the proper course of reform for the CIA. If covert actions have been on the whole successful affairs then there is little need to make major changes in the area of covert actions. If covert actions turn out to be more of a mixed bag of successes and failures then there is at least some need to look at the future usefulness of covert actions. Ending covert actions all together may be warranted if most operations turn out to be failures.
There is an assumption that the effects of a given covert action have large scale effects. These effects can also be discerned as largely being a product of a single covert action. Such an assumption is difficult to defend. The course of a given foreign nation may have been very similar even without the intervention of the CIA. In some cases the nation may have been much worse off even if the covert action is considered a failure. Though it seems unlikely, maybe the course of Chile's history would have been worse without the large scale CIA interference to defeat Allende for in its first week Pinochet's regime "closed the country to the outside world for a week, while the tanks rolled and the soldiers broke down doors; while the stadiums rang with the sounds of execution and the bodies piled up along the streets and floated in the river; the torture centers opened for business, ..., and the poor returned to their natural state." Possibly the country could have collapsed into an even bloodier civil war without CIA interference, though it is difficult to imagine given the brutal nature of Pinochet's rule. Arguing that CIA operations have little effect lends credence to the view that covert actions are an outmoded tool. Factors like economic productivity may be only marginally related to CIA interventions, the country arriving at its present state with or without CIA assistance. Still it seems that if CIA operations had little real effect they would simply be abandoned as a way of conducting foreign policy.

The U.S. perspective being the most important is an assumption as well. Since the CIA is an American institution, the bias is not hard to understand. Also viewing operations from a foreign perspective would clearly be difficult since almost no endeavor would be approved. What remains to be seen is whether covert actions are still largely successful and useful tool from a U.S. perspective.

Another issue is the lack of large numbers of case studies. A better study would attempt to include all the covert actions that meet the definition from 1947 to the present. A comprehensive study of CIA operations would include all of the major operations from its inception, at least the ones that have been made public or that can be inferred from reliable
evidence. This would include quite a few operations in Italy, Chile, Cuba, Angola, Iran, Guatemala, El Salvador, and many other foreign nations. Such a study would provide more reliable results and allow for a great deal more comparison. Still it is not within the scope of this study.

One final issue is the difficulty of using only one researcher to examine and determine the results. It is hoped that this bias may be overcome by replication of this study using the same scale and rating method in a number of other case studies. If other researchers can use this same technique and replicate similar results then it will add greatly to the reliability of the conclusions reached. Under better circumstances a panel of researchers could be asked to rate the case studies. They would then compare the results to determine how reliable this ranking method is. Much of the literature on CIA operations examines individual operations and deems them successes or failures. The hope within this study is to bring about a more rigorous standardized examination of covert actions. With this method the goal of a common definition of success or failure in the covert action arena can be reached.
Endnotes


13Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*, 89.


16Ibid.


Chapter III

Nicaragua: Seven Deadly Sins or Seven Signs of Success

The Contra program in Nicaragua was not the first U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua. Indeed the leadership the United States opposed took its name from famous Nicaraguan who fought the U.S. Marines in the 1920s, Augusto Sandino. The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship merely brought renewed attention to the region, especially with the onset of the "Reagan revolution."

American interest in Nicaragua first began in 1855 when a U.S. citizen, one William Walker, declared himself president of Nicaragua. As accounts go:

Liberals hired an American adventurer, William Walker, and his small mercenary army, to fight on their side against the Conservatives. Walker, a physician and lawyer from Tennessee who had earlier tried to conquer northern Mexico, landed on the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua with fifty-eight men and quickly took control of the Nicaraguan army and the entire country. He had himself elected president, made plans to institute slavery, and grabbed the railroad-steamship line that Cornelius Vanderbilt had built across Nicaragua to transport people from one ocean to the other a route especially popular among people from the eastern United States who were going to California.2

The Liberals and Conservatives were Nicaragua's main political factions. The only major difference between the two factions "was their attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church, with the Conservatives, in general, believing the Church should have a lot of influence in government, and the Liberals thinking it ought to confine its interest to the soul." Walker was merely a Yankee mercenary turned dictator and was later executed in Honduras by a firing squad.

Under Conservative rule Nicaragua remained in relative peace until 1893 when a Liberal general, Jose Santos Zelaya, came to power and enforced a rather brutish dictatorship. According to some accounts the situation evolved into a series of "wars between Conservative and Liberal generals that dragged on over two decades and
brought U.S. troops to Nicaragua five times—three times to protect U.S. citizens when hostilities threatened, twice to shore up compromise coalition governments menaced by rebellious party generals."3 Others have questioned the U.S. role seeing "the country under US military occupation (1912-1933 apart from one year), leading to the murder of the nationalist leader Sandino and the establishment of the Somoza dictatorship after a brutal counterinsurgency campaign."4 Obviously, enlightened or not, the presence of U.S. Marines helped to create Nicaragua's revolutionary folk hero, Augusto Sandino.

Sandino, the nationalist who inspired the term Sandinista, fought a successful guerrilla war against U.S. Marines occupying the country from 1927-1933. He fought a long series of skirmishes with the Marines and was the unfortunate recipient of "the first organized dive-bombing attack in history"5 on July 16, 1927. Still Sandino managed to live to see the U.S. Marines pull out in 1933. One year later he was executed by a National Guard firing squad under the orders of Anastasio Somoza Garcia. As the years passed the legend of Sandino grew in a country with few heroes and eventually the Sandinistas claimed his memory as their own.

The Somoza regime began soon after Sandino's death, the overthrow of the elected president a mere formality. Somoza merely had the National Guard surround the palace and forced the president to resign. Somoza then held an election and "when the ballots were counted Somozaism had won the first of many landslide electoral victories--107,000 votes for, 169 against."6 Putting a positive spin on the rule of the Somozas, Glenn Garvin argues that "while the Somozas could be brutal, they were not significantly worse than the many Nicaraguan presidents who had enforced their rule with party armies."7 Others have described the rule of the Somozas as "one of the most repressive and corrupt in the Americas."8 Though the Somozas were generally regarded as dictators, they were dictators friendly to U.S. interests, "our son of a bitch," as FDR would claim."9
Anastasio Somoza Garcia was killed by a poet turned assassin in 1956. His son Luis took over and ran the country stepping down after only one term to be replaced by Rene Schick, a Somoza puppet, until 1967. Anastasio Somoza Debayle, or Tachito, ran for president despite the best advice of his brother Luis who advocated a more liberal form of dictatorship at least in appearances. Another Somoza as president would damage Nicaragua's international stature. Tachito proved this quite early in the election campaign by setting the National Guard upon supporters of the opposition candidate. As the crowd marched towards the National Palace, "the Guardia opened fire, killing at least forty marchers and wounding more than one hundred others."10

Obviously domestic opposition to the rule of the Somozas existed. One disaffected group which would later come to prominence was the FSLN, the Sandinista Front. It was formed originally by three leftist student leaders: Carlos Fonseca, Tomas Borge, and Silvio Mayorga. All three were influenced by "Marxism-Leninism, but they did not spell it out in their early plans."11 The revolution in Cuba inspired them to think that a guerrilla movement might be possible in Nicaragua. Still the FSLN "repeatedly met with failure in its military operations."12 Indeed after the first two military campaigns in 1963 and 1967, "the few remaining guerrillas retreated so deeply into the jungle that, for all practical purposes, they ceased to exist."13 They also mixed in the nationalism of Sandino, Fonseca in particular insisting that the group name itself after Sandino. They would finally become an important resistance group in December of 1974.

On December 18, 1974 a Sandinista squad burst into a Christmas party hosted by Jose Maria Castillo and took over forty important guests hostage including Somoza's brother in law. Somoza was forced to negotiate with the guerrillas--a prospect that was not altogether pleasant for him:

I asked the Federal Reserve Board for five million dollars because I was not certain what the final negotiated figure would be. As it turned out, we agreed on one million dollars, so we had money to spare. The thought of paying that amount of money to Communist-trained terrorists, who had kidnapped and killed, caused me to suffer mental agony. But what was I to
The 1974 raid brought international attention to the Sandinistas and their cause, at a point when "to most Nicaraguans, the Sandinista Front was presumed to be dead or dying." Though it was a spectacular tactical success it brought on a crisis within the leadership of the FSLN. The FSLN would separate into three distinct factions: one emphasizing a very prolonged war in which the consciousness of the people had to be raised, one pushing for a prolonged peasant war, and the 'terceristas' or third-way who hoped to "reach out to non-Marxists in the hope of producing a quick victory through mass insurrection."  

After the 1974 raid Somoza quickly pressed the National Guard into service leading to widespread massacres including two mass executions totaling eighty-six civilians within just a few weeks. This level of repression eventually led to criticism from the United States during the Carter administration. While Carter was not willing to completely abandon Somoza on the basis of human rights, his administration did seek to convince Somoza that he had to clean up his image or lose military assistance from the United States. To Somoza the Carter administration's stress on human rights was "a tool of destruction" to be used on Nicaragua. Meanwhile Somoza, especially after the corruption surrounding the 1972 Managua earthquake, had begun to lose support from even the business sectors.

On January 10, 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was assassinated. He had been the head of La Prensa, the only tolerated opposition to Somoza. A harsh critic of the regime he quickly became a martyr. His assassination brought the anti-Somoza forces together, business and labor leaders had already been meeting with Somoza in an effort to convince him to open up and reform the government. Soon after the murder of Chamorro, they began calling on him to resign. At the same time the Sandinistas heated up their armed resistance. Commander Zero, Eden Pastora, led a raid on the National Palace galvanizing support, though Pastora would later turn up as a Contra
commander. Business and labor leaders were "sparked into action, declaring a general strike the day after the phenomenally successful National Palace occupation ended." Somoza's prospects were dim.

Stubborn till the end, Somoza refused to step aside and instead "tried to shoot his way to peace," sending the National Guard to lay "siege to the rebellious cities, cutting off food and utilities, and bombing and strafing by air." The Guard would then enter the smoking cities and proceed to "clean-up" which often meant killing any male over 14. Despite these displays of brutality the Carter administration stuck by Somoza longer than expected. Essentially the Carter administration tried to get Somoza to step down to be replaced by an associate who was not related to the Somoza family. Failing that, the Carter administration hoped to install a new moderate government without Sandinista dominance and most importantly to keep the National Guard largely intact. This was a policy of Somocismo without Somoza.

As the Sandinistas launched their final offensive on May 29, 1979 things began to look especially bad for Somoza. The United States was willing to try one last time to stave off a total Sandinista victory. Somoza finally agreed to step down now that the Sandinista victory was inevitable. An attempt was made to set up a new government by ceding power to Francisco Urcuyo, head of Congress, as the new president. Urcuyo would then negotiate a new government with moderate groups and the Sandinistas and maintain the National Guard in part. The problem was Urcuyo "was prepared to serve out Somoza's term." On July 19 the Sandinistas took power. The CIA's covert action would begin with Reagan's election. Eventually about $500 million would be spent trying to oust the Sandinistas.
Foreign Policy Goals

Foreign policy goals should be relatively easy to determine. Governments regularly announce foreign policy positions and take stances on international issues. Presidents, prime ministers, and diplomats all comment on their country's foreign policy. The problem of course is that much of foreign policy is unofficial. Governments often pursue policies antithetical to announced polices, an obvious U.S. example was the Iran-Contra affair.

The case in Nicaragua was one of conflicting foreign policy goals. The initial contention was that Nicaragua was supplying El Salvador's leftist guerrillas. This was tied to a Soviet/Cuban imperialist conspiracy. Even more ridiculous claims of an actual invasion force from Nicaragua were also put forward as proof of a new "domino" theory in Central America proved by an increased military presence "nearly six times the size of the old National Guard." Still all of this was to provide support for the Reagan policy of creating and supporting the Contras.

In an early speech on foreign policy Reagan harshly criticized Nicaragua. "Violence has been Nicaragua's most important export to the world," according to Reagan. Still despite his heated rhetoric, Reagan made clear the United States limited foreign policy goals:

Let us be clear as to the American attitude toward the government of Nicaragua. We do not seek its overthrow. Our interest is to insure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence. Our purpose, in conformity with American and international law, is to prevent the flow of arms to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. We have attempted to have a dialogue with the government of Nicaragua but it persists in its efforts to spread violence.

Thus the stated goal of American foreign policy was merely to stop the flow of weapons to El Salvador. The other countries where Nicaragua was supposed to be sending arms were relatively unimportant and mainly added for effect or in order to bolster the notion that Nicaragua was supporting a widespread communist revolution in Central America. Thus our stated goals were relatively simple in regard to Nicaragua,
basically being a side note to foreign policy regarding El Salvador. It would not seem that the U.S. would be terribly interested in the Sandinistas as long as they were willing to end military aid to El Salvador's guerrilla movement.

Problems with this stated policy arose instantly. First, it was difficult to prove that a large scale arms shipment program was underway. The arms supply connection was relatively minor and was not the primary reason for the success of El Salvador's rebels. "Despite administration assertions of success in interdicting arms shipped by land, and more recent charges that shipments are continuing, primarily by air, not a single major shipment of arms has been captured in or near El Salvador since a Costa Rican pilot was caught in 1981."25 Some argued as well that the government was applying a doctrine "invented by Lucas Alaman: blaming internal problems on foreign governments."26 El Salvador had a problem with leftist guerrillas because of the brutal rule of El Salvador's right wing elite, not because of Nicaragua.

The Administration's proof came largely from a series of captured documents that were released to the public in the form of a White Paper, Communist Interference in El Salvador. Whether the documents actually were captured from Salvadoran guerrillas is a matter of some debate as Philip Agee, a famous or infamous former CIA employee, maintains. According to Agee, "the Salvadorans may well have captured some documents, but the most sensational in this White Paper are, I believe, fabricated."27 Agee was far from alone in his questioning of the White Paper released by the State Department. Within a month the White Paper was "exposed in the media as a textbook case of U.S. government disinformation."28 Wall Street Journal reporter, Jonathan Kwitny, broke the story on June 8th and later spelled out the case against the White Paper in his book, Endless Enemies, stating that instead of proving the case of a grand communist conspiracy against the government of El Salvador the documents:

show the opposite: a disorganized, ragtag rebellion. Some of its participants have gone around begging for help from the most likely sources and have been consistently stalled off.
and sent home empty-handed, or with much less than they asked for. Not only do the documents not prove the thesis, the thesis simply isn't true.29

Still the White Paper served its purpose despite being exposed as a major exaggeration.

Along with Ronald Reagan's rhetoric, the White Paper helped win over Congress and most Americans who "agreed that the Sandinista government was both internally repressive and a threat to the hemisphere."30 As it was presented to the public the purpose was merely to curb arm shipments to the Salvadoran rebels. The real problem, especially frustrating to Reagan, was that he could never get widespread support for his programs in Nicaragua. Indeed he was able to curry more favor with Congress than the American public. Gallup polls taken up until 1989 on the handling of Nicaragua showed consistently high disapproval ratings, never once reaching more than a 35% approval rating.31

Another problem was that Administration officials and the Contras themselves were hinting at the true aims of U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua. While the United States may have only intended the Contras "as an instrument of cheap containment, that wouldn't prevent the Contras from pursuing their own agenda."32 Much of the evidence points to the notion that the Contras shared their goals with their sponsors in Washington. The Contra intervention was always in hopes of overthrowing the Sandinistas.

At one point Congress through the Boland amendment put its foot down on aid to the Contras. The amendment was supposed to stop any action by the CIA which was aimed at destabilizing the government of Nicaragua. It specifically authorized an end to all military aid to the Contras by either the CIA or the Department of Defense.33 Congress did not foresee that a overzealous president would be willing to simply shift the operation over to the National Security Council.

Still there remained an atmosphere of mystery among the United States foreign policy goals regarding Nicaragua. Some scholars such as John Norton Moore have tried to defend the Reagan Administration's claims. Moore claims that the notion that
the United States is trying to overthrow the government of Nicaragua is ludicrous. According to Moore the U.S. desired good relations with the commandantes, President Reagan's statements have been taken out of context, the Boland amendment says the U.S. cannot seek to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, official policy statements did not advocate overthrow of the Sandinistas, and the U.S. would have every right to overthrow the Sandinistas, though the U.S. was not engaged in overthrowing the Sandinistas. 34 None of these arguments is particularly convincing. The United States through the Carter administration tried to keep the Sandinistas out of power right up until the end. President Reagan's slips about the true purpose of the Contras to make the Sandinistas "say uncle," were only too close to the truth. The Boland amendment was not exactly a strict limit on Contra activities, and by May of 1983 Chairman Boland himself recognized that anyone "with any sense, would have to come to the conclusion that the operation is illegal, (and) that the purpose and the mission of the operation was to overthrow the government of Nicaragua." 35 Official policy statements meant little, "since "arms interdiction" was to be the official rationale for supporting the Contras, administration spokesmen persisted to claim that Nicaragua was shipping vast amounts of weaponry to El Salvador." 36 Finally, in 1986, the World Court disagreed with the stated right of the U.S. to intervene in Nicaragua.

The Boland amendment would come about in direct response to this unspoken foreign policy agenda. Essentially the Administration's unspoken policy was one of overthrowing the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The sabotage operations of the Contras, even early on, pointed to a policy of destabilizing the Nicaraguan state, not merely preventing the shipping of arms to El Salvador. A policy of destabilization is nothing new in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed many of the nations of Central and South America have been subjected to U.S. power at various periods. Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, and others have all been targets of invasion, election interference, and even assassination attempts.
Eventually even moderate members of Congress such as Speaker Jim Wright realized exactly what the unstated U.S. goal was. Wright speaking on renewed Contra funding in 1985 stated that "for the first time we're going to be saying that we are accessories to overthrowing the government of Nicaragua."37 There was no longer doubt of the real intentions of the United States in regards to the government of Nicaragua. The U.S. intended to overthrow the government of Nicaragua by way of a proxy army, economic warfare, and election financing. All of these techniques involved the services of the Central Intelligence Agency.

As the actual foreign policy goals have been established little remains except to see if the goal of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua was reached. On February 26, 1990 Daniel Ortega peacefully conceded defeat to the U.S. supported opposition, while "U.S. policy makers gloated over the results."38 After a decade the Sandinistas had finally been defeated by electoral means. The Contras had largely faded from the scene no longer a significant military force without Congressional funding. While the victory was long and costly in the long term U.S. foreign policy goals were met. For this operation foreign policy goals can be assigned a +7. The election of the Chamorro government was clearly a foreign policy victory.

**Operational Success**

It is difficult to state the actual operational goals in the CIA's involvement in Nicaragua. Part of this difficulty stems from a foreign policy which was largely secretive and unannounced. While many observers fully understood that the aim was to overthrow the Sandinistas, officially that was never the policy. The operation also suffered breaks in funding which led to a lack of continuity.

Since it can be assumed that the CIA operation was an attempt to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, then their primary operational goal was to mold the Contras
into an effective guerrilla force capable of destabilizing the government. Similar operations in Laos and Iraq had been less than successful with the Agency eventually tarnished with the implication that they had cynically manipulated peasants and then hung them out to dry. The bulk of CIA spending was directed towards supporting the Contras, but there were other facets to the CIA program.

Unlike foreign policy goals the operational success of the intervention and destabilization campaign was decidedly mixed. The Contras were basically a unadulterated failure. Despite large investments in training, equipping, and supplying the Contras, the "years of United States assistance never produced an insurgency capable of sustaining itself among the population in Nicaragua."

The Contras were little more than a well paid band of mercenaries "who routinely attack civilian populations. Their forces kidnap, torture, and murder health workers, teachers, and other government employees." "Their inept guerrilla campaign serves chiefly to discredit themselves and their American supporters." They were never the proxy army of "freedom fighters" that Ronald Reagan had hoped for.

The Contras' military campaign never moved much beyond border raids. The typical Contra incursion into Nicaragua involved crossing the border of Honduras and launching small raids on villages possibly picking up recruits or forcibly taking them. Their was little coordination of attacks even when large scale campaigns were cooked up by U.S. military advisors in Honduras. The Contra military campaign was highly successful at causing terror among the population of northern Nicaragua, but it never seriously threatened the population centers such as Managua in Central Nicaragua.

Their human rights record was deplorable. Indeed Congress set aside three million dollars of a 100 million dollar aid package to the Contras in 1986 when it finally renewed funding. The three million was specifically to train the Contras to respect international norms of human rights. In an interview one Contra officer, who was obviously in need of human rights training, was quite frank about what happened to
captured prisoners answering the interviewer’s question on what would happen if one did not wish to answer questions during an interrogation:

You would be beaten until you talked. Also, an interrogation is carried out intensively only when it can be determined that the subject can give information of interest. No time is wasted interrogating people who can’t give any information. CDS members (Sandinista military), for example, don’t usually give any useful information. So they aren’t interrogated. They’re eliminated right away. A real interrogation is useful only if one has captured a soldier in battle. Then one can get from him information that’s directly applicable.42

Reviewing the record of atrocities committed by the Contras, the Brody report issued in 1985 by Reed Brody concludes that "the preponderance of the evidence indicates that the Contras are committing serious abuses against civilians."43 Brody’s report met with criticism from the Reagan administration, but was confirmed by the New York Times, CBS News and Americas Watch. And human rights were not the only problem with the Contras. They also had a corrupt leadership which was quite happy to take U.S. money and less worried about winning a war. Finally, there are even some allegations that the Contras were dealing in drugs to finance their cause.44

Corruption was well known in the Somoza regime, and it would remain under his old National Guard in Honduras. Since the leadership of the Contras was overwhelmingly former National Guard members the Contras would be run by a corrupt leadership. Lower level Contra commanders attacked the leadership numerous times over corruption. Often even basic foodstuffs would never make it to the troops in the field. The leader of the FDN, a former National Guard member, Enrique Bermudez, survived numerous attempts by lower level commanders to remove him. Often Bermudez was no where to be found, "spending time in Tegucigalpa with his lover and child."45 Bermudez was accused of corruption throughout his leadership of the Contras, but with CIA support he stayed in power. At one point the CIA set up a system of distributing funds through a central coordinator, Hugo Villagra, in order to get weapons and food directly to troops. It ended two months later, and upon his resignation Villagra maintained that there was "a lack of authentic leadership, professionalism, and ethics in the majority of the military personnel who hold positions
in the upper echelons of the FDN [and] who have transformed this sacred cause into a way to make a living."\textsuperscript{46} By keeping the National Guard leadership the CIA kept intact its rampant corruption.

R. Pardo-Maurer, a political officer with the Contras from 1986 to 1988 argues that the real failing of the Contras was their leadership. The Contras were without democratic traditions. Washington tried to create a democratic force though "assemblies, committees, secretariats came and went; declarations, charters, covenants solemnly succeeded one another."\textsuperscript{47} The true problem resided in the leadership of the Contras, the former National Guard. "They seemed to grudge, not embrace, democracy."\textsuperscript{48} With a well entrenched leadership unwilling to implement democratic reforms the Contras would never be a viable alternate to the Sandinistas.

Another problem with the operation came from the mining of Nicaraguan harbors. The problem here was that it wasn't carried out by the Contras, but by the CIA and it amounted to little more than an act of war. It caused widespread outrage among even Congressional supporters of the Contras such as Barry Goldwater. It helped to outrage even European allies of the United States. In short it was "one of the most catastrophic covert actions in the history of U.S. intelligence."\textsuperscript{49} Mining the harbors turned out to be a huge mistake. Eventually it would lead to a strong ruling against U.S. interference in Nicaragua in the International Court of Justice.

Another error came with the discovery of a CIA manual for training the Contras which advocated assassination. The manual written by a former Special Forces major referred to neutralizing Sandinista officials in villages. It also referred to using criminals and creating martyrs by provoking confrontations, but these sections were edited out by Edgar Chamorro, propaganda chief for the FDN. The manual caused a tremendous uproar because it implied that the CIA, quite illegally, was again engaged in political assassinations, which had been specifically banned by executive order.
The cutoff of aid in May of 1984 was difficult for the CIA and the Contras. At this point the CIA operation would for all purposes cease. Unfortunately Ronald Reagan was not willing to take no as an answer from Congress and so he told his staff: "We can't break the law, but within the law, we have to do whatever we can to help the Contras survive."\(^{50}\) Despite his claims, the interim funding project for the Contras would blow up into a terrible scandal involving Iran, arms trading, hostages, and Swiss bank accounts.

The Contra part of the Iran-Contra affair was led by an NSC staffer, one Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North. North was completely behind the Contra cause. While it is still unclear just how much authorization North had to support the Contras there is little doubt the Reagan at least supported North's operation in general. North helped by hitting up friendly allies for funding for the Contras. Of course there were obvious implications that when Saudi Arabia donated a million dollars a month, later doubled, to the Contra cause that they expected some consideration in return. North also went looking for aid among private donors—primarily rich anti-communist crusaders.

The Boland amendment never bothered North, and it obviously didn't stop his supervisors McFarlane and Poindexter. He went about creating a resupplying operation through Richard Secord whose interpretation of the Boland Amendment is instructive:

> The idea that Contra support was intended to be an illegal "end run" around the Boland Amendments, and not something painstakingly conducted in compliance with them, was a myth created later by the media and repeated so often that it eventually took on the color of truth. In fact, the legislative history shows quite the opposite.\(^{51}\)

Secord, North, McFarlane, Poindexter, and others were all eventually charged and convicted of crimes in the Iran-Contra affair because they accepted such facile explanations or later sought to defend such actions during the cover-up.\(^{52}\) The most serious abuse of power in Iran-Contra was this attempt to create a private foreign policy
out of the reach of Congress. If Iran-Contra had succeeded or gone undiscovered future Presidents who disagreed with Congress could simply make an end run around the legislative branch.

The final aspects of Iran-Contra involved the crossing of two operations, a terrible idea under almost any set of circumstances. Since Secord and Albert Hakim had made some extra money off of arms sales in Iran they donated a part of it back to the Contra resupply operation which they were also running. When Eugene Hasenfus was captured by Sandinistas he spilled the beans on North and Secord’s operation. Shortly thereafter the Iranian operation came to light and then the last damaging piece in the puzzle, the diversion. The entire operation was eventually revealed in some detail and the Reagan administration was mortally wounded although Bush and Reagan managed to weather the storm without criminal charges by claiming ignorance. The scandal hurt the CIA by involving the U.S. once again in secret operations that went beyond the law, even if this time the CIA hadn’t really been involved.

During all of this the CIA was largely relegated to the sidelines as required without Congressional funding. Little of the blame for Iran-Contra can actually be accessed as a CIA failure. Essentially Reagan used the National Security Council staff to conduct an unregulated covert war without the aid of the CIA. William Casey, then head of the CIA, was probably privy to the operation, but the CIA was not really involved. McFarlane asserts that Casey “was searching for an alternative basis for conducting covert operations in Central America,” and that North and the NSC provided an off-the-shelf Contra support operation, however illegal. The blame for Iran-Contra rests with the Administration. The problem for the CIA with Iran-Contra would come about over the long term.

Beyond support for the Contras the CIA intended to make the economy scream. Many of the Contras’ operations were explicitly aimed at causing economic damage that would further weaken the Sandinistas. This was so important that the CIA would
involve its own personnel in mining harbors and attacking coastal towns, "a CIA operation from start to finish."55 Reagan's official policies dovetailed nicely with the CIA's operational aims. In May of 1985 Reagan declared a full trade embargo with Nicaragua though there was no "allied support for the embargo."56 The embargo and other actions, including pressure on the World Bank to end all loans to a struggling Nicaragua, helped to make the internal situation in Nicaragua worse. In the end it also helped to prove Washington's fears, pushing a military draft into effect to defend against the Contras and forcing Ortega to woo the Soviet Union since they were "the only outside source available to him for money and weapons to defend against the Contra military forces."57 Still much of the economic program was above ground. The CIA only specifically helped to damage the economy by supporting Contra operations intended to destroy key economic targets since the Contras at no time could actually wrest control from the Sandinistas by purely military means.

During the years of the CIA's operation up until 1990 possibly $100 million was spent specifically on internal opposition to the Sandinistas. These opposition groups included political opponents, religious leaders, and even La Prensa. Nicaragua's most successful newspaper received "covert funding not only from the Central Intelligence Agency, but also from the secret network coordinated by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, the former National Security Council official and central figure in the Iran-Contra scandal."58 Domestic opponents of the Sandinistas were supported as well, and the CIA helped set up the civilian cover for the Contras at times even enticing former Sandinista supporters to serve on the Contra's political directorate. Indeed the most popular domestic opponent of the Sandinistas, Managua Arturo Cruz, pulled out of the 1984 election specifically to help invalidate the elections though he might have made "a formidable opponent."59 Cruz had returned to Nicaragua to go "through the motions of being named the presidential candidate of the CDN and then of entering into
discussions with the government on the terms of participation, \(^6^0\) in order to pull out and make the Sandinistas look bad, a decision he later regretted.\(^6^1\)

Overall the operational goals were only met in 1990 when the Sandinistas were forced out by the ballot box. Though the goal was finally met, the main thrust, the Contras, were almost an absolute failure. Edward N. Luttwak, a chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, refers to the CIA's work in Nicaragua as "disastrous operational incompetence."\(^6^2\) The elections were arrived at not so much because of CIA pressure, but because of pressure from other Central American countries especially Costa Rica. Indeed most of the money for candidates came from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an open source. The NED provided about $12.5 million to the opposition directly, or about $8 dollars a voter, more than twice what George Bush spent per voter to get elected in 1988.\(^6^3\) And this in an extremely poor Third World nation. As a whole the CIA operation in Nicaragua was a failure.

Operationally all that remains is deciding how big a failure the Contras were. An ill trained army commanded by corrupt National Guard members—the Contras were a disaster. The CIA had to involve its own personnel in mining efforts and attacks on coastal towns, a development that eventually hurt the whole operation. The Contras never developed an effective political wing, and the final foreign policy came about because of election influencing where the CIA and the Contras played only a marginal role. All of this adds up to a nearly complete disaster in reaching operational goals giving the Nicaragua operation a -5 for operational goals.

**Long Term Success**

In the short and medium term the CIA operation was a general success. The Chamorro government upon winning instituted a Western style democracy. The
Sandinistas were defeated in an election generally conceded to be free and fair despite heavy United States aid to the opposition candidates. Notions of privatization were introduced immediately after Chamorro assumed office with dramatic effects. "In the first six months of the new government the economy suffered a dramatic acceleration of hyper inflationary tendencies. It reached an unprecedented average monthly inflation rate of 89 percent for the first six months."\(^64\) One year after Chamorro's election, 58% of Nicaraguan citizens felt the UNO government had worsened the economic situation. Additionally, more than three-quarters of the population expressed displeasure at the decline in health and educational services.\(^65\) Even early on there were problems.

In the medium term things were still going well for the United States, but cracks were beginning to show in the earlier glowing victory. Under pressure from the United States Nicaragua dropped its valid claim to war reparations stemming from the World Court decision in 1986.\(^66\) Chamorro was under quite a bit of pressure to leave Humberto Ortega, a Sandinista leader, as the head of the military. Some considered her to be giving "away a victory that had cost Nicaragua a decade of war and twenty thousand lives."\(^67\) In effect the Chamorro government was not as well received as the United States had hoped.

In the longest term that can be effectively observed as of today, the final goal of removing the Sandinistas from power was largely achieved. A U.S. backed government sits in power today. Still there are nagging problems in the long term with the CIA's program of destabilization. As the new elections of 1996 approach there is some question as to how the UNO will fare.

First, the Sandinistas are by no means defeated as a political force. Within the Chamorro government they still wield much power and have a strong base in the military. They also maintain widespread political support. Some have argued that Nicaraguans were convinced to vote for the Chamorro government because it was the only way to convince the U.S. to leave Nicaragua alone. Essentially "the Contras, with
U.S. approval and at U.S. direction, became an active part of the US-organized anti-
Sandinista political campaign."68  William I. Robinson, an investigative journalist,
spelled out the simple equation:

Because the Contras support the UNO, and because the United States sponsors both the UNO
and the Contras, an electoral victory for the UNO will mean an end to the military war with
the Contras. The UNO, by virtue of its relation to the superpower waging war against
Nicaragua, will be able to achieve peace. A vote for the UNO is a vote for peace.69

Thus the Sandinistas may be able to return to power in the next few years with
substantial public support. The CIA itself seems to see some danger of communism in
Nicaragua. In its 1991 World Fact Book the Agency lists Nicaragua as containing
between 15,000 and 20,000 communists, though it does not list numbers of dedicated
capitalists, supporters of liberal democracy, or democratic socialists, groups that
probably have greater followings than communism.70

At least there is some indication that despite being defeated in the electoral realm
the Sandinistas are still a large popular force capable of returning to power sometime in
the future, most likely through perfectly legal electoral means. Only one year later
writing in the New Republic James LeMoyne states that "Chamorro is still simply
trying to maintain the imperfect peace that ended the open civil war. She has barely
begun the process of crafting a true democracy."71  As well, the long term implications
of the operation are unknown. There are still a large number of former Contras in
Nicaragua and the country is in desperate economic straits.

The question also remains as to how the situation in Nicaragua would have
evolved without the massive intervention by the United States. Jim Wright, former
Speaker of the House, points out that a "negotiating process achieved what six years of
U.S.-financed military intervention had failed to achieve. It brought peace and restored
democracy."72  Others point out that the Contra intervention forced the Nicaraguan
government to more extreme measures which would have been unlikely without U.S.
interference.
In the long run Nicaragua is not likely to have posed any real threat to the U.S. The only real threat was that of a successful demonstration. Nicaragua could lead by example to the rest of Central America. Essentially the threat that is always cited is a domino effect. If Nicaragua fell to socialists then El Salvador would be next and then maybe Guatemala or Houndoras. The Sandinista victory proved that dictators in Central America could be overcome by popular uprisings. Cuba had provided a similar example in 1959, and remains to this day a bitterly denounced enemy of the United States. Since the United States has consistently supported military backed regimes such as the one now coming under fire in Guatemala, the threat of demonstration may have been serious. Other attempts to oppose U.S. interests such as Panama and Grenada met with armed force. A successful Nicaragua may have led to renewed fears of uprisings in other U.S. friendly regimes. Obviously there was a fear that the successful revolution in Nicaragua would carry over to El Salvador, a place where "one learns that an open mouth can be used to make a specific point, can be stuffed with something emblematic; stuffed, say, with a penis, or if the point has to do with a land title, stuffed with some of the dirt in question," a place where body dumps "are a kind of visitors' must-do, difficult but worth the detour." With or without the intervention Nicaragua could pose little actual threat to the United States.

Finally, the whole intervention is likely to sustain anti-Yankee sentiment for some time to come. Essentially whether one supported the Sandinistas or not, the United States was heavily involved in violating Nicaragua's national sovereignty. It is also hard for the Nicaraguan population to see this as an ahistorical aberration since there is a long history of massive interference by the United States in Nicaragua. Though it is impossible to predict the effect of anti-Yankee sentiment, it helped fuel bitter enemies such as Iran and Cuba. Many observers believe that to this day Castro remains in power mainly because of U.S. hostility to Cuba. Castro can always point to
the evil United States and how he stands up against it, a strategy that has maintained his popularity in Cuba even now in a very difficult economic situation.

Since the long term effects are difficult to determine the operation is ranked as a zero. There is considerable anti-Yankee sentiment in Nicaragua and the Sandinistas are a powerful political force. Ranking will be easier after the results of the 1996 election that may return the Sandinistas to power. If UNO or another party can retain power then the long term effects may be slightly positive.

Covertness

The CIA operations against Nicaragua were never truly secret. While the Carter administration's early funding of groups opposed to the Sandinistas may have remained hidden, Reagan went out of his way to brag about the Contras. In Reagan's attempt to win over domestic opinion he approved "the public use of classified imagery on a scale unparalleled since the Cuban missile crisis, in a despairing attempt to try to prove the administration's case."74 Even special missions such as the mining of harbors became unearthed almost immediately.

The main thrust of the CIA's operation in Nicaragua, the Contras, was never much of a secret. Nor was the United States' role in funding their operations. Indeed, unlike previous large scale covert actions, the Administration engaged in debates with Congress about funding the Contras. Previous proxy armies such as the Meo tribes in Laos and anti-Castro Cubans had at least attempted to maintain some secrecy. Had the CIA been able to hide U.S. connections to the Contras the myth of the "freedom fighter" might have been more plausible. No one in the international community including allies really questioned whether the U.S. was behind the Contras.

Some of the CIA program and funding was kept more secret. Aid to opposition groups and organizations such as Nicaragua's largest paper, La Prensa, were largely
unacknowledged though there were significant rumors and allegations of CIA involvement. As it turned out the allegations were quite true. John Spicer Nichols reports in the Columbia Journalism Review on a year long investigation that "clearly shows U.S. aid to La Prensa was an integral part of a campaign to help the Contras overthrow the Sandinista government."\textsuperscript{75} Still even at the last minute reports emerged about the CIA funding of the 1990 elections. The U.S. had agreed to no covert funding of opposition candidates, but the CIA was secretly funding opposition candidates in explicit violation of peace accords. While concrete proof was never unearthed before the election the rumors turned out to be true. The CIA had run "a covert operation largely hidden from Congress that paid about $600,000 to some 100 Miami-based Contra political leaders and organizers to return to Nicaragua."\textsuperscript{76} The two intelligence committees weren't fully informed of the program until after the elections and Senate Chairman David Boren felt that "he had been had."\textsuperscript{77} At the very least the CIA was able to keep much of the electoral and political interference from public view, a situation that never existed for the Contras.

The failure to keep the Contras covert was a serious mistake. Even though some of the election interference and aid to other groups were kept secret, rumors persisted that the CIA was involved. Also since the Contras were the main thrust of the operation their mistakes were especially costly. The United States simply could not deny it was behind the Contras. Under covertness the operation scores a -3 saved from a -4 only by the amount of undercover aid to Sandinista political opponents that went undiscovered.

Democratic Standards

U.S. foreign policy typically suffers from an emphasis on promoting "democracy." The mission in Nicaragua never met democratic standards, but that
would be hard to tell from Administration statements. The Contras were a force led mostly by ex-Guardsmen that were used to terrorize the Nicaraguan population. Elections were massively financed and influenced by the CIA including reports of attempts to sabotage the respectability of 1984 elections by pulling out a high profile candidate. International opinion was less then positive. Also since the U.S. role wasn't hidden it is difficult to defend. Still a Democratic House did vote to continue sending money to the Contras though ostensibly it was merely to stop aid flows to El Salvador, a goal that was of little use to the Reagan administration.

One of the greatest contentions was that the Contras were "freedom fighters" who sought to restore democracy to Nicaragua. The Sandinistas were portrayed as a totalitarian communist group seeking to establish a new Russia in Central America "imposing rigid military rule and ousting the leaders of the other factions that had fought with them in the revolution." Neither of these myths hold much weight.

The Contras were far from a principled group of revolutionaries hoping to turn their country into a democratic nation. Instead they were largely holdovers from Somoza's National Guard, hated and despised by the majority of the population. The September 15th Legion from which the FDN was formed was a gang of petty criminals and mercenaries for hire. Their earliest exploits were "robberies, kidnappings, and deathsquad murders" in Guatemala. While Reagan may have wanted to wrap the Contras in the cloth of true revolutionaries, the Sandinistas actually pulled off a popular revolution against Somoza.

Despite the rhetoric Nicaragua was not the totalitarian communist nation that Reagan imagined. The Sandinistas did consolidate power in the ruling junta after the revolution, but they were well supported by the population in general. Though an election was not held until 1984 "most observers agree that the Sandinista party would win any election held." Freedom of the press was retained although there were some restraints put on the shrill opposition *La Prensa* which received funding from the CIA.
Indeed the CIA funding of the Contras precipitated the state of emergency which brought about the most oppressive measures imposed by the Sandinistas. When the U.S. government pointed out things such as censorship and the draft under the state of emergency they failed to point out "that every government, no matter how democratic, has employed extraordinary measures in wartime, including the United States."\textsuperscript{82} The Contras certainly helped to create these "totalitarian" aspects of the Sandinista government. If the Sandinistas were truly as evil as they were portrayed they would never have won the 1984 election, which was considered basically free and fair by the international community, and they never would have peacefully stepped aside as they did upon losing the 1990 elections.

The U.S. never followed democratic standards in the "secret" war against Nicaragua. Indeed the U.S. was willing to violate international law to such an extent as to mine Nicaraguan harbors. Once the case was filed against the U.S. in the World Court, the U.S. simply announced that it was ignoring the World Court's jurisdiction for two years, a move that clearly signaled U.S. guilt. In the name of fighting communist revolution and its export the U.S. clearly ignored democratic standards, massively interfering in the elections that were held. This policy of fighting communism at any cost including "dirty wars" had a long history, probably beginning with the U.S. intervention in the Russian revolution or the 1948 Italian elections. Nicaragua was merely a case of hypocrisy where the United States government claimed to be fighting for democratic ideals while constantly violating them. The overt nature of the operation merely adds to the true failure in Nicaragua. The operation scores a -3 for its total failure in even partially meeting democratic standards.
Efficient Expenditure

As mentioned earlier there was a large measure of corruption among the FDN leaders. Even non-Guard members got in on the act not the least being Eden Pastora, a former Sandinista leader. Pastora never established a Southern Front despite his championing by the CIA. All of the aid sent to Pastora made very little impact and with an attempt on Pastora's life the Southern Front broke up. Despite Pastora's popularity and authenticity as an opponent of Somoza, unlike the FDN's leadership of former National Guard members, by 1984, "the CIA, once so proud of recruiting Pastora, wanted nothing more to do with him." Members of the political directorate had their hands in the cookie jar as well. Basically the Contra politicians were shuttled around Congress in order to convince legislators of the need for Contra funding. Still these politicians were amply rewarded for their services. Calero the most important member of the directorate was not living off ideals. "Calero was wearing expensive suits, jetting from speech to speech, hobnobbing with America's wealthiest conservatives. Lawmakers could see what this "rebel leader" really was--a glad-handing businessman." Many of the Contras best paid members would end up moving to Miami after the war.

From a standpoint of expenditures, the covert action in Nicaragua was relatively cheap, certainly cheaper then actual U.S. military involvement. Still quite a lot of money was spent in order to remove the Sandinistas. The bulk of this money was spent on the Contras who were an utter failure. The final victory was partially from exhaustion after facing the wrath of a superpower. And the Sandinistas were not completely removed from the picture because they still wield substantial power in the Chamorro government.

Largely overt election interference proved the final blow to the Sandinistas. A large part of this interference was completely in the open through the National
Endowment for Democracy (NED). Indeed William I. Robinson argues that the NED has effectively taken over the old role of the CIA in rigging elections. Nicaragua was just the latest example which goes back to three earlier success stories in the Philippines, Chile, and Panama:

In both the Philippines and Chile, the goal was to remove U.S. allies, brought to or maintained in power by earlier U.S. interventions, whose continuation in office no longer served U.S. interests. The U.S. effort in these two countries intersected with indigenous and broadly based movements against dictatorial governments. In the case of Panama, the aim was to legitimize an opposition created by the United States after the existing regime fell out of favor with Washington and to build an international consensus in favor of military aggression. In Nicaragua, the goal was to remove a designated enemy.85

If the CIA was not the key to the assumption of power by the UNO, then the expenditure on the Contras was largely worthless. Still the implicit threat the Contras posed was quite convincing to members of the Sandinista government. "Nicaragua was worn down considerably as the result of war,"86 forcing the Sandinistas into unpopular polices such as the universal draft.

In the end the cost of the intervention, at least the CIA’s part, appears to have been wasted. Despite hundreds of millions of dollars in aid the Contras were never capable of military victory. Much of the aid also went into the pockets of the corrupt Contra leadership instead of the actual Contras in the field. Also much of the economic pressure involved cutting off aid, enforcing a unilateral trade embargo, and pressuring international agencies such as the World Bank to deny loans to Nicaragua. Finally, the massive election interference was largely out in the open. While the corruption was significant the foreign policy goals were met, and the Contras may have been part of the reason for the electoral victory. Instead of rating the operation as totally inefficient these mitigating factors give the operation a -2.
The Contra war was a tremendous strain on an economy already in shambles from the end of Somoza's rule. While the country would probably not have recovered until 1983, with the Contra war it simply continued to fall. The Sandinistas made mistakes and productivity dropped off both because of Contra attacks and an overly centralized planning system. Though inflation was running at 35,000 percent in 1988 the Sandinistas "were able to bring inflation under control without popular upheavals like those that rocked other Latin American states." This was quite a feat considering the poverty of the country.

Still the guide to measure by is how the economy did after the Sandinista defeat and whether the population benefited. According to CIA figures GDP started at 1.7 billion in 1989 and fell to 1.6 billion by 1991 a year after the Chamorro government was in power. Per capita income showed the same precipitous decline in 1991 falling from $470 per capita to $425 per capita. In 1992 GDP grew returning to 1.7 billion, but per capita income remained low at $425 per capita. This coupled with a decline in spending on education and health shows a net loss for the people under Chamorro. Still this must be tempered with the difficulty of overcoming a decade of open warfare. At least under the Chamorro government the United States was willing to end its support for the Contras.

As far as the basic level of political violence, it has severely tailed off with the end of the Contra war and the election of the Chamorro government. Still there are some political killings both of former Contras and Sandinistas. Amnesty International's 1993 report also included some cases of abuse by the police including beatings of protesters. If one was to establish a baseline with the onset of operations against Nicaragua there would be some violations of human rights, but generally a pretty good record for a poor country. The general consensus is that most of the
abuses by the Sandinistas took place in the first few months of the new government. Hundreds of ex-National Guard members were the main victims. Most of the political violence was caused later by the Contras which means the United States was truly fostering much of the violence and lack of human rights in the country. Thus the lifting of the United States campaign of violence obviously improved human rights, since the Contras themselves were the main violators.

Nicaragua at this stage of its development can be considered a democratic nation. Though there are still flaws in Nicaragua's institutions, they have been able to hold two elections in a row judged free and fair by the international community. Opposition members are not outlawed or killed. By turning over power the Sandinistas helped to maintain the fragile democracy that had been threatened during the Contra war. The military has been maintained as subservient to the civilian government despite fears that Humberto Ortega would simply rule the country through the military as is the case in so many Latin American countries. The victory of Chamorro demonstrated that a revolutionary government could give up power. Chamorro has loosened restrictions on the press and political speech, though much of the restriction of these by the Sandinistas was due to a state of war. All in all political freedom has become more widespread with the end of the CIA operation.

The results of the Contra operation have yet to completely play out in Nicaragua. The population is suffering from an economic standpoint, but their political freedoms have increased. Adding together positive increases in political freedom with negative economic effects gives a score of 0. Further down the road it may be possible to access the full benefit or harm of the operation.
Conclusions

Assigning the number values to the Nicaragua operation and its seven areas comes up overall with a -5 on a scale of -28 to 28. Each of the areas is accorded a value beginning with +7 to -7 for foreign policy goals and finishing with +1 to -1 for the benefit for the general population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Nicaragua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covertness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit general population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for Nicaragua operation: -5

Overall this describes the Nicaragua operation as a mild failure given the criteria. While foreign policy goals were clearly met, very little else was clear in the Nicaraguan case. Also the CIA had only part of the role to play in the final victory by the Chamorro government, its classical election interference role absorbed by the overt NED. Thus the operation in Nicaragua was a failure as a covert operation.

Things are unlikely to change in the future with regards to the scoring of Nicaragua. Several factors could actually change for the worse in the next few years. Data will become available to better evaluate the progress observed for the general population. As well, the election of 1996 will be quite important in assessing the
longer term effects of the CIA operation. Should the Sandinistas return to power in 1996 the long term effects would take a negative turn.

In the end Nicaragua was an expensive failure. Still the Chamorro government was able to grab the reins of power after ten years of covert warfare. The eventual success of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy goals were met at a very high price. The problem was that the CIA was asked to engage in covert warfare by means of a proxy army while the President talked about the connection on national news. The CIA was also ill used in the sense that many of its tasks had been taken over by overt means including overt election interference campaigns by the NED. Mining the barbors with its own personnel was a terrible miscalculation. While the Nicaraguan operation was underway the CIA was slowly evolving out of its Cold War thinking. Covert actions had been a way of fighting communism short of conventional war. The CIA held on to too many practices that had failed before in Laos and Iran--developing paramilitary operations without a political arm and promising continued support that would quickly be withdrawn as soon as the political winds shifted. Unlike the Nicaraguan operation both those operations were developed primarily to keep costs high for the North Vietnamese and the Iraqis.

The operation in Nicaragua is an example of why the CIA's role needs to be reexamined and reconsidered. It is possible that the same results could have been achieved without the CIA's involvement, without ever having to support the Contras. Much of the intervention in Nicaragua was overt, ruling out the need for CIA involvement. The importance of the NED in winning the election may be a good example of how future interventions can take place without the dangers involved in covert actions.
Endnotes


7 Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo*, 12.


10 Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, 252.


12 Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, 258.


14 Anastasio Somoza as told to Jack Cox, *Nicaragua Betrayed* (Boston: Western Islands, 1980), 52.


16 Ibid., 32.

17 Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, 259.


21 Ibid., 33.


32 Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo*, 65.


34 Moore, *The Secret War*, 114-120.

35 *Congressional Record*, February 23, 1984, H886.


37 *Congressional Quarterly*, June 15, 1985, 1139.


39 Kombluh, *Nicaragua the Price of Intervention*, 204.

40 Brown, *With Friends Like These*, 175.


44 Kombluh, *Nicaragua the Price of Intervention*, 201-203.


46 Kombluh, *Nicaragua the Price of Intervention*, 34.


48 Ibid., 130.

49 Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo*, 128.


55 Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo*, 128.

56 Kombluh, *Nicaragua the Price of Intervention*, 103.

57 Jim Wright, *Worth It All: My War for Peace* (Washington: Brassey's, 1993), 79.


59 Jim Wright, *Worth It All*, 75.


65 Ibid., 160.

66 Ibid., 155.

67 Garvin, *Everybody Had His Own Gringo*, 257.

69 Robinson, A Faustian Bargain, 139.


72 Jim Wright, Worth It All, 247.


74 Andrew, For the President's Eyes Only, 466.


77 Ibid., 47.

78 Reagan, An American Life, 300.

79 Ibid., 473.

80 Kornbluh, Nicaragua the Price of Intervention, 27.


82 Sklar, Washington's War on Nicaragua, 114.

83 Garvin, Everybody Had His Own Gringo, 139.

84 Dillon, Commandos, 164.

85 Robinson, A Faustian Bargain, 22.

86 Cuenca, Sandinista Economics, 13.


Chapter IV

"A Soviet Vietnam"

In the case of Afghanistan, the U.S. had no long history of intervention as in Nicaragua. Afghanistan fell far outside the traditional sphere of U.S. influence and even outside the oil producing regions of the Persian Gulf which had become so vital to U.S. interests in the second half of the century. Afghanistan was a poor, sparsely populated country bordering the Soviet Union and Iran. Still the United States would be drawn into the conflict based on the containment notions of NSC 68.

The history of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan dates back primarily to the founding of Pakistan in 1947. Pakistan claimed within its borders an area inhabited mainly by Pushtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Due to this disagreement over honoring the Durand Line as Pakistan's border Afghanistan "alone cast its votes against Pakistan's admission to the world organization. (United Nations)"¹ Eventually the border issue would push Afghanistan much closer to the Soviet Union. Pakistan found allies with Iran under the Shah and the United States thus necessitating that Afghanistan would be left to the Soviet Union. Indeed the Soviet Union became and "continued to be the major supplier of military and economic aid, and the dependence of the Afghan government on this aid was ever growing."² This close relationship with the Soviet Union is not unusual given its proximity to the superpower, indeed, it is unlikely that Afghanistan could have pursued a close relationship with the West.

Explicit communist influence began with the overthrow of Kin Zahir Shah in 1973. He was overthrown by a cousin, Mohammed Daoud, who disagreed with the king's policies regarding border disputes with Iran and Pakistan. In staging this coup
he was aided by the military where he found "much support among a large section of the military which he had modernized and equipped with Soviet assistance during his tenure (as former defense minister)." While the importance of Soviet trained officers in the coup is often cited as evidence that the coup was planned by Moscow, Selig S. Harrison argues that "subsequent events showed that he saw them as expedient, temporary allies who could easily be controlled or discarded when convenient." Still the 1973 coup is seen as the first significant step towards the eventual Soviet invasion.

Daoud was generally a nationalist, willing to seek the help of the Soviet Union only to further his nationalist goals. After a time he moved away from the Soviet Union's sphere of influence seeking to be a truly non-aligned nation. He sought aid from oil rich Islamic countries and even came to terms with Pakistan over border issues. His course of action was fruitful considering the millions in economic aid received from both Iran and Saudi Arabia, still it was a dangerous course considering the proximity of the Soviets. Afghanistan as a poor Third World nation would always have to lean towards the Soviet Union even when claiming to be a member of the non-aligned movement. His dealings with Iran encouraged distrust among the Soviets which led Daoud "to lean ever more towards Iran for intelligence support, which in turn further strengthened the Soviet fears and distrust." Moving away from the Soviet Union would turn out to be a tragic mistake.

Soon after the 1973 coup Daoud had begun to move against communists in the government. He had appointed many of them to high posts, but it was not long before he "quietly started removing hard-line leftists from their governmental positions and shuffling around those whom he thought would not pose any threat." In July of 1974 he removed two hundred officers who had trained in the Soviet Union. Daoud's own coup had proved to the communist party leadership that a takeover was well within their means. As Daoud cracked down on the communists, Moscow was forcing them together. There were two rival groups within the party, the Khalq faction and the
Parcham faction. The Parcham communists had been those taken into the government under Daoud. The Parcham communists were less orthodox Marxist-Leninist and favored by Moscow. The Khalq faction and its leaders were seen as too headstrong and ambitious by Moscow. While the Soviet Union was important in this decision to unify the factions, "in the final analysis, it was their common fear that Daoud, with the support of Iran and by turning to the oligarchic elite, was preparing for a final move to destroy the leftist movement." By moving strongly against the communists and towards the West, Daoud had brought his own downfall.

The coup would come in 1978. A visitor to Afghanistan at the time Selig Harrison describes the state of the country:

Looking back on the year preceding the Communist coup, I remember vividly the siege mentality that pervaded the Afghan government. Daoud had drifted increasingly into the self-isolation so characteristic of dictators. His insistence on unquestioning personal loyalty and total control over even minor administrative details drove many capable advisers out of government. While Daoud himself lived an austere life, corruption charges against his intimates, some related to aid transactions, cast a pall over his regime.

The catalyst would prove to be the murder of Mir Akbar Khaiber, an old Marxist with many connections to communist military officers. Two days later over fifteen thousand angry mourners showed up for his funeral where top communist leaders addressed the crowd. Soon after many party leaders were arrested including General Secretary Noor Mohammed Taraki, but mistakenly a key figure, Hafizullah Amin, was only put under house arrest. Amin simply passed the plans for the coup by his guards, and on April 27th, 1978 the coup began. A tank division and one wing of the air force participated and soon the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the PDPA was in control. The coup "succeeded with such a limited number of troops participating in the fighting," because the Afghan Army stayed on the sidelines waiting to see which way the winds would blow.

Moscow's part in the coup had been minor. Kurt Lohbeck, a reporter for CBS News who spent extensive time in Afghanistan, argues that the KGB planned the coup in detail just two weeks before the actual coup. Rasul Rais counters this explaining
that it was planned by the leaders of the PDPA, adding that only "circumstantial
evidence" of Moscow's involvement can be found.\textsuperscript{12} Soviet involvement at any level
was largely a response to events in Afghanistan. Obviously the Soviets would approve
of any removal of Daoud especially by the indigenous communist party. Selig
Harrison contends that Moscow had strongly advised against a coup, but that once one
was underway they would not consider betraying the PDPA by revealing it.\textsuperscript{13}
Moscow had a role in the coup, but only after being informed of it by the PDPA. After
being informed Moscow waited and then quickly recognized the new government. Still
in the years ahead Moscow would get much more closely involved in palace coups.

Taraki would assume the leadership of Afghanistan for only a short period.
Before the PDPA could effectively consolidate its rule, a ruthless Amin would win a
new struggle for power. The Soviets found Amin to be unreliable and dangerous.
Amin attempted to erase the Parcham faction of the party, especially from positions of
power. Pushing ahead with land reform and equality for women Amin angered the
Soviets who saw the moves as "ill prepared, much too ambitious, and certain to
provocate bitter opposition from rural vested interests, stoking the fires of a nascent
insurgency that would be exploited by Pakistan and the United States to destabilize the
new regime."\textsuperscript{14} During Taraki's rule Amin was in charge of a raid on the separatist
group, Setam-i-Milli, that went terribly wrong ending in the death of the kidnapped
American ambassador. The decision to launch the failed raid led to the end of
meaningful relations with the United States.

Amin had emerged as the true power in the government. An insurgency by
Islamic groups within the country was underway, and though it was not really a threat
to overthrow the government it was significant. Taraki appealed to the Soviets to
intervene with troops, but on March 20th of 1979 Moscow formally rejected the request
for troops. After an uprising in Herat the Soviet government was convinced that the
insurgents had actual indigenous support, and that Amin was going too far. In the
summer of 1979 Moscow began to circulate a plan of setting up a national "democratic" leadership in hopes of producing a government less offensive to the Afghan population. While communists would play prominent roles, Taraki would step down as president to be replaced by a non-communist.15

Moscow would never get the chance to act on its designs. Amin seized power after learning of the planned coup against him. On October 9, 1979 Amin executed Taraki and took full control of the country. The execution almost certainly led to the final decision by the Soviet Union to intervene. Though the Soviets were forced to deal with Amin, he also relied almost totally on the Soviets to prop up his regime. At this point it was too late to make amends with Soviet leaders, and "neither his expressions of gratitude to the Soviet Union nor his professions of loyalty to the socialist Commonwealth earned him Brezhnev's affection."16 Amin's rule would be quite short.

Amin's rule came to an end on December 24, 1979. The final decision to invade was authorized by Brezhnev despite reservations from many military leaders. Three days later "a special KGB hit team supported by Soviet airborne commandos assassinated President Hafizullah Amin, thus officially setting in motion the USSR's occupation of Afghanistan."17 The whole operation was executed almost to perfection. As soon as Amin was gone Babrak Karmal was installed as the new president and quickly called for Soviet help, thus giving an official justification for the invasion.18 The Afghan army had been disabled earlier by Soviet advisors who had claimed to be winterizing heavy equipment. Installing their own puppet government allowed them to intervene with regular troops while claiming to be nobly protecting a neighbor from rebellion.

The West's reaction was swift. The United States instituted a grain embargo against the Soviets and condemned their invasion as an act of brutality. Brezhnev and others had underestimated the response of the United States assuming that after some
hand wringing the United States would do nothing substantial. Carter was visibly upset when Brezhnev responded to a letter condemning the invasion with the response that they had not invaded Afghanistan, but merely been invited in. Afghanistan changed Carter's mind set on covert actions according to Stansfield Turner, "thus it was that the Carter administration, despite its dedication to human rights and its considerable reservations about the morality of covert actions, turned easily and quickly to covert devices to respond to some of these despotic acts." Eventually the United States would spend over two billion on covert actions against the Soviets in Afghanistan, making it the most expensive covert action in history.

Foreign Policy Goals

The foreign policy goal attempted in Afghanistan was clear. It was to increase the stakes for the Soviets. More simply it was an attempt to turn Afghanistan into the Soviet Vietnam. Initially there was little hope of pushing the Soviets out of Afghanistan. The hope was that the United States could engage the Soviets covertly without involving any U.S. personnel.

Policy in Afghanistan was never as confused as policies in Nicaragua. The United States was quite clear about its support for the Mujahideen if technically stating a policy of noninvolvement. There was always public support for the operation. Unlike Nicaragua, the Afghanistan policy "enjoyed near-unanimous support from the American people and Congress." The public supported the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations' goals in Afghanistan despite knowing only the broad features of the operation.

Initially among Carter's advisors Brzezinski was biggest supporter of the policy of bleeding the Soviet Union. Stansfield Turner was not initially convinced that arming the Mujahideen would be more than an encouragement to commit suicide against a
vastly superior Red Army. The United States had armed similar groups before encouraging them towards suicidal rebellions with promises of U.S. help. Early in the CIA’s history the agency took part in an operation to help foster rebellion in Tibet against the Chinese communists. The operation was a disaster, one of few early failures for the fledgling CIA. Still with Carter’s enthusiasm for punishing the Soviets and Brzezinski’s favoring of covert intervention funding for the Mujahideen pressed ahead.

The foreign policy goal was simply to bleed the Soviets in Afghanistan. In the early stages there wasn’t much hope that the United States could turn Afghanistan into a Soviet Vietnam. "American policy aimed first, through clandestine arms shipments, at keeping the invading Soviet army from occupying the whole country and then at making the cost of "just holding on" so high that the Soviets would decide to bring their forces home." The eventual success of the Mujahideen was above and beyond all expectations. There was also major concern in keeping the Soviet Union contained in Afghanistan, not letting them advance into Pakistan or Iran. This concern would lead to the Carter Doctrine and the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Essentially Carter argued that the U.S. needed to quickly create an armed force that could respond instantly to events around the world, primarily this meant the Middle East. The Carter Doctrine was created to inform the Soviets that if they if they invaded Iran the United States would consider it an act of aggression and deploy troops to stop the Soviets even if Iran wanted no such help. The Soviets never crossed the line in the sand. Without the need for direct U.S. involvement, the Soviets suffered a humiliating defeat. From a foreign policy standpoint Afghanistan was certainly the most successful covert action of the 1980s.

Afghanistan is often compared to Vietnam. There are distinct parallels: invasions of sovereign nations, propping up of unpopular local rulers, underestimates of national liberation movements. Still there are important differences. In pursuing the
war against the Mujahideen "the Kremlin has been much more restrained militarily" than the United States was in Vietnam. The Soviets were never willing to commit much more than a hundred thousand troops in Afghanistan versus the United States' much larger commitment in Vietnam. The drain on the Soviet Union was significant, but it had little to do with the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.

George Kennan and others argue that the Soviet Union collapsed in spite of and not because of the foreign policies of the United States. Indeed Kennan argues in general that the "effect of cold war extremism was to delay rather then hasten the great change that overtook the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s." Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison argue that those who accept the Cold War model and give most of the credit for the collapse of the Soviet Union to Reagan's policies can carry the Afghanistan interpretation to an extreme giving "the CIA's covert operation in Afghanistan credit not only for ending the Cold War but also for bringing about the dissolution of the Soviet Union." So while Afghanistan was a brilliant foreign policy success, it cannot be considered a significant factor in the end of the Cold War.

In the final analysis, Afghanistan yielded an important Cold War victory. The initial goal was to simply contain the Soviets and inflict casualties. Instead the Afghan Mujahideen bled the Soviet military dry and drove them back across the border, by making the price of victory simply too high to maintain. For meeting U.S. goals the Afghan operation scores a +7. Initial foreign policy goals were exceeded in Afghanistan.

Operational Goals

The main operational goal in Afghanistan was to arm the Mujahideen and turn them into a significant headache for the Soviets. The CIA has converted many rebels
into proxy armies for the U.S. in the past, Afghanistan falling somewhere between the Kurds in Iraq and the Contras in Nicaragua.

Problems crept into the Afghan operation early. Charles G. Cogan in an article entitled, "Partner's in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan Since 1979," makes a long list of the operational failures in Afghanistan:

Some accuse amateurs in the CIA of letting the infamous Interservices Intelligence Directorate (ISI) of Pakistan handle everything. ISI, the argument goes, gave most of the weaponry to the fundamentalists, who as was abundantly clear early on, were going to install a fundamentalist and anti-American regime in Kabul at the end of the war. ISI, notoriously corrupt, siphoned off a substantial portion of the weapons and either sold them or kept them for other battles, most notably in Kashmir and the Punjab. The CIA neither monitored the inflow of weapons nor arranged to get weapons into the hands of the good commanders in the field. Meanwhile, the main recipients of the arms—the political parties in Peshawar—were engaged in a brisk traffic in drugs, and Washington overlooked Pakistan's nuclear program because it did not want to antagonize an ally. And finally, the CIA was so unimaginative and so cautious that it was slow to provide the insurgents with non-Soviet (i.e. non-deniable) weapons, thus delaying for months, if not for years, the departure of the Soviets.29

Cogan admits that these criticisms of the operation are valid, but he argues that the brilliant foreign policy success outweighs the operational problems since in the end "the policy worked."30 So despite a partially flawed operation the foreign policy goals were indeed reached.

Pakistan was not the most pliant of American client states. Indeed in many past operations CIA client states were quite friendly and reliant on the United States. This was not the case with Pakistan. Carter kept levels of aid to the Mujahideen low primarily because of "the coolness of his relation with General Zia, leader of the strategic front-line state of Pakistan."31 The Reagan administration reversed this policy by actively aiding the Mujahideen. While the Carter administration had been snubbed by Zia for offering only a $400 million dollar aid package, the Reagan administration jumped in with quick support and a gentlemen's agreement to ignore Pakistan's nuclear program. The Reagan administration simply "asked for and received a Congressional waiver" of the Symington amendment which prevented the government from supplying weapons to countries engaged in nuclear weapons programs.32 Eventually Zia would be rewarded with a three billion dollar deal and 40 new F-16As.33
Pakistan also insisted on handling the aid to the Mujahideen. This was primarily to keep the CIA from running an independent operation and to benefit by siphoning off some of the weapons. The amount of seized weapons was quite substantial:

As a matter of policy, the Pakistan military laid claim to a share of the weapons' flow. Zia's armed forces saw it as their right to appropriate weapons from CIA shipments and the CIA, in effect, condoned the theft as a sort of commission, as the way one does business with the government of Pakistan. It is believed that at least 20 percent of the arms and perhaps more than 30 percent were siphoned off from the supply pipelines.34

All of this was in addition to the massive aid program for Pakistan which was essentially a bribe to let the CIA conduct the covert operation for the Mujahideen. In essence Pakistan was double dipping. At one point in 1987 ISI's main ammo dump exploded spectacularly. Both the KGB and Mujahideen were blamed as possible culprits, but Kurt Lohbeck implies that the ammo dump may well have been blown sky high to hide the skimming operation that the ISI was conducting. An audit was to be conducted by the Inspector General's Office of the U.S. Defense Department, but the explosion conveniently ended those plans.35

The operation was also run essentially by the Pakistanis. While the CIA supplied arms and some intelligence, the Pakistanis did everything else. Pakistan's military and secret intelligence (ISI) organized the Mujahideen parties, planned individual missions, organized the refugee camps, and distributed the weapons. Pakistan selected seven parties to represent the various Mujahideen Islamic factions: National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), Afghanistan National Liberation Front (ANLF), Movement of the Islamic Revolution (HAR), Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hikmatyar) (HIH), Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Khalis) (HIK), Islamic Society of Afghanistan (JIA), and Islamic Union for the Freedom of Afghanistan (ITT). Even within this system Pakistan played favorites giving over half of the aid to one group, the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, led by Gulbiddin Hekmatyar.36 Though this was the worst group to support in the American view, General Zia hoped that "once
Afghanistan was rid of the Soviet invaders, Hekmatyar, by far the most religiously conservative of the Afghan Mujahideen leaders, was expected to set up an Islamic state of the type favored by Saudi Arabia and Zia ul-Haq. Obviously Pakistan was pursuing its own interests with the Mujahideen.

The Pakistanis were also in charge of the supply system whereby arms were shipped to the insurgents. After arriving in the country arms were transferred directly to the Pakistani authorities. From there the arms were divided up by the Pakistanis, the lion's share going to the more radical Islamic parties. Then they were transported to the Mujahideen commanders in the field. When they reached the commanders they would then be paid for mostly by the Saudi Red Crescent with Saudi funds. The commanders associated with the more nationalist parties would generally have to pay almost the full transport cost, meaning they would have to sell back a portion of the arms to pay for the shipment of the rest. By forcing non-Islamic parties to pay for almost total transportation costs, thereby forcing them to sell weapons, the ISI could then point to the corruption of these groups versus the well supported Islamic groups.

Opium also became a serious problem. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran had always been opium producing regions, but before the Soviet invasion they had not been a serious exporter of opium or heroin. By 1990 Afghanistan was second in the world in the production of both opium and hashish. The drugs were not manufactured by the Soviet invaders, but rather by the Mujahideen. Indeed in the early 1980s the Mujahideen "used their new CIA munitions to capture prime agricultural areas inside Afghanistan" which were then planted with opium poppies. The poppies would be processed into heroin and sold for arms or money to Pakistanis who would smuggle the drugs out of the country or sell them inside Pakistan. By 1986 Pakistan was in the midst of a terrible heroin crisis with over 1.3 million addicts.

The pursuit of opium also led to a less effective Mujahideen. Many commanders became caught up in turf wars over fertile opium regions. Indeed, some
became little more than petty drug warlords, more prone to fighting other Mujahideen than the Soviets. One of the largest traffickers was Hekmatyar who received over half the CIA's support by way of the ISI, an agency also involved in the drug trade. While Hekmatyar would later gain control of the majority of the opium fields, during the war he held a "complex of heroin laboratories at Koh-i-Soltan at the southern end of Helmand just across the border inside Pakistan," with the help of the ISI. Heroin moving through the ISI also just added to the corruption of the Pakistani intelligence agency, which the CIA had entrusted to run the operation.

The CIA hurt itself by choosing to heavily support the radical Islamists. As already noted, the Islamic Party of Afghanistan run by Gulbiddin Hekmatyar received over half of the aid in weapons and money from the CIA. Many accounts of the war explain that the seven parties were supported on the basis of their effectiveness in fighting the Soviets. Under this system the three major Islamic parties should have been by far the most effective since they received approximately 75% of the American aid. If this was a valid justification for the varied aid levels in the seven different groups then certainly at least Hekmatyar's faction should have received less.

Some observers of the Afghan war support the contention that the Islamic parties were the most effective fighting forces, especially Hekmatyar. Rasul Bakhsh Rais contends that Hekmatyar ran a "most effective guerrilla organization," but that he was given "disproportionately large economic and military resources." Barnett R. Rubin argues that though the Islamic Party of Afghanistan was the "most disciplined of the Islamist parties," Hekmatyar "consistently placed the long-term goal of Islamic revolution above resistance to the Soviets or to the Kabul regime." Other observers are less flattering. Marvin G. Wienbaum reports that:

Although a number of field commanders in Afghanistan were intensely loyal to Hezb-i-Islami, their forces were in fact neither the largest nor most effective. Oddly, ISI officials seemed more impressed with the frequent ruthlessness of Hekmatyar's leaders than with the scope of their fighting or accomplishments against Soviet and Kabul government troops. Given Hezb-i-Islami's limited popular base within Afghanistan, only with direct Pakistani support could it hope, after a resistance victory, to be a successful contender for power in Kabul.
And Wienbaum is not alone in his criticism. Abdul Haq, one of the most successful and respected Mujahideen commanders, told U.S. policy makers repeatedly that Gulbiddin was virulently anti-American, had no significant force within Afghanistan, had never won a large battle, and had no commanders of renown under him.48 Hekmatyar was constantly blamed for ambushing other Mujahideen parties even in the midst of battle, and Edward R. Girardet described him as "ruthless, uncompromising, and devious."49 Hekmatyar could certainly surpass Amin's exploits in his short term in office were he ever to come to power in Afghanistan. Alfred W. McCoy describes the CIA decision to heavily support Hekmatyar as "dismal."50 The CIA built Hekmatyar the largest Mujahideen army which he then used to establish himself as a drug lord, to attack other parties, and to try to establish an Islamic state along the lines of Iran, most importantly, following Iran's anti-American line.

In conclusion the operational goals were met though the operation itself was "far from flawless."51 Corruption, drugs, and support for fundamentalists were all serious errors. Due to these problems the Afghan operation only receives a +2 with regard to reaching its goals. In the end the operational goals were met despite numerous mistakes, chief among them an over reliance on the Pakistanis who practically ran the operation.

**Long Term Success**

In the short term the Afghan operation was an overwhelming success. The Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan in 1989 ending what Gorbachev had termed in 1986 as a "bleeding wound."52 It was assumed that the communist puppet government would fall almost instantly without its sponsor. Still much as in Vietnam the Soviets pulled out while continuing to send tons of military equipment to the embattled Afghan army. An assault on Jalalabad near the Pakistani border was
supposed to be the first step in establishing a new government under the Mujahideen--
Jalalabad would be the first capital of a new, free Afghanistan.

The assault on Jalalabad would prove to be a terrible disaster. The Mujahideen
commanders were unable to unify the command structure resulting in uncoordinated
attacks against Jalalabad. Political infighting continued, and the operation was pushed
by the ISI, not the Mujahideen. The Mujahideen suffered heavy casualties and were
unsuccessful at permanently closing the supply route from Kabul. The Mujahideen
also hurt their own cause by "inflicting heavy civilian casualties and killing some
prisoners, actions that strengthened the will of the garrison to resist." Indeed this
"unsuccessful and costly Mujahideen attempt to capture" Jalalabad resulted in increased
aid. Aid dried up after the Soviet pullout, but in an attempt to save face in the last
days of the cold war the United States stepped up aid to the Mujahideen.

One of the most obvious contradictions in the operation was the support for
radical Islamic factions of the Mujahideen. The Islamic parties were consistently
supplied with the bulk of the arms, and the initial reason for not providing Stinger
missiles was the general fear that some of the Stingers would end up in the hands of
fundamentalist terrorists. Some like Angelo Codevilla and Kurt Lohbeck argue that
their was no real danger in giving the Mujahideen Stingers. Lohbeck argues that since
Iran was a Shii'a Muslim nation the Mujahideen would never hand Stingers over to
them. Codevilla dismisses the CIA's warning about a possible diversion to terrorists
as a "throwaway line." Both Codevilla and Lohbeck give the Stingers credit for
turning the tide of the war in late 1986, for Lohbeck it was "unquestionable" that the
Stingers changed the course of the war. In retrospect by 1986 the Politburo had
already decided it was time to disengage from Afghanistan. The Stingers merely
made the war costlier, but they were not quite the dramatic turning point they seemed at
the time. Mark Urban implies that intelligence officers at the time thought the Stingers
had made a huge difference, but that in reality the Stingers had little real military effect.
The Stingers probably helped most by increasing morale among the Mujahideen. And the CIA's worries about Stingers ending up in the wrong hands seems quite justified given the level of corruption in getting arms to the Mujahideen, and corruption within the Mujahideen themselves.

The support of radical Islamists would eventually wind up with serious repercussions for the United States. In 1993 the United States endured the bombing of the World Trade Center. The blame would eventually fall on Pakistani-trained fundamentalists. Elie Krakowski, an adviser to Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, a rare critic of the policy of letting the Pakistani's have a free hand in managing the operation, predicted that supporting fundamentalists would be counter productive in the long term. Still as an advisor he had little effect on policy. Even liberal Pakistanis blame part of the Pakistan's problems with fundamentalism on the United States since Washington "turned a blind eye to Zia's wider agenda while it used him to arm the Afghan Mujahideen fighters." In Afghanistan the CIA was willing to support groups who shared the same philosophies and ideals as the government of Iran, the Party of God in Lebanon, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Algeria. It was a short term calculation that was bound to backfire. And the CIA had other choices. Three of the recognized parties in Afghanistan were nationalistic parties who did not embrace a revolutionary Islam. And even among the Islamic groups their were more moderate factions, but the Pakistanis with reluctant CIA acquiescence allowed the greatest part of the aid to be funneled to Gulbiddin Hekmatyar's faction, the most radical and virulently anti-American of all the parties.

The end of the operation did not mean an end to the drug problem within the Afghan Mujahideen:

By early 1990 the CIA's Afghan operation had proved doubly disastrous. After ten years of covert operations at a cost of $2 billion, America was left with Mujahideen warlords whose skill as drug dealers exceeded their competence as military commanders. In 1989, as the cold war ended and the Bush administration's war on drugs began, Afghan leaders like the opium warlord Hekmatyar had become a diplomatic embarrassment for the United States.
By supporting the Mujahideen in spite of their drug connections the CIA was complicitly involved in the heroin trade itself. Allegations against the Contras with respect to drugs had damaged support for the Nicaraguan operation. In the end, "the cultivation of opium and the refining of heroin in Afghanistan ultimately contribute to the drug problem in the United States, since at least part of the Afghan harvest will end up in the veins of American drug abusers." The long term effects of ignoring the opium production could be quite catastrophic.

Another long term problem is the CIA support for the Islamic factions heavily involved in the opium trade. In an effort to lower opium production USAID offered to give millions of dollars in aid if the Mujahideen would discontinue the opium harvest. One opium warlord, Naseem Akhundzada, agreed to the ban in exchange for aid. Naseem's followers controlled the important Helmand River valley, so the ban on opium production there was significant. In March of 1990 Naseem was assassinated by followers of Hekmatyar who controlled the manufacturing of heroin in Pakistan. Instead of attempting to create a new government in Afghanistan, Hekmatyar and his Islamic Party of Afghanistan were involved in drug wars. The problem continued to worsen with regards to opium production in Afghanistan.

One small footnote to the Afghanistan operation was the involvement of the BCCI. BCCI, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, or more appropriately the "Bank of Crooks and Criminals International" as Robert Gates would later deem it, was heavily involved in the Afghanistan operation. Though BCCI would finally collapse in 1991, "the CIA transferred funds for weapons to the Mujahideen," through BCCI and "BCCI also helped the CIA, NSC, and other U.S. agencies supply weapons clandestinely to the Mujahideen." The founder of the BCCI, Agha Hasan Abedi, was a Pakistani with heavy connections to the Pakistani government and military. Indeed, after the collapse of BCCI, "investigators found a check to President Zia from BCCI for 40 million rupees--$2 million." BCCI in its final collapse had only $1.2
billion in assets that could be located out of some $20 billion in actual assets. Much of the missing money was believed to been stolen and used to fund other covert operations. With the fall of BCCI the CIA was pulled into another scandal showing it in a bad light. So by using BCCI the CIA had to suffer the negative publicity of being heavily involved in a very dirty financial affair, and the possibility that the CIA had used BCCI to finance operations without Congressional oversight or approval.

Finally, the situation on the ground in Afghanistan was a disaster. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, Afghanistan reverted to its long held status as a forgotten part of the world. U.S. aid dried up falling to only 6 million dollars between 1993 and 1994. Zalmay Kahalilzad sums up the situation in 1994:

Failing to win after almost a decade of war, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. Their failure may have contributed to the destruction of the USSR, but the success of the effort against them did not bring peace to Afghanistan. The war continued, first against the Najib government left behind by the Soviets; its defeat in 1992 finally brought the Afghan resistance groups—the Mujahideen—to power, but they have failed to govern the country and the war has turned into a brutal civil conflict fought not over ideological, sectarian, or ethnic differences—although these factors are part of the setting but over who should govern.

The capital Kabul lay in ruins, over 75% destroyed, a replication of Lebanon high in the mountain plateaus. The country was in tatters not only due to the invasion of the Soviet Union, but also because of the Mujahideen the CIA had supported. The Mujahideen that had never been forced into a unified political body. The Mujahideen that had for some been more interested in harvesting opium than fighting the Soviets. The Mujahideen that had been manipulated by the Pakistanis who had no interest in a strong nationalistic, united Afghanistan. In the end the Mujahideen had torn their beloved country apart.

In the final analysis Afghanistan is a broken country. The United States only wanted to raise the stakes for the Soviets letting "Islamabad use American aid leverage to settle old scores with Afghan nationalist adversaries and to pursue its own strategic objective of a Pakistan-dominated postwar Afghanistan." Afghanistan has remained a chaotic mess well supplied with U.S. weapons and battle hardened fundamentalists.
While the Soviets were driven out, Afghanistan will remain in dire straits for many years to come, and the U.S. can expect the Afghans to have an unwelcome impact on much of the Middle East and, at least in one case, the United States itself.

Considering the long term picture for Afghanistan a score of -4 is warranted. While Afghanistan has yet to launch massive terrorist strikes on the U.S. it has both the capability and the will. The World Trade Center bombing is already a significant warning. Opium production has had an effect on the U.S. heroin market driving down prices and creating more addicts. The only positive note about long term prospects for Afghanistan is that the situation could be worse. So far Stinger missiles have not been used in any terrorist attacks involving Americans.

**Covertness**

In a direct parallel to Nicaragua the covert operation in Afghanistan was run overtly. In the early days of covert aid the Carter administration could have plausibly denied helping the Mujahideen, but upon Reagan's assumption of office there was no question that the United States was aiding the Mujahideen. Angelo Codevilla, a well respected intelligence expert, presents the argument that "in the case of Afghanistan, presidents used covert action to run away from an issue."75 The first public notice came with the announcement in 1980 by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana.76 Gregory Treverton refers to the operation as an "open secret, more unacknowledged than unknown."77 Codevilla argues that the operation in Afghanistan was kept covert in order to avoid the problems of winning support in Congress and with the public. It nicely avoided most of the usual restraints on presidential power. Still in the case of Afghanistan the decision to go the covert route, considering the amount of public support is troubling. Covert actions had passed into the realm of real oversight with
official intelligence committees; they were not the unrestrained instruments of the executive that they had been for Truman and Eisenhower.

It is difficult to justify the need for keeping the aid program covert. At no time did the Soviets not understand who was behind the Mujahideen's armaments, be they Soviet models or not. It was obvious that someone other than Saudi Arabia was involved with the Mujahideen, and Pakistan's role could not be disguised. If the target nation of the operation knows who is behind the operation and U.S. citizens know who is behind the operation, what gain is there in hiding the operation?

Gregory Treverton argues that the U.S. hardly needed to keep the aid program to the Mujahideen secret. Obviously the secret was an open one, simply unacknowledged. The reason articulated by Treverton was the need to keep Pakistan happy since the Pakistanis "were prepared to support them but unwilling to be too visible in doing so lest it antagonize its powerful neighbor, the Soviet Union." While Pakistan claimed to the Soviets to be doing little to help the Mujahideen, the Soviets clearly knew the degree of Pakistan's involvement. Indeed the Soviets launched raids on border camps within Pakistan, though Pakistan rarely made any large complaint over the incursions.

Angelo Codevilla persuasively argues that Pakistan never really cared whether or not the operation was covert. He states:

The question with regard to Pakistan is this: Is Pakistan's acquiescence in serving as a conduit for arms and other assistance for the Mujahideen based on the fact that the Soviet Union does not know that such assistance is flowing through Pakistan? That seems unlikely. Rather the Pakistanis cooperate because they are confident the United States will come to their aid should they be attacked by the Soviet Union. Since the Russians know this, they refrain from attacking. I suggest that the willingness of third parties to help in covert actions depends not so much on the secrecy of their involvement as it does on their assurance that should the action ever become overt, they will receive plenty of overt support.

According to Codevilla the answer there is no real reason to run the Afghanistan operation covertly. The major contention that the Pakistani's insisted on secrecy does not hold water. Whether the Pakistani's wanted the U.S. aid to remain secret or not, they really only wanted assurances that the U.S. would come to their aid in the event of
a Soviet invasion. Pakistani insecurity was not the major reason for running the operation covertly.

Afghanistan was another case of a "overt" covert action. While using the CIA as a foreign policy tool, the administrations ducked responsibility. They neglected to pursue a course of action in full view of the public, which obviously supported the campaign in Afghanistan. Congress was certainly behind the program as well. Congressman Charles Wilson of Texas, a member of the House Armed Services Committee and a member of the House Intelligence committee, heavily backed the Mujahideen hoping to "repay the Soviets for Vietnam." Congress also regularly increased aid to the Mujahideen beyond the administration's requests. Indeed pursuing a covert course of action may have hindered the Mujahideen early on.

Since the action was covert the CIA choose to supply the Mujahideen with Soviet weaponry, so that the rebels could claim it was captured. The Mujahideen would have to go without advanced U.S. weapons. The Soviet arms, "many of them obsolete," were helpful, but more sophisticated heavy weapons would have been a greater help. When U.S. weapons were supplied the Mujahideen were successful in attacks on the Soviet army. Angelo Codevilla charges that "the CIA purchased old Soviet military equipment form Egypt and China, some of it in terrible condition, paying more for junk than it would have for good Western equipment, in order to maintain "cover." The covert nature was actually harmful in terms of arming the Mujahideen.

The case for covert action in Afghanistan was never convincingly made. Afghanistan could have easily been run as a overt operation, which for all intents and purposes it was. While the operation was hardly secret from the Soviets or the American public, it also made little difference. The Afghan operation is a fine example of how future covert actions can be run openly, possibly even without the use of the CIA. The Afghanistan operation certainly had public and international support, and
could not possibly be hidden from the enemy, so it should have been run openly, possibly by the Defense Department, in order that it could have been examined and critiqued fully in the public sphere.

Was covertness merely an excuse to hide the problems of corruption, drugs, and the Islamic ideals of our Mujahideen clients? Even if it was a cover for pubic debate in the end it was less a problem then in Nicaragua where the Sandinistas could expose embarrassing U.S. tactics, such as the assassination manual. In Afghanistan there was little to gain by exposing any part of the operation since it was widely supported and largely without controversy.

Afghanistan was an operation run openly. While significant details were kept hidden the broad outlines of the intervention were obvious to the Soviets, the U.S. public, and the press. The Afghan operation scores a -2 in the covertness category. While the lack of secrecy did not doom the mission it certainly didn't help.

Democratic Standards

The question of democratic standards is important for the CIA in Afghanistan. Mujahideen were more easily portrayed as freedom fighters than the Contras who had never been subject to a Soviet invasion and were plagued from the start by heavy National Guard influence. They were willing to fight a superior foe while suffering heavy casualties. The Mujahideen had more concern for the civilians of Afghanistan and the refugees who flooded across the borders. Living a Spartan existence they defied the Russian bear. The question of whether the Mujahideen would bring democracy to Afghanistan was largely ignored. As rebels they were never expected to win, and even if they did they were at least anti-communists who would get rid of any communist influence within the government.
Gregory Treverton assumes that there was never much concern with democracy in Afghanistan. Supporting the Mujahideen in Afghanistan "was a way to put strategic pressure on Soviet occupation of that country; given the character of the resistance forces, it cannot be said to be a way to bring "democracy" to Afghanistan."3 Certainly once the Mujahideen showed that they were capable of actually winning, there should have been some concern with forming a government respecting of some democratic principles. Truly, there was never a large attempt to develop the seven Mujahideen parties into some sort of unified government. Eventually the situation would erupt into open civil war among the Mujahideen factions.

The Mujahideen were not a well organized military force schooled in the Geneva accords. They were hardened fighters who often performed summary executions on captured prisoners. Indeed the Mujahideen saw little need to keep prisoners alive who would only have to be fed and clothed. They had little use for Western human rights norms and often violated them. The CIA did little to try to clean up the Mujahideen, and the respect for human rights continues to be dismal in Afghanistan.4

In Afghanistan at least the government could be seen as completely illegitimate, backed by a Soviet invasion, a clear cut case of aggression, unlike Nicaragua. The problems came more with the Mujahideen who the United States supported. Instead of supporting more moderate factions, the CIA ended up supporting the factions that were most against some sort of democratic process. Hekmatyar's idea of a democratic republic was an Islamic state set up along the lines of the Ayatollah Khomeni's Iran.

For meeting democratic standards the operation scores a -2. Only the inherent righteousness of fighting off a foreign invader keeps the score from falling to a -3. The Mujahideen factions that were supported placed little worth in democratic values. They were willing to tear down the country rather then allow anything but a fully Islamic government from coming to power in Afghanistan. Considering that the U.S. had
much better factions within the Mujahideen to support, supporting radical followers of Islam violated any idea of instilling democratic values in a future Afghanistan.

**Efficient Expenditure**

The operation in Afghanistan is the most expensive CIA operation on record. Over two billion dollars in arms and aid were funneled to the Mujahideen, though some ended up in the hands of the Pakistani military and intelligence. Where did all the money go?

A significant portion of the munitions and aid were skimmed by the Pakistanis. John Prados argues that:

> The official neutrality (of Pakistan) creates a climate of graft on the Afghan supply lines, which amounts to more than just the "cost of doing business." The most optimistic estimates, from CIA sources, are that 20 percent of the aid is skimmed off. Some Afghan groups put that figure as high as 85 percent. The very existence of such a wide range of estimates indicates that there is little real accounting—no one actually knows what has happened to all the covert action money.85

Prados is not alone in his assessments.86 Corruption was rampant in the Pakistani ISI, and as the CIA decided to entrust the Afghan operation to the ISI they had to accept a high level of corruption. Still the ISI was, according to the CIA, "the most efficient, and the least corrupt, organization in Pakistan, a statement that probably raises more questions than it answers."87 While corruption was to be expected in such an operation with huge amounts of money involved, the level of corruption in Pakistan was quite high. Many Pakistani generals made fortunes out of the CIA operation.88

While CIA operations, especially large operations like Afghanistan, entail significant interaction with local or regional powers, often "greasing" the palms of pliant officials, the Afghan operation was excessive. Not only did the Pakistanis receive a huge aid package, which has now dried up with the Soviet pullout, but they received highly advanced F-16s even over Israeli protest. In general this could be assumed to be enough of a "bribe" to let the CIA operate within Pakistan. Still the
Pakistanis under military rule also wanted a large chunk of the weapons destined for the Mujahideen. On top of skimming weapons, Pakistanis were also involved in the Mujahideen's drug trade buying raw opium or semi-processed heroin. Their most favored Mujahideen party, Hekmatyar's, was heavily involved in the heroin trade.⁸⁹

In the end the Pakistanis skimmed at least 20 percent of the arms and aid from the Afghanistan operation.⁹⁰ While this is a conservative estimate, it still means that approximately $500 million ended up in the hands of corrupt Pakistanis. This seems an outrageous figure for a CIA operation where accounting is generally accurate, and payoffs to local officials are small. Since the running of the Mujahideen was handled largely by the ISI, the CIA was left out in the cold, hoping only that the bulk of the weapons would make it to the Mujahideen. From a spending standpoint the Afghan operation rates a -2. From a standpoint of spending, the Afghan operation was extremely inefficient and corrupt.

**Benefit to Population**

The population of Afghanistan is worse off today then before the Soviet invasion. It is less a sovereign nation than a collection of tribes and factions battling for supremacy. Taking stock of the situation within the country in 1994 Asian Survey concludes that "economic and humanitarian conditions worsened for the Afghans, especially for residents of Kabul and for refugees."⁹¹ Despite a massive aid program to the Mujahideen throughout the 1980s Afghans are worse off today.

After the Soviets pulled out, Afghanistan soon returned to being just another backward nation nestled in some unimportant corner of the world. Aid dwindled precipitously, and success only hurt the Mujahideen in terms of U.S. aid. Afghanistan became a casualty of the rapidly warming Cold War. The CIA itself claims that "although reliable data are unavailable, gross domestic product is lower than 12 years
ago because of the loss of labor and capital and the disruption of trade and transport.\textsuperscript{92} Obviously economically Afghanistan is far worse off even after the Soviet pullout. Per capita GDP is an estimated $200. Still the blame for Afghanistan's situation can be leveled on the Soviet Union rather than the CIA.

As for political violence, it has only escalated since the Soviet pullout and the fall of the communist government. Kabul lies in ruins, the result of warring factions willing to fight for political domination at any cost. Freedom House ranks Afghanistan among those nations most lacking in freedom pointing to the intolerance of the Mujahideen groups and leaders with their insistence on Islamic principles and laws. According to Freedom House there exists credible reports that tens of thousands have been killed since the fall of the communist government.\textsuperscript{93} Freedom House is joined in its assessment by other human rights monitors. The \textit{World Human Rights Guide} for 1992 reports that human rights are "widely violated" within Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{94} Human Rights Watch even reports that the United States is tied up in "indiscriminate attacks against civilians."\textsuperscript{95} Some of the inaccurate rockets that are used to bombard cities like Kabul were provided by the Iraqi government courtesy of the United States and Saudi Arabia. After capturing large amounts of weapons in the Gulf War the United States simply passed many of them on to the Mujahideen.\textsuperscript{96}

Afghanistan, today, is a violent place without any stable political order or general respect for human rights. A decade of war with the Soviets could have led to a triumphant victory. It could have led peace at last for the civilian population. Instead Afghanistan is a disaster. The population is worse off after the operation from any standpoint earning the operation a -1 score for benefit to the population. Afghanistan is a tragedy.
Final Conclusions

Afghanistan scores a -2 on the scale. This makes Afghanistan a mild failure as a covert action according to these criteria.

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<td>Foreign policy goals:</td>
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<td>Operational goals:</td>
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<td>Covertness:</td>
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<td>Democratic standards:</td>
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<td>Efficient expenditure:</td>
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<td>Benefit general population:</td>
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<td>Total for Afghan operation:</td>
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Clearly Afghanistan was a major foreign policy success. It was less clear in almost every other area. The only other positive score is given to operational goals. There were numerous flaws in the operation, not the least being handing over control of the Mujahideen to Pakistan. Still, the Mujahideen, armed with CIA weapons, did fight off the Soviets. Then the picture becomes less rosy. In every other category the operation gets a negative score. This is generally due to the present state of Afghanistan caused in part by the CIA support for the most radical Islamic factions, many of which were involved in corruption and drugs.

In the future there is little likelihood of any change. Afghanistan is not threatening to form a stable democratic government in the near future or even a stable government. The situation for the general civilian population is unlikely to improve
significantly, especially since the local warlords are now armed to the teeth with advanced weapons. Afghanistan despite throwing off the hug of the Russian bear is unable to advance beyond the status of the poorest of countries, indeed ranking first in infant mortality worldwide. And in the end the fundamentalist Mujahideen may come back to haunt the United States and its allies as terrorists well bred with a hatred of Washington.
Endnotes


5Rais, War Without Winners, 44.

6Ibid., 39.

7Cordovez and Harrison, Out of Afghanistan, 17.

8Rais, War Without Winners, 44.

9Cordovez and Harrison, Out of Afghanistan, 22.

10Rais, War Without Winners, 48.


13Cordovez and Harrison, Out of Afghanistan, 27.

14Ibid., 31.

15Ibid., 38.

16Rais, War Without Winners, 82.


19Lohbeck, Holy War, Unholy Victory, 43.


21Prados, Presidents' Secret Wars, 361.


26 Giradet, *Afghanistan*, 34.


30 Ibid., 78.


34 Ibid., 31.


41 Ibid., 455.

42 Ibid., 458.

43 There are some disputes over the amount of CIA money officially channeled to Hekmatyar. Some sources quote a lower figure between 20-25%. See Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan*, 34, and Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 200.
44 Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan*, 35.


47 Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan*, 34.


51 Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 493.


54 Cogan, "Partner's in Time," 77.

55 Lohbeck, *Holy War, Unholy Victory*, 150.


57 Lohbeck, *Holy War, Unholy Victory*, 151.

58 Cogan, "Partner's in Time," 77.


60 Cordovez and Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan*, 164.

61 Ibid., 163.


69 Ibid., 44.


72Ibid., 147.


76Ibid., 270.


78Ibid., 213.


80Lohbeck, *Holy War, Unholy Victory*, 52.

81Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars*, 361.

82Codevilla, *Informing Statecraft*, 270.

83Treverton, *Covert Action*, 219.


87Cogan, "Partner's in Time," 79.


89MacDonald, "Afghanistan's Drug Trade," 64.

90Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars*, 362.


96 Ibid., 342.
Chapter V

Agency without an Adversary

The reason for examining Nicaragua and Afghanistan was to use these case studies to make an informed evaluation of the CIA after the Cold War. The CIA is now under harsh examination. Created in the crucible of the Cold War the Agency is now fighting for its life. Everything is being reconsidered from intelligence analyzing to counterintelligence to covert actions. The focus of this study is covert actions as defined in Chapter II. After looking at the proposed reform plans the case studies will be reexamined adding important evidence in favor of certain reform plans.

The precursor to today's examinations of the CIA took place in the mid 1970s. By the mid seventies the CIA had lost the sterling image of a young agency boldly fighting the Cold War. The golden age of CIA operations had passed with the 1950s, and Vietnam was winding down. Instead of the successes of Iran and Guatemala, there were the failures of Cuba and Chile. After Watergate and the exit of President Nixon, the next target of a reform minded Congress was the secretive CIA.

Congress would eventually form two committees to look into the CIA. The Pike committee in the House returned a scathing condemnation of the Agency. Embroiled in controversy, the committee's final report was suppressed by the full House and was leaked to the Village Voice. The Church committee in the Senate also released a report highly critical of the Agency, but in the end neither committee recommended that the Agency be abolished. The Church committee, more respected then the Pike committee despite its own share of controversy, had its final report released and gained support for reforming the Agency. In that report the committee
did not decide to preclude all future covert actions even though that option was strongly considered. Many of the Church committee's suggestions were enacted into law.

The Year of Intelligence resulted in the formation of two oversight committees on intelligence one in both the House and Senate. The Year of Intelligence also resulted in a significant reduction in covert actions. President Ford announced an executive order banning assassinations as well as the planning or the conspiracy to commit such deeds, while the Carter administration drastically cut back on covert actions. Carter appointed former Admiral Stansfield Turner to head the CIA. Turner made deep cuts in the covert side of the agency, some even called the cuts a massacre which gutted the agencies covert and human intelligence capabilities. Congress under Carter had few problems overseeing covert actions. When Carter later stepped up covert actions Congress remained friendly to the president's wishes even after a failed attempt to save hostages in Iran. Oversight remained a friendly process until DCI Casey. Casey would embroil the Agency again in controversy over Nicaragua and Iran-Contra. Congress would look at the CIA and point out needed reforms. Now that the Soviet Union has faded from the scene Congress is, once again, investigating the CIA.

End of the Cold War

Though the end of the Cold War does not mean the end of history as Fukayama would insist, it does have significant effects on the international scene. For the U.S., its sworn enemy is now merely a defeated friend after more than four decades of indirect hostility. It also leaves the United States as the lone superpower and the UN as a more powerful enforcer of international norms. Most importantly, it calls for a complete reexamination of the country's national security apparatus.

The Central Intelligence Agency was a creation of the Cold War. The agency became a "third way" to fight the Soviets, a middle road between diplomacy and open
warfare. Retired CIA officer Theodore Shackley refers to the term as the "third option," an option he advocates. It appeared too dangerous to engage the Soviets directly. In the worst of scenarios a confrontation would mean nuclear war. Therefore the Agency would attempt to engage the Soviets.

The Cold War also meant a tremendous amount of spending on national security. Indeed the term national security began to expand. Soon almost any spending could be justified in terms of national security. Today items ranging from "Star Wars" research to economic espionage by the CIA are defended as essential to national security. Still much of this emphasis on national security relied on the Soviet Union as the supreme threat; drug lords and small time dictators no longer provide the implicit threat of destruction. The emphasis on defense and related spending is certain to decline, especially now that the United States has moved into the role of a debtor nation and has significant economic competition in world markets from Germany and Japan.

The end of the Cold War means an end to almost unlimited defense spending. In a country with trillions of dollars of public debt, there is little room for a heavily funded intelligence sector. The CIA will face budget cutting as will the entire military. Indeed the CIA's budget has been shrinking with the decline in the defense budget. Though CIA directors such as James Woolsey have continued to try to hold off budget cuts, they are coming.

Reform the 5 Paths

With the end of the Cold War, the CIA is once again under the unwelcome glare of public examination. Scores of articles on reforming or even terminating the CIA have been written in newspapers and popular magazines. In the halls of Congress Senators and Congressmen have called for reform. The basis of all this attention is that
the central protagonist of the CIA, the Soviet Union, no longer exists. Since the Soviet Union was the basis for much of the CIA's work, what need is there for it now? It would seem to be a perfect time for reexamination.

Much of the discussion of the CIA's role revolves around intelligence. There are many expectations of a billion dollar intelligence agency such as the CIA. Failures in recent predictions such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait have led to harsh criticism, especially as the CIA is being expected to get by with less money. And according to members of Congress the cuts are still on the table. The former chair of the House Intelligence Committee stated in the spring of 1994 that "if the agency expects the CIA authorization bill to reflect the status quo of previous years, it has to have another thought coming."\textsuperscript{6} The single greatest intelligence failure by the CIA has been the failure to predict the downfall of the Soviet Union. With all of the intelligence focused on the Soviet Union the CIA missed the boat. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan puts its, "for a quarter-century, they told the president everything there was to know about the Soviet Union, excepting the fact that it was collapsing. They missed that detail."\textsuperscript{7}

There are many critiques of the agency in its present form. Some suggest that it is an agency without an adversary, an agency that should be regulated to the dustbin of history with other Cold War relics. Others argue that while the need for covert actions has lessened greatly, there is still a need for the intelligence collecting and the analytical side of the agency. Some even argue that in the times ahead the CIA will need to be expanded to combat a myriad of new threats from drugs to terrorists. From the perspective of covert actions these future plans for the CIA can be broken into five groups. First, are those who would like to see the CIA expand its role moving into more covert actions against varied threats such as terrorists or drug cartels as well as moving into the realm of economic espionage. Second, is the group who would leave the CIA alone despite the end of the Cold War. Third, is the group who would slightly reform the CIA and drastically cut back on the large scale covert actions, especially
paramilitary actions. Fourth, the group who would break up the CIA along operational and intelligence gathering lines, leaving covert actions generally to the Pentagon. Fifth, is the group who would call for an end to covert actions or even an end to the CIA. Covert actions would not simply be moved to another agency, but dropped altogether while entertaining the possibility that overt operations could still be carried out by the military or other agencies like the State Department. All of these five groups have significant arguments.

Retaining the CIA in a New More Dangerous World

There are arguments lodged at the end of the Cold War that the world is now a vast, dark room haunted by ghosts and phantoms. In a bipolar world the threats were simple, but now threats can erupt from anywhere. While implying that the Cold War was "the "best of all worlds" may be an exaggeration; bipolarity did offer important advantages to the American intelligence community." It afforded the United States the luxury of throwing all intelligence resources at one large target, the Soviet Union. According to James Woolsey, former DCI under President Clinton, "we have slain a large dragon. But we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes." In this new post-Cold War world the CIA has many new, smaller enemies.

This school, which includes a large number of CIA personnel, argues that the CIA needs to look at expanding the intelligence role as well as the possibility of expanding covert actions. Its defenders see the need for increased spending on the CIA to offset reductions in military spending. They want more spending on the CIA in human intelligence as well as technical intelligence. The agency has found new roles to play as well. In the future the Agency will be involved in combating drugs, nuclear
proliferation, terrorists, and possibly even economic espionage. Still many critics see this as an attempt to justify its own existence.\textsuperscript{12}

Given the CIA's record in dealing with drug traffickers, is it really a good idea to let the CIA get involved in stamping out drugs? A case can be made that the CIA "needs to spend less time around the honey pot of narcotics, not more."\textsuperscript{13} The golden triangle became the world's largest opium producing region during the Vietnam war. One of the leading drug traffickers in the region is General Vang Pao, the leader of the CIA's Laotian secret army. The golden crescent largely within Afghanistan has become the second largest opium producing region. One of the leading traffickers there is Hekmatyar, a the CIA supported leader of one Mujahideen faction. The CIA has also allegedly been involved with other groups who were dealing in illegal drugs including the Contras in Nicaragua. So trying to move the CIA into a new role of drug enforcer is quite a change from the Agency's general policy of looking the other way. Is the whole argument of giving more funds to the CIA merely a argument to save the CIA bureaucracy from budget cuts?

Essentially the creation of new tasks for the CIA is an old fashioned tactic of any bureaucracy, the need to find a new mission to justify the its existence. Roger Morris, a former NSC official under both Johnson and Nixon, initiated the attack on the CIA's new justifications for existence. In a \textit{New York Times}' article Roger Morris wrote:

\begin{quote}
To preserve and extend that expanding domain while much of its rationale disappears, the CIA has begun to advertise new perils of the post-Cold War period—international narcotics, terrorism, industrial espionage, even the spread of chemical weapons. In each field, however, the agency's own performance has been inept if not worse...[On reform plans] Like high priests railing at an end to superstition, the professionals will call such a plan heresy, impossible. If only they could tell us that the danger were really gone, they have always said. Only then could we change this obese, tunnel-vision relic, slouching toward Capitol Hill for still more money, still more ominous briefings on a world already past.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

It is a harsh criticism of the Agency, but possibly a valid one. Obviously the CIA was not created to operate in a world without the Soviet Union. In an effort to find a new
worthwhile bogeyman, the CIA may be doing the country a disservice.\textsuperscript{15} Still the new arenas for the CIA are valid concerns even if the CIA is not the right agency for the job.

Many critics of the Agency acknowledge that some of its new tasks are valid. While agreeing the drug mission is not a valid mission for the CIA, since "its officers neither like it nor are they particularly good at it," Loch Johnson argues that they can play an effective role combating terrorism.\textsuperscript{16} Since counterterrorism relies heavily on intelligence it is a natural area for the CIA to expand into according to Johnson. Still how large a role this will be for the CIA remains to be seen. Terrorism, despite the bombing of the Oklahoma federal building and the World Trade Center, is a rather small concern compared to keeping track of the Soviet Union and all of the KGB intrigues.\textsuperscript{17} In 1989 only 35 Americans were killed abroad by terrorists.\textsuperscript{18} Spending billions on counterterrorism may be unjustified given the current level of the threat.

Roy Godson, a long standing defender of the CIA, argues that these critics of the CIA's mission are damaging, perhaps fatally, the CIA's covert action capability. Godson accepts the thesis that covert actions are a justifiable tool of statecraft. He refers to the mood of CIA critics today as "exceptionalism." Exceptionalism "holds that covert action should not be engaged in unless there are grave and unusual circumstances--the definition of which varies from one exceptionalist to another."\textsuperscript{19} He divides the critics into two schools, those who disagree generally with the compatibility of covert actions and democratic rule and those who regard covert actions as a third way between diplomacy and open warfare. Godson argues that both of these positions are wrong. Covert actions should only be undertaken when there is a clear policy behind them. The early years of the Cold War demonstrate how covert actions can be properly conducted.

As the United States emerges from the Cold War, Godson sees a dangerous predicament. If the U.S. does not heed the warning signs it could be in for an unwelcome fate:
Letting counterintelligence and covert action capabilities lapse may not prove fatal, given the advantages the United States enjoys today with respect to the world's other powers. Nevertheless, diminished counterintelligence and covert action capabilities raise the cost of exercising that advantage by reducing the tools a president has on hand to address national security problems, short of waging war. Moreover, American dominance is unlikely to go untested forever; the Hitlers and Stalins of the world have not vanished with the end of the twentieth century. When the test does come, a weak U.S. counterintelligence and covert action capability could be much more than a mere hindrance. It might prove a catalyst for disaster—as it has for many others throughout world history.

It is indeed a dire warning. If the United States lets its covert actions capabilities lapse, as it did to some extent in the last half of the 1970s, the country could fall under the boot of some modern day Hitler. Still the U.S. successfully survived the downsizing of covert actions under Carter and retooled quickly enough to launch two large scale covert actions in Afghanistan and Nicaragua. Currently covert actions have lapsed again; no shadows of any large scale program have emerged. Godson argues that the current trend towards de-emphasizing the role of covert actions is wrong, an arguable position, but his contention that the United States could collapse due to a lack of covert action capability and counterintelligence appears to be overstated.

There is an honest fear that the post-Cold War world may be dangerous enough to justify an enhanced intelligence agency. Many also see problems in the Gulf or the former Yugoslavia as areas where covert actions can be pursued without the fear of Russian interference. An argument can be made that increasing economic espionage can have dramatic benefits for U.S. business. But if all of these programs were so useful, why were they not conducted during the Cold War? The CIA often overlooked drug production and dealing, made little noise about nuclear proliferation in Israel and Pakistan, and helped arm terrorists such as the Contras. Obviously it is quite favorable for the CIA to find new missions now that it is without an adversary.
Status Quo

A second school argues for largely keeping the CIA intact with some minor reforms. This school is well reflected by former DCI Webster. They are differentiated from other critics who largely defend the agency, but hope for a very minor role for covert actions. Webster, typical of a bureaucratic chief, argues for slow reforms, but that nothing is essentially wrong: "as far as covert action [is concerned], I've tried to make this point: the procedures are already there. We need only people who will follow the procedures ... I believe very firmly in maintaining a covert-action capability in this agency." Essentially the argument here is that despite some problems, the CIA has been largely on the right track all along.

Defenders of the CIA argue that the large scale reforms being suggested go too far. And outright elimination of the CIA is simply beyond the pale. Samuel B. Hoff, a professor at Delaware State University concludes:

> The Central Intelligence Agency should be trimmed down, not put down; it must retain its traditional concentration on analysis and operations in the international sphere, not at home; and it must train able and honorable personnel who share a commitment to advancing our country's interests while adhering to laws, cultural norms, and accepted practices. In this manner, the CIA can facilitate congruence between the purpose and outcome of foreign and national security policy.23

There is nothing significantly wrong with the CIA according to Hoff. The CIA should be trimmed down since there is less money in the budget and because the Soviet Union has disappeared. Past offenses or even recent ones such as Nicaragua and the "failure" to predict the invasion of Kuwait merit only new attention to high standards. If the agency’s personnel can learn to closely follow high standards, the past failures will largely evaporate. What is needed is merely an emphasis on good management.

One Agency defender, John Horton, argues against many of the suggestions to radically alter the agency. He states that while it might be tempting to take operations out of the CIA and put them in some other agency, it would never work. It would be dangerous because the personnel would have nothing better to do than to justify their
own existence, by pushing for more and more covert actions. It would be "so expensive that neither the executive nor the Congress would abide by it."24 Finally, the United States should not make the mistake of separating the two clandestine services as during the days of the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). There were chronic battles between the CIA and the OPC "over personnel, salaries, and status"25 and difficulties arising from having covert actions run by two different agencies. The CIA staffed and housed OPC while having no control over them. This difficult situation continued until 1952 when the OPC was brought under the CIA's authority. In the end, only the historical argument is convincing. Horton's protests about the cost of a separate organization and the fear that it would always be plotting to increase covert actions, could be applied equally well to today's CIA.26

Many in this school worry that cutting back on covert actions would mean that the U.S. would only be able to respond to situations with diplomacy or all out war. While conceding that "many activities that would have been conducted covertly will be conducted in an overt or semi-overt manner," Andrew C. Tuttle worries that this new situation for covert actions is dangerous since they are "essential to the security interests of the state."27 The Carter administration's de-emphasizing of covert actions before the Afghanistan invasion is often cited. Some argue like John Ranelagh that by de-emphasizing covert actions, the United States will be repeating a failed experiment that took place under Carter and Turner. When covert actions were played down, the United States looked weak and had little option in responding to events such as the hostage crisis in Iran. Ranelagh even attributes part of Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory to an electorate disturbed by the emasculating of the CIA.28 Thus the United States should never abandon the covert action tool, nor regulate it to only occasional use under rare circumstances.
Moderate Reform

A common argument in reforming the CIA centers around covert actions. Couldn't the agency simply de-emphasize covert actions? George Ball, a member of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, believes that "in principle, we ought to discourage the idea of fighting secret wars or even initiating most covert actions." George Ball (1968, p. 29) Even members of the CIA have often wished that covert actions were not a part of the Agency's mission. In particular members of the intelligence directorate commonly rail against the "cowboys" in operations who constantly embarrass the entire Agency. Indeed Clark Clifford, who helped draft the legislation creating the CIA, explains that the Agency has drifted off course away from "the original concept of an intelligence-coordinating agency." Many would like the CIA to return to its original emphasis even if covert actions are retained.

Another argument in favor of reducing covert actions centers around the ethics of such ventures. While the Cold War justified many unseemly activities, the basis for engaging in these acts now has significantly lessened. According to the Doolittle Committee, a committee formed by President Eisenhower to make recommendations on covert actions, since the Soviet Union was willing to use almost any means to destroy the West, "acceptable norms of human conduct do not apply." Without the Cold War, these acceptable norms of human conduct should again be applied to covert actions. Seen in this light, policies that are without public support and involve extreme measures are unlikely to be approved. Nicaragua is an example of one operation that would be extremely difficult to justify without the Cold War setting, even then the operation was highly controversial. Chile is another that seems unlikely to occur again today, especially the excesses of Track II which involved even assassination plots. On the other hand, an operation such as Afghanistan could still be supported, possibly with
James Barry, a Deputy Director of the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence, states that some covert actions can still be justified. A "once compelling, anti-communist rationale for covert action has lost all validity. But this is not to say that the United States should eschew the method of covert action." According to Barry by applying just war theory to covert actions a reasonable calculus could be set up. It would fit all the following criteria: approval by president and appropriate members of Congress, intentions clearly spelled out, reasonable, and just, other means would not be effective, a reasonable probability of success, and the methods envisioned are commensurate with the objectives. Obviously these standards would greatly reduce the number of covert actions attempted, and also tend to make large scale covert actions quite difficult to justify. Still Barry is not alone in his insistence that "covert interventions abroad should be less frequent." 

In another study of the ethics of covert actions Arthur S. Hulnick and Daniel W. Mattausch attempt to apply ethical theories to covert actions. Examining just war theory and shared expectations theory they come to the conclusion that "assassination and aid to criminals or terrorists" fall well outside the ethics of a democratic nation, and that even for a great power, "the fact that other countries do such things to us does not justify similar activity on our part." They suggest that it may be possible for a democratic nation to engage in such acts, but there must be a public policy consensus. Without public consensus such generally immoral acts cannot be attempted.

Loch Johnson, a Church Committee staffer and now Regents Professor at the University of Georgia, wants covert actions to be reined in, suggesting the best way of doing so is by Congressional oversight. For Johnson, "like original sin, covert action is unlikely to disappear." He does, however, suggest some guidelines for future operations in the post-Cold War environment. There are four basic thresholds for
covert actions in order of seriousness: routine intelligence operations, modest intrusions, major intrusions, and extreme options. Major intrusions include election interference and the supplying to arms to rebels. Extreme options range from providing sophisticated weapons to rebels—Stinger missiles to the Mujahideen—to arranging coup d'états. Johnson would essentially ban extreme options:

In almost all cases, reject secret wars, coup d'état and other extreme measures, for if America's interests are so jeopardized as to require major forceful intervention, properly authorized overt warfare--ideally, multinational in nature and at the invitation of a legitimate government or faction-- is a more appropriate and honorable option.38

Major intrusions would be allowed, but only for compelling reasons. Johnson hopes that under the watchful eye of Congressional oversight, the CIA could return to its primary task of collecting intelligence and stay out of the covert action arena. Under Johnson's proposals Nicaragua likely never would have been attempted, while Afghanistan would have been run overtly, probably by the Pentagon.

Gregory Treverton, like Johnson a member of the Church committee staff, also has reservations about covert actions. According to Treverton "there needs to be a higher threshold for the use of covert action, ... the circumstances in which major covert action makes sense as policy are sharply limited."39 Like Johnson, Treverton has a series of standards to meet before an action should be considered by policy makers. Every policy maker should be able to answer three "what if?" questions before undertaking a covert action. What if it becomes public? What if it does not succeed? What signal will be received, by whom and with what result?40 The effect of these questions is to sharply limit large scale actions as well as to favor smaller covert actions such as propaganda which can answer all three questions positively.

Many critics of the CIA, who still see a need for retaining the CIA in its present form, agree that covert actions should be judiciously scaled back. For this group covert actions should only be attempted as a last resort.41 Charles G. Cogan of Harvard sums up the thinking on covert actions:
Finally, there is the fundamental question of whether we need covert action now that the Cold War is over. Already, in the real world, the budgets for covert action are but a small fraction of what they were in the 1980s at the height of regional conflicts. The era of the "900-pound gorilla" that was covert action is largely a thing of the past. I think there is a sort of wise men's consensus that covert action should be done, but only very sparingly and only in response to paramount national interests.42

The sort of large scale paramilitary adventures undertaken in the 1980s no longer apply. Even agency employees such as John B. Chomeua argue that "if real muscle is needed and the U.S. government is willing to undertake what in most cases amounts to an act of war, then the appropriate response becomes the use of either conventional military force or of forces specializing in low intensity conflict (LIC)."43 At the end of the Cold War the rationale for major covert actions may have finally expired.

Cracking the Institution

Daniel Patrick Moynihan's proposal for reforming the CIA goes far beyond anything the influential senator has done before. At one point in the early 1980s Moynihan's proposals for reforming the CIA were largely borrowed from the Agency itself. Moynihan was willing to let many problems in the CIA slide during the Cold War since "it was the KGB, not the CIA, which threatens democracy."44 Still by the end of the Cold War, Moynihan would turn from being a mild critic to an actual foe of the Agency.

Moynihan's gripe with the CIA essentially came down to the failure to predict the fall of the Soviet Union. Rolling Stone reporter, Eric Alterman, describes Moynihan's attack on the agency as "a one man jihad."45 Ever since Moynihan became aware of the enormity of the CIA's misreading of the state of the Soviet economy, he has had nothing but contempt for the agency. His argument is that if the CIA couldn't produce worthwhile intelligence on the country's primary enemy, how can it be expected to do anything right. While Moynihan's proposal might have initially
been expected "not to pass" when it was proposed in 1991, by 1994 the "End of the Cold War Act" would "be revisited, not just with one, but two, and many others" voicing support.46 Still even Moynihan is aware that the CIA is unlikely to be abolished in his lifetime.47

Moynihan's plan seeks to end the CIA as an agency and to move its responsibilities to the State Department and the Pentagon. Moynihan's plan contains four basic goals:

1. Disband the analysis directorate, whose functions are largely overlapped by the State Department and the Pentagon.
2. Split up the National Reconnaissance Office, "which buys satellites whether we need them or not," into imagery and communications intercept divisions.
3. Reorganize and rename the operations division and "put it someplace else." [Under the Pentagon]
4. Keep the director of central intelligence to oversee budget issues and intelligence targets.48

Obviously the CIA would come to an end under the Moynihan proposal. Still his proposal may have defined the middle ground on the intelligence debate. Moynihan's proposal began to gather steam again with the Ames scandal, Guatemala, and even the CIA briefing on Aristide implying that he had been a mental patient. As it turned out no one had checked their facts and there was no direct evidence of any hospitalization of Aristide. The CIA was accused by Senator Tom Harkin of trying to sabotage Aristide, a fair criticism according to a senior CIA official.49 These incidents led to the creation of the Aspin Commission to recommend what is to be done with the agency in the future.

Another radical reform plan that came out recently is the Gates plan. Long a CIA insider, and a DCI under Bush, Gates has his own plans for the CIA. Under the Gates plan the CIA would turn covert actions over to the military, the CIA would be responsible for only Russia, China, regional powers, and conflicts, terrorism, and proliferation. The CIA would also turn over all satellite intelligence to a new agency,
and the CIA would cut the number of spies.\textsuperscript{50} Gates' plan retains the CIA while greatly reducing its role. His plan also closely resembles the plan of Stansfield Turner who would break up the agency by making the Directorate of Operations a separate Agency.\textsuperscript{51} Dave McCurdy, the former Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, follows closely the Gates suggestions emphasizing that analysts should be institutionally separated from covert action, to the degree possible.\textsuperscript{52}

Robert Gates, a controversial figure while serving in the CIA, was not exactly a likely source for a radical reform proposal. While in the CIA Gates was accused of selective ignorance of the Iran-Contra affair which happened on his watch. Gates also helped to produce the intelligence reports on the Soviet Union that would later so infuriate Senator Moynihan. Finally, Gates was often accused of cooking the books to provide support for enhanced defense spending under Reagan and Bush. Senator Edward Kennedy describes Gates' record as "one of a cold warrior who skewed intelligence to fit his or his superiors' view of the world. He ignored the biggest scandal of the decade, intimidated those who disagreed with his views, and ignored the crumbling of the Soviet Union long after it began."\textsuperscript{53} Still many now look to the Gates plan as a likely successor for Moynihan's proposals. While it retains the CIA, it implements many of the reforms Moynihan proposed, significantly, putting covert actions under the military. His plan is now considered the front runner of the radical reform plans.\textsuperscript{54}

There are other reform plans similar to Moynihan's and Gates' that are not being widely circulated in Washington. Marcus Raskin, a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, has another radical reform plan for the CIA. The plan includes opening up the secrecy that shrouds the agency and sharing intelligence with the United Nations. Its most important feature is its insistence that the CIA's paramilitary operations be put under the Department of Defense, which would "subject them to scrutiny and civilian control."\textsuperscript{55} All of these plans share a similarity in acknowledging
that the CIA would be better off separating intelligence from covert action. As many of
them put the operation under the Pentagon, there is a sense that in the business of
paramilitary actions, the Pentagon is a better place for operations.

John Prados, who has written a history of covert actions, agrees essentially
with Moynihan, Gates, and Raskin. Having cited reasons for the failure of covert
paramilitary actions under the CIA from the creation of artificial oppositions to
informational leaks, Prados presents his solution:

One measure that could help clarify the legal status of paramilitary action would be to end the
CIA role altogether and put the function squarely within the purview of military special-
warfare forces. This would ensure maintenance of the capability for wartime, when it has been
demonstrated historically to be most effective, and reduce the propensity to use this technique
against the Third World in the service as some Cold War strategy.56

There is an inherent danger, according to Prados, in letting presidents conduct secret
wars with little oversight. By putting paramilitary operations under a military
command, there would no longer be a means for a president to abuse the power
inherent in the operations side of the CIA.

The advantages of the Pentagon are twofold. The Pentagon is subject to well
established civilian control unlike the CIA which still breeds distrust among Congress.
Many members of Congress probably feel that oversight of covert operations will be
significantly easier under the military. Indeed, frustrated by the Iran-Contra affair
Congress pointed out that "this country has been fortunate to have a military that is
sensitive to the constraints built into the Constitution."57 The implication was that
hopefully in the future the CIA could learn to be more like the military, more
accountable to elected officials other then the president. The military also has built in
expertise in paramilitary actions, far more so then the CIA ever attained. The special
forces of the military are trained in complex paramilitary maneuvers. The Pentagon
regularly sends many military advisors to other nations sometimes providing advisors
to significant rebel movements in those countries. In addition the armed forces of
many nations are brought to the United States for specialized training as provided by
special schools such as the infamous School of the Americas in Columbus, Georgia. Running paramilitary operations is a professional responsibility in the military which will not disappear when covert actions calm down for a period of years.

Finally, if covert actions are to be run as "overt" covert actions or simply out in the open, then the military can certainly be called upon. There is little point in waging a secret war that is essentially open knowledge to the Congress, to the American people, and to the target nation. Essentially many recent covert actions such as Nicaragua and Afghanistan have been simply undeclared wars. The Pentagon has been called on in many recent cases such as Grenada, Panama, and Kuwait to intervene in other nations. In Afghanistan and Nicaragua the Pentagon could merely have played the role of arms supplier and adviser. Certainly assigning operations, especially paramilitary operations, to the military is not unthinkable.

There are some distinct problems with turning over covert actions to the military. Since the military conducts primarily overt missions, they make a big splash when they go in. Another danger associated with this relates to using the armed forces of the United States in any situation. While a country may be willing to tolerate some CIA interference without declaring war on the United States itself, the same cannot be said if the U.S. military is behind the action. Putting the military in an operation tips the scales closer to outright warfare. Another problem relating to the Pentagon's size is flexibility. The military cannot be flexible as a small Agency such as the CIA which has only a few thousand employees devoted to covert actions. The Pentagon would have some difficulty in staying out of a bureaucratic rut with regard to covert actions, a situation that is much less difficult for the smaller CIA bureaucracy. Still the Pentagon, despite difficulties, could certainly shoulder the additional task of covert actions.

Many of the CIA's covert functions have been taken over by overt agencies. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has recently taken over many of the election functions that the CIA once conducted covertly. A good example of covert
functions being replaced by overt measures is the Voice of America, which is now run overtly though initially its funding was secretive. According to William Robinson of the Center for International Studies:

Political aid programs—formerly conducted by the CIA with limited success and sophistication—have now come in from the cold. "It is not necessary to turn to the covert approach," commented former CIA Director William Colby in regard to the NED program. "Many of the programs which...were conducted as covert operations [can now be] conducted quite openly, and consequentially without controversy."^58

If political action can be conducted openly, then as Colby says there is no controversy involved. For the CIA and the government non-controversial operations are a significant advantage over traditional CIA operations which often become steeped in controversy when revealed. If many of the political actions of the CIA can be conducted openly and paramilitary actions can be conducted by the military, then there may be little need for an active covert action arm of the CIA.

Abolishing Covert Actions or the Agency

Moynihan's proposal does not define the extreme edge of opinion on reforming the CIA. Some have called for a complete end to covert actions or even a complete end to the CIA. And the CIA would not simply be broken up into smaller pieces like the Moynihan plan, but secret intelligence would cease to exist. It is not the first time that there have been calls for termination, but with the demise of the Soviet threat, the CIA's raison d'être, such attacks carry more weight.

Even media institutions generally supportive of government such as The New York Times have come out against covert actions. On February 1, 1993 the editorial board of The New York Times suggested that it was time to re-examine covert actions to determine "whether they have any use at all."^59 It was a time to decide whether covert actions "are truly necessary, and to explore in every case whether democracy is
better promoted openly."60 Certainly such an editorial suggests a general mood in favor of eliminating covert actions, at least among media elite.

Editors are not the only opponents of retaining covert action capability in the future. Morton Halperin, a former member of the NSC under Nixon, argues that covert actions should be abolished by the United States. He contends that covert actions get around the necessary public debate over policy. Covert actions cannot be openly discussed and agreed upon and thus they serve no purpose in a democracy. Halperin believes that "the United States ought not to engage in covert wars or in covert operations designed to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries."61 Halperin suggests that intervention would still be possible in cases that the public would support such as Afghanistan. The intervention would merely be a subject of public debate and knowledge, surely making little difference in an "overt" covert operation like Afghanistan. The details of the operation would not be needed, but a general consensus support for a project would be necessary. In Afghanistan the question would be whether or not the United States should support the Mujahideen. Then the operation could be debated like any other foreign policy issue in Congress, the media, and among the public. Thus the CIA would be out of the covert business in regards to running operations supposedly hidden or at least plausibly deniable.

Others are more critical of the entire agency, covert actions included. Their solution is simply to end the CIA as it stands without dispersing its various functions to other government agencies. Representative Ron Dellums declared in 1980 that "we should totally dismantle every intelligence agency in this country piece by piece, nail by nail, brick by brick."62 Some leftist critics of the agency argue it is time to do just this. The editors of The Progressive declare that "this is not the time to reform the CIA. It is the time to shut it down."63 Kevin Kelley of the Utne Reader as well argues that "the Central Intelligence Agency may stand out as the ultimate example of a bureaucracy whose life span has been pointlessly prolonged."64 These critics are not alone.
Many former employees of the agency such as John Stockwell and Philip Agee have become famous, or infamous in the CIA's view, for publishing damaging reports of just what goes on within the CIA, most importantly what goes on in the operations directorate. Morally outraged at the practices they saw and performed they argued that the CIA should be abolished. Stockwell, an operational specialist, worked with the Agency through the Angola operation. Philip Agee probably the harshest critic of the CIA, now residing in Britain, exposed the CIA in his 1975 bestseller, Inside the Company: CIA Diary. Agee is easily the most controversial of former CIA employees having published individual agents names. Both of them agree in general that the CIA ought to be abolished. They contend that the CIA has consistently lied to Congress, engaged in bloody covert actions and assassinations, and generally hidden a host of problems under a veil of secrecy. Stockwell even refers to Gregory Treverton's book length criticism of covert actions as a "restrained critique." The two obviously see no future for the CIA. For Stockwell and Agee the CIA should be ended as soon as possible.

**Final Conclusions**

For the purposes of this study, the contentious debate over intelligence is less important. What is important is covert actions, in particular large covert actions. Examining the two largest and most public covert actions of the 1980s should provide some lessons for policy makers looking at the fate of future covert actions.

The cases of Afghanistan and Nicaragua help to cast further doubts on the ultimate usefulness of covert actions. There have been no flawless successes in the history of the CIA's covert actions. By the standards used in this study there have certainly been successes. Operations in Iran and Guatemala would certainly be ranked...
as successes, but these same standards would make for a long list of failures beginning with Indonesia in 1957 "one of the CIA's first major covert-action failures."

Admittedly, large scale covert actions are difficult ventures often with unpredictable long term consequences. The very nature of a secret intervention in another country invites difficulty. Still the CIA cannot claim many successes at large scale covert actions, especially of a paramilitary nature. Election interference has been more successful though it has its share of failures as well. The overall success rate of covert actions is not high.

The outcome of the Nicaragua case is not surprising. Nicaragua was a contentious issue throughout the 1980s. It was a case argued before the American public which never gained majority support. When the CIA was legally separated from the operation, Reagan and Casey were willing to continue aiding the Contras despite the illegality of the venture. The Contras never had widespread support among the Nicaraguan population. While the Sandinistas may have lost much of their initial popularity after bringing down Somoza, they were still widely supported as contrasted with the National Guard led Contras. Eventually after a decade of almost open warfare the United States succeeded in removing the Sandinistas from power by free elections, though they were heavily bought by American money, and threats of renewing aid to the Contras. Nicaragua never met the measure of a clear and supportable policy, and the rationale behind keeping the operation covert was less then convincing.

Afghanistan is perhaps a different story. Many consider the Afghanistan operation at least to be an "arguable success." Many cold warriors consider Afghanistan much more than arguable; they consider Afghanistan an example of Reagan standing up to the Soviets and helping to bring down the entire communist system. Still by the standards set forth in chapter II Afghanistan is a mild failure. These same standards are weighted in favor of U.S. interests, from a more neutral
position Afghanistan would appear to be a greater failure. As a mild failure, Afghanistan is a convincing argument that large scale covert actions have failed.

At this point some general conclusions can be drawn from the evidence. Both the case studies involved proxy armies fighting against perceived communists, the Sandinistas in one case and the Soviets in the other. Both case studies took place at the end of the Cold War. And finally, both case were failures. Looking at the reform plans now on the table, one can make several suggestions. Three basic courses of action are warranted in regards to covert action.

First, it seems likely that at the very least the CIA needs to seriously consider lessening emphasis on covert actions. There may very well be success stories in covert actions, but the two largest covert actions of the last decade were not. Many of the plans stressing moderate reforms include emphasis on cutting back on covert actions. Covert actions as pursued under Carter seem a relatively successful model. Under Carter there were no major controversial operations. While it is true that both the Nicaragua and Afghan operations started under the Carter administration, they were small operations with limited objectives. Under Reagan both of the operations would expand at a dramatic pace and ultimately fail. Carter's only major covert action failure was an attempt to rescue hostages in Iran. If the past few years are any indication then covert actions are once again in decline, the only publicly rumored actions were in Haiti and Bosnia.

Future covert actions should be conducted only in extreme cases where keeping the intervention covert is absolutely necessary to success. Even if this is the case there needs to be clear policy goals set forth, and public support for the objectives. Public support for the objectives may mean simply full Congressional knowledge by the relevant committees, or if basic policy goals can be debated without jeopardizing the action then the case should be brought before the public at large for debate. Nicaragua would have never been approved under these standards, and the country may have been
better off. Afghanistan would never have met the need for covertness though it could have easily been run overtly with debate over the general running of the aid program to the Mujahideen.

Second, the Pentagon could easily take over paramilitary covert actions, the most controversial of all interventions. Moving operations out of the CIA would allow the CIA to concentrate fully on intelligence without the constant controversy brought on by operations. The Pentagon has a history of civilian oversight and cooperation with Congress that the CIA has lacked. As mentioned before the Pentagon is fully capable of running professional paramilitary campaigns. Covert operations that have been run semi-overtly could now be run with the full acknowledgment of the U.S. role. Some other operations initially run by the CIA covertly have now been moved out of the CIA and conducted in the open. The NED is a prime example of removing CIA functions such as election interference and transferring them to a public agency which freely acknowledges the U.S. hand in its operations. Most large scale covert actions by the CIA have lost their true covert status. The world obviously knew even many details of both the Afghan and Nicaraguan operations.

By running paramilitary covert actions overtly out of the Pentagon or even covertly the CIA would stand to gain back significant respect. Had Nicaragua been conducted by the Pentagon instead of the CIA, it likely would have been more successful. There have been similar missions conducted by the military in Latin America most notably in Panama and Grenada. Still the likelihood in the case of Nicaragua is that it never would have been attempted. The Contras did not present a significant military force capable of overthrowing the Sandinista regime. That would have meant an invasion by Pentagon forces would have been necessary, an extremely unlikely possibility considering the public mood towards such a military adventure. In the case of Afghanistan the military would have been useful. It is unlikely that the Pentagon would have let the Pakistanis have such incredible influence on the
Mujahideen. The Pentagon would have insisted on U.S. planning of operations and training of the Mujahideen if the project was U.S. financed. An operation run by the Pentagon instead of the CIA could have been far more successful considering the amount of corruption in the Pakistani military and the incredible portion of the aid that was stolen by the Pakistanis. In summary there is a powerful argument that if the country is to keep its covert action potential intact, secret operations should be farmed out to the Pentagon.

Finally, there is the possibility of banning covert actions altogether. This would mean an end to large scale actions which involve secret intervention in the affairs of other nations. This course has the advantage of meeting high ethical standards, much as the banning of assassinations by President Ford brought some respect back to the Agency. It would end the CIA's most controversial mission and bring renewed focus to intelligence. While it remains an unlikely prospect, it could well be followed in practice if not in principle in the future. If presidents take it upon themselves to use covert actions sparingly or not at all then the effect would be almost the same as a complete ban on covert actions.

As the 17 members of the Aspin Commission prepare their report on the intelligence community and suggest reforms in the CIA they should strongly consider the more radical reform plans. As the two case studies indicate the latest large scale covert actions have not been very successful ventures. The most damning case is Afghanistan which is often considered a CIA success. If an operation like Afghanistan can be a mild failure then there is a genuine need to consider just how useful covert actions are, especially at the end of the Cold War. Aspin has promised to "start with a blank piece of paper" and stick to the best solution to the problem even if that means "abolishing the agency." Still the commission appears to be another attempt to save the CIA--recommending mild reforms but leaving the basic institution intact. That would be a tragic mistake.
Endnotes


10 Ibid., 276.


19 Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence* (Washington: Brassey's, 1995), 64.

20 Ibid., 254.

21 Prados, "Woolsey and the CIA," 34.


34 Ibid., 378.

35 Ibid., 389.


37 Johnson, "Covert Action and Accountability," 105.


40Ibid., 216-219.

41"In Black and White: The Central Intelligence Agency is Still Necessary, So is Its Reform," The Economist, January 14, 1995, 16.


47Alterman, "A View to a Kill," 49.


50Alterman, "A View to a Kill," 51.


53Marcus Raskin, "Time for U.S. Intelligence to Come in From the Cold," In These Times, September 2, 1992, 8.

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60Ibid.

61"Should the U.S. Fight Secret Wars?", 37.


64 Kevin Kelley, "R.I.P. for the CIA?" *Utne Reader*, July/August 1995, 16.


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136
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