

Spring 5-9-2010

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## Recommended Citation

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# Covert or Overt Intervention? The Reagan Administration in Latin America

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*Marika David*

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## **Introduction:**

The 1983 American military intervention in Grenada was confusing to various groups of people. Many American citizens wondered why a country so tiny needed to be invaded. Many Grenadians thought that the motives lay in revenge for the murder of their beloved leader Maurice Bishop, the former Prime Minister who had only days before been executed by the new government. The official reason given was to save the students of the medical school, where about 1000 Americans attended (Schultz 1993: 324). However, the real, more complex reasons for intervention are what will be investigated here. The internal situation in Grenada was complicated with successive revolutions, leaving a regime which had deposed recent revolutionaries and appeared even more leftist, and lacked popular support (Lewis 1987:62). These conditions created a situation which was ripe for external intervention. When compared with the similarly timed revolution in Nicaragua, and a pattern of covert interventions in Latin America, the overt military action in Grenada is puzzling.

Historically, there were many rationales for American interventions around the world, including containment of communism, filling power vacuums, and spreading democracy. Containment was a strategy that focused on not allowing communism to expand any further than countries that were already espousing this view. It was the idea

of keeping communism limited, thus contained. The destruction of many previous colonial powers left the Third World in a destabilized state. Many of these areas, especially those where there were significant natural resources, were a source of contention between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Areas where colonial power was gone were considered to be power vacuums. An example was the Middle East. No one had “control” over it, and therefore, both powers were afraid that power could be seized by someone else, giving them control over the region. Additionally, during the Cold War, the opposing ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union played a large role in various other international conflicts. After World War II, America and the Soviet Union were the leading powers. The opposing economic ideologies of capitalism and communism were a main source of tension between the superpowers. Each wanted to control as much as the world as possible, for various reasons including the security of being surrounded by allies. They also wanted to sway other countries to their type of economic system, making investment into their economies easier.

Since most of Europe had been destroyed by the war and was financially indebted to the U.S., colonial power was weakening. Encouraged by the self-determination ideals expressed first by President Wilson, and revisited by America at the end of the war, many countries were searching for freedom from colonial rule in this post-war time period(Gaddis, 2005:88-91). Many of these countries were attracted to the idea of communism or socialism. The imperialist system of colonialism was what they knew as capitalism. This had not worked or been structured to work in their benefit, but for the colonial powers (Holsti 1995: 11) . In general, colonialism provided colonial powers with a market for their manufactured goods and a new source of raw materials.

Unfortunately, this is not a system that allows for economy building within a newly decolonized nation. Some measure of economic control can be gained by redistribution of land, but when led by the government, this often comes under the category of socialism.

In this context of a destabilized world and power struggle between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R., revolutions often became points of interest and parts of this larger power play. Any type of revolution was a destabilization, in a system that was precarious at best, and peace between the powers rested carefully on the concept of “Mutually Assured Destruction.” This stemmed from the terror of atomic weapons, and was the strategy created by McNamara that each side should attempt maximum casualties, in order for the fear to be greater than the desire to use the weapons(Gaddis, 2005:80). Each side was afraid that the other would use the destabilization to its advantage. Also, since the existing system was considered capitalist, the U.S. was afraid that part of the desire for change would include a change to communism.

With these ideas in mind, I plan to examine in particular, the Latin American region, which was full of upheaval, and was an area for much American intervention, especially during the Reagan Administration. This administration had varying goals and conflicts about the region, which played into the actions taken there during the 1980s. Specifically, I plan to investigate why there was overt military action taken in Grenada, and not in other countries in Latin America, such as Nicaragua. In many ways, Nicaragua is representative of a more general regional pattern of covert operations and advisors, while Grenada seems different because of the overt action taken. The intervention in Grenada seems to be due to a combination of events that make it

possible for military presence with few repercussions. The unique situations immediately following the second (and much more violent) coup make an invasion both possible and desirable. The issue of intervention anywhere, and especially in Latin America, has many factors, which need to be put into context.

## **Organization**

This project will begin with a look at the context, both historical and geopolitical. The case of Latin America during the Cold War needs to be looked at from various angles. First, the Cold War background and its relevance to intervention during the 1980s will be discussed. American hegemony in the Western hemisphere as well as attitudes towards Latin America will also be relevant. The cases that I intend to investigate for this study are Grenada and Nicaragua. These two cases present different facets of American intervention. One shows the use of covert action, while the other shows overt use of military force. In Nicaragua, the complications arise from the fact that the Sandinista government had been recognized and given aid by the U.S., and it attempted to meet the requirements. Nicaragua also had a long history with American government, as the Somoza regime ousted by the Sandinistas was given preferential treatment for decades. In Grenada, the complications stemmed from successive revolutions and a lack of elections.

These cases have a lot of commonalities as well. Both were economically depressed, and the revolutions sprung from a desire to develop economically as well as to remove a dictator. They were also openly opposed to being under American control or

influence. In fact, Bishop made statements to that effect, saying that they did not consider themselves as being in America's backyard. This sentiment and open support of the Soviet Union in the UN against the Security Council's condemnation of the invasion of Afghanistan, show linkages to the Soviet Union. Another concern was the close friendship between Maurice Bishop and Fidel Castro, who felt that they had a lot in common with fellow Caribbean revolutionaries. Many of these similarities are commonalities throughout Latin America. The intervention in each can be used to help view U.S. intervention in Latin America, and in general, Cold War interventions (Payne 1991). This project intends to look at the idea of American intervention based in part on the experiences of the people involved. Also, comparing Nicaragua and Grenada intervention cases should give a representative idea of both American military intervention and other forms of action and pressure used, especially in a Cold War context.

### **Historical Context: The Cold War**

In the framework of American Cold War policy, why was Grenada a ground invasion as opposed to an approach using covert measures, which fits the more general intervention pattern in Latin America? This study will begin by looking at views on communism in the 1980s, and how this fits into the prevalence of intervention. As previously stated, most of American foreign policy from the 1940s to the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 was colored by the larger issue of the Cold War. A look into the American military intervention in Grenada, therefore, ought to begin with American-Soviet politics, and the impact of this on the rest of the world.

Coming out of World War II as the two main victors and powers, relations between the new superpowers had been strained since before the war ended. The lack of trust between the former WWII allies was based on their opposing economic strategies, but also stemmed from the personalities involved. Stalin's intense paranoia and the fear of the spread of communism in the West created a tension even during the war, which was magnified when the war was over. During the post-war period, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. were faced with a rapidly decolonizing, destabilized world which both wanted to support their economic strategy.

The attempts to control a world filled with nationalism and revolution took the forms of both economic and military activity. Sometimes, this was in the form of aid given to a country that seemed to have favorable views, or as sanctions against and interventions in countries that had opposite views (Gaddis 1982:15; Tucker 1992:6). Often, as in the case of Grenada, the first step was sanctions. This did not often work to sway a country from communism, since many needed economic assistance, and were further pushed towards the Soviet Union.

Because many of the countries that were seeking agency and revolution during the Cold War had been colonies and did not have adequate economies, they needed economic assistance in order to improve their countries. Often the reason for revolution was tied to the economic depression and desperate poverty in these countries.

One of the main American policies and watch words of the Cold War was containment. A central goal of American foreign policy during this period was to prevent the further spread of communism, believed to be emanating from the Soviet Union. Gaddis describes it as a strategy that intended to stop the Soviet Union from using its

post-war power, which was seen as possibly more dangerous and terrifying than Nazi Germany (Gaddis 1982:3-5). The mechanisms employed to prevent the spread of communism started with aid reduction to the Soviet Union at the end of the war (Gaddis 1982: 17). As distrust increased and there was no longer the common goal of the war to hold them together, the two countries grew further apart. Fear of the spread of communism played a large role in the Korean War, and became a mainstay of American foreign policy. Any mention of socialism or communism in a country was met with an attempt to stop or prevent it. Because communism was seen as the ultimate threat, the United States backed many dictators who were said to have more favorable views. At the same time, governments that may have had popular support were viewed as dangerous if they had communist tendencies or goals. This was further complicated by the way that many changes which were unfavorable to American economic goals were labeled as dangerous and communist, even when this was not so. But, as will be discussed later, the economic relationships between the more and less developed countries were changing, and not always to the benefit of the developed nations. This change was not often met with American approval (Holsti 1995:11-12, Gaddis 1982: 30, 64).

Part of the original stated vision of the Cold War was to prevent various areas of the world from becoming hostile to American goals. It was necessary for the continuation of American power to keep the governments of nearby countries lenient to American aims. Latin America fell into this category, but more discussion on American foreign policy as it pertains to Latin America will come later. The majority of Atlantic – bordering countries and areas where exports were needed by America, such as the Middle East, was on the list of countries to keep favorable. To this end, America got



involved in numerous conflicts over the decades. This often included setting up various governments, provided that they would be loyal to America. This is one of the criteria that Kirkpatrick sees as the difference between dictators and authoritarian governments.

“Only the intellectual fashion and the tyranny of Right/Left thinking prevent the intelligent men of goodwill from perceiving the facts that traditional authoritarian governments are less repressive than revolutionary autocracies, that they are more susceptible of liberization, and that they are more compatible with U.S. interests....There are, however, systemic differences between traditional and revolutionary autocracies that have a predictable effect on their degree of repressiveness. Generally speaking, traditional autocrats tolerate social inequalities, brutality, and poverty, whereas revolutionary autocracies create them.

“Traditional autocrats leave in place existing allocations of wealth, power, status and other resources, which in most traditional societies favor an affluent few and maintain masses in poverty. But they worship traditional gods and observe traditional taboos....Such societies create no refugees.

“Precisely the opposite is true of revolutionary Communist regimes. They create refugees by the millions because they claim jurisdiction over the whole life of the society and make demands for change that so violate internalized values and habits that inhabitants flee in the remarkable expectation that their attitudes, values, and goals will “fit” better in a foreign country than in their native land (Kirkpatrick, 1982:49-50).”

Kennan, who was a main architect of containment, felt that the main goal of foreign policy was American security. The strategy for pursuing security grew and changed over time. After each war, the strategy was revised, to prevent falling into the same traps, and to maximize the successes. Soviet aggression, however, was cast similarly each time, often with mentions of Cuba involved.

The ideas of American security by limiting the global influence of communism permeates most post World War II conflicts, which were mainly entered into due to containment strategy. In *The Best and the Brightest*, Halberstam looks at issues like this as drivers of the Vietnam War. There was a need to showcase American strength, and to

crush communism (Halberstam 1972: 72). These combined objectives played a role in the majority of Cold War armed conflicts. At the point of the Vietnam War, there was a break in the way the Congress and public looked at Cold War conflicts. Since allowing the executive and the military free rein seemed to have backfired, Congress became involved in policy-making in foreign affairs, and was mostly concerned with ensuring that America did not get entangled in a civil war. The public felt that the war had dragged on for too long, and doubted the decisions that got America into Vietnam originally. These led to a less interventionist view, and a desire to avoid involvement in the internal situations of other countries.

The Vietnam War was seen by many as at best a mistake, and at worst, a failure. It appeared to be an imperialistic action to some Americans, who were not sure that the invasion was justified. Schulzinger describes it as a trauma, especially because it damaged the faith that Americans had in their leaders to make moral decisions. The idea that America had been the aggressor was disturbing to many. Immediately following the war, the Watergate scandal contributed to the growing sense that America could not trust its elected leaders to be honest and make moral judgments. Americans also became somewhat isolationist, not wanting to be involved in civil wars in other countries, which was one view of the Vietnam War that Americans were left with. (Schulzinger 2001: 374, 382). In the post-Vietnam Cold War, all interventions were under the shadow of Vietnam. There was a concerted effort not to end up in a similar situation. This led to a certain amount of wariness to use military force. Conflicts that came after had to be obviously different, and not pose the threat of getting tied up in an internal conflict. This is due in large part to the hesitancy of both the American people and Congress to get

involved in another long-running war, without a clear goal and “exit strategy”. Against this background, the Reagan administration combined the idea that Soviet aggression was a lasting, powerful threat; with a renewed zeal to display American military might (Tucker 1992: 3). The wish to oversee the presidency, especially in foreign policy matters, coincided with scrutiny of the situation in Central America (Arnson 1993:22). Post-Vietnam conflicts were all partially a reaction to the idea of it as failure, which the Reagan Administration wished to change.

The Reagan administration had a different view of intervention than many American citizens, and was more concerned with making sure communism was not only contained, but also prevented from spreading into the Western Hemisphere. Returning a sense of confidence in the executive, especially in military and foreign policy decisions, was one of the issues the Reagan Administration struggled with. The American public and Congress were reluctant at best to get involved in international issues, especially those that seemed to be internal conflicts (Arnson 1993: 59). Therefore, the administration had to make Vietnam appear like less of a poor policy decision, and to make everyone more comfortable with the use of force. The use of force had to be divorced from the idea of failure. Also, a main Cold War tenet was proving military might to the Soviet Union.

One way to do this was to change the way that Vietnam was looked at. It seemed like an unnecessary intervention, and many were confused as to whether the decision to enter into the war, and the continuous prolonging were wise decisions. By saying that the Vietnam War was a “noble cause,” Reagan was trying to recapture the idea of America as a heroic nation, and getting rid of the crippling visions of invasion and defeat

(LeFeber, 1993: 280). In order to be able to enter into more conflicts, the administration had to make Vietnam seem like less of a failure. This would help to restore confidence in the presidency, and change the atmosphere of fear and distrust surrounding foreign interventions.

### **Economic Context: Latin America and Dependency**

Imagine dependency as a city, surrounded by rural areas. The rural areas contain farms that produce the raw materials for the city. In exchange for these needed materials, the city sends the country dwellers various manufactured goods. Unfortunately, the factory products are more expensive than the fruit and vegetables produced by the rural areas, so the city is continually richer than the country. Also, the control over setting the prices of both the produce and the manufactured products is in the city. In this allegory, the city is the United States, and the countryside Latin America. It would appear that the relationship that the U.S. has had with Latin America has been one of this nature.

As part of the sphere of influence recognized by Kennan, Latin American economic and political systems have long been influenced by America. This idea, although phrased differently, was a long standing one. Starting with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, America has felt that the rest of the Western Hemisphere looked to it for protection, and provided this, assisting them to maintain their independence from the European powers. Along with this protection came varying degrees of economic and

political involvement, including easy access to the mostly agricultural products of these nations.

Latin America was in a tumultuous and revolutionary state after WWII. Anything that seemed like it would be economically unfavorable to America was dealt with severely. As stated previously, communism and containment were the major issues of the post WWII period in American foreign politics. Therefore, governments that seemed to be leaning towards communism, were believed to be threats, and part of a Soviet desire to have bases in the Western hemisphere especially. Due to these national security concerns, it appeared that the requirements for American aid and assistance within the region were a strong anti-communist stance in the region, and support of U.S. policies. Governments that did not have strong anti-communist policies, and seemed more intent on internal reform, were frequently targeted for overthrow, or at least, treated with great skepticism.

The first example is Cuba in the 1950s. The dictatorship run by Batista was not only allowed, it was assisted, as it furthered both capitalism and American investment. When there appeared to be a revolution in the making, the U.S. first attempted to shore up the Batista government, and then to put together a new military based regime when it no longer seemed possible to save the Batista regime. The U.S. tried by all possible means to prevent Fidel Castro from gaining control of the government. When Batista refused to step down, both covert and overt means were used in the attempt to prevent Castro's rule. These attempts proved unsuccessful, however, and led to the U.S. taking a stronger role in the region, continually attempting to prevent "another Cuba" (Morley 1994:9-12).

The next example of America's attempt to maintain its hegemony in the Western Hemisphere is the Dominican Republic. During the 1960s, the Trujillo government became more repressive. American officials in the Eisenhower administration became concerned that dissatisfaction would grow within the country, and lead to a situation similar to Cuba. When Trujillo was assassinated by Dominican nationals who were connected to the Eisenhower and Kennedy administration, America took advantage of the situation, and assisted in training a military that would lead to the creation of a military state. This military was instrumental in the overthrow of the Juan Bosch, a social reformist who did not support American policies in the region. After Bosch, a three-member oligarchy was installed, which was more favorable to American policies, and further right, therefore not a communist threat (Morley 1994:12-15).

Yet another example was Brazil in the early 1960s. Under the new government of Jaoa Goulart, reforms and programs instituted to assist the poor and working class made those of upper classes feel threatened. The United States put pressure on the government through a variety of means. Not only were anti-Goulart candidates supported, but the loans approved even by non-governmental organizations were delayed and were not received during a time period of economic instability. Politically, the CIA and the AFL-CIO were also involved in campaigning against Goulart with propaganda, and support of military officials who were opposed to his rule. The coup that took place in 1964 was instigated by the U.S., and the new government was fully supported with aid from both America and various organizations(Morley 1994:15-19).

The hegemonic economic relationship between the U.S. and Latin America continues with the involvement of the United States in the overthrow of the Chilean

government in the early seventies. Similarly to other cases, when the socialist Allende was elected, the U.S. began both economic and propaganda campaigns with the intent of destroying the regime. A large part of this subversion involved training and using the armed forces against the government. They were given aid and were eventually part of a coup that overthrew Allende. Once the new government was in place, it was largely beholden to American ideas, and started by eradication of the social and economic reforms instituted under Allende (Morley 1994:19-23).

Despite this history of intervention, the strategy used depends on the government. The amount of change to the status quo, both within the country and in interactions with former allies, play a large role in the policies espoused by the U.S. towards various countries. New governments that uphold the economic hierarchies and ally systems of their predecessors seem like much less of a threat, and therefore are not pressured as severely. Change is to be kept as moderate as possible( Morley 1994: 218-219).

Dependency theory is a way of looking at the economic system created under colonial rule and later taken over by America, in which Third World or periphery countries are mainly consumers of factory goods and exporters of raw materials. Since the raw materials (based on prices set in the advanced, colonizing countries) are generally worth less than the factory goods, the terms of trade are bad and eventually get worse as the factories become more efficient. The cost of manufactured goods increases at a much faster rate than raw materials, so that these countries never have enough wealth (Holsti, 1995:10-12). Even with decolonization, it is very difficult to get out of this system, as there is nothing on which to base a large structural change in the

economy. Locals who have some amount of elite status, often acquired it under colonial rule, by buying into this system. Therefore, they stand to gain from the perpetuation of a dependent system.

Leading up to the 1970s, the economic situation in Central America changed. There was a push to become more integrated into the world capitalist economy, which meant that there was a greater focus on the exportation of agricultural products. This required using more land for these products, and therefore led to some redistribution of land. Less of it was able to be used for subsistence farming, and more went towards “cash crops.” This led to a concentration of access to wealth, especially in the form of fertile land. Also, it led to changes in occupation, from subsistence farming to wage-laborers or urban city workers. As disparities in the distribution of wealth, especially wealth in the form of arable land, grew, there was an increase in poverty and dissatisfaction in Latin America, according to Booth (1991: 35). The growth of the working or lower class, along with decreased access to sources of wealth led to attempts for change. These struggles, sometimes in the form of unionization, were not often successful. Instead, they were often met with violence, increasing the frustration and anger of those participating. This was a pattern seen in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The lack of satisfaction from these original attempts at taking back some economic power led to more solidified and systemic state opposition.

Therefore, in Latin America, there has not been a very favorable history with capitalism. It could be seen more as a system which prevents progress than a system which increases agency and market freedom (LeFeber 1993: 17; Morales 1994). Since the main exports of the region tend to be agricultural, and thus non-industrial or raw



products, there is a history of balance of payment problems. There are two main reasons for this issue. First, the prices of agricultural products are based mostly on the demand of those importing them, and therefore, in the control of more developed nations that import such things as tropical fruit. Secondly, the prices of industrial products are higher, and also set in the industrialized nations. The prices of industrial products tend to increase, while the prices of agricultural products (and other raw materials) tend to remain low (LeFeber 1993:17 ; Lewis 1987). In Latin America, modernization and moving away from mostly agricultural products is difficult at best. Because there is a demand for the exports of these countries (sugar, fruit, spices), there is little incentive for the U.S. to have them reduce the agricultural sector of their economy. With capitalism seen as a block to progress, many found socialism an attractive alternative (Heine 1991: 4; LeFeber 1993:18).

It has been argued, however, that dependency does not necessarily always have a detrimental effect. It is sometimes connected to economic growth and improvements. In looking at two different studies, Ray and Webster showed that the correlations were tenuous at best, and could be either somewhat positive or somewhat negative. Therefore, there may be other economic issues taking place like perhaps a lack of infrastructure, and various national disasters. (The region is prone to hurricanes and there was also a massive earthquake in Managua in 1972). They do however, admit that foreign investors make more than they invest (Ray & Webster 1992:507-513).

In the Western Hemisphere, America has a history of hegemony (LeFeber 1993: 19). Especially with the southern part of the hemisphere, America has attempted to protect and maintain economic control of their raw materials. Since the 1800s, America

has felt that the southern part of the hemisphere was its ‘backyard’ and considered the other countries in a paternalistic fashion. Partly, this was felt to be in the best interest of these countries. Due to the vested interest America has in the governments of these countries, it has a long history of intervention. Geopolitically, as nearby states, it is wise to ensure that the governments of the Latin American nations are favorable to American policy. Having close states that are not allies can lead to feelings of danger, especially given the tensions of the Cold War. Economically, since many of them export mainly to America, it is important to maintain compatible economic systems. Land redistribution, for example is an issue because it makes the large scale farming of cash crops more difficult. This prevents these countries from developing more diverse economies, which, in turn, keeps them dependent on the more developed nations for consumer goods and factory products. The lack of agency inherent in this system is what pushes many countries away from maintaining a capitalist economic system. Especially when political agency has been found, a lack of economic agency can be very frustrating.

Under these conditions, a sense of being mistreated and oppressed by the state was harbored by various groups of citizens. This eventually leads to revolutionary ideas and activities. In The cases examined here, the state did not give much political or economic agency. This caused increasing tensions, which culminated in revolutions. Since the governments installed after these revolutions did not seem to be favorable to American economic policies, and were socialist in nature, they were targeted for destruction like many of the other socialist leaders of the region. Once the “mistake” had been made in Cuba, the other Latin American countries needed to remain closely

connected to the U.S. or else face severe pressures that often resulted in the installation of a military state.

### **What Happened: Revolution in America's Backyard**

All around the world, and especially in the Caribbean region, Cuba and the Soviet Union were considered to be the main instigators of any socialist-leaning revolution. This made action against these revolutionaries serve two ideological purposes. First, it was seen as a strike at the Soviet Union and monolithic communism. Secondly, it would not be viewed as yet another instance of intervening in another country's internal affairs, which was not something that the public wanted to engage in (LeFeber, 1993). In any situation where aid could be traced to Cuba and the U.S.S.R., the revolution was seen as hostile. This, however, was a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, since revolutions overthrowing U.S.-backed dictators were often responded to with economic sanctions by the U.S. As previously stated, dictators that were not communist were often supported by America as being preferable to the alternative. This often pushed countries into asking for Soviet aid. Once they had done so, America was able to state that they had been communist and Soviet-inspired and driven all along. Since it was felt that economic and governance systems could be imposed from outside, the Soviet Union was generally believed to be exporting communism (LeFeber 1993; Gaddis 1982: 42).

The main problem with the continued desire to turn the post-War decolonization and power struggles away from communism was the failure of the capitalist system and the "free market" to assist these smaller, often agricultural -based economies (Gaddis

1982:17 ; LeFeber 1993). Since they were set up under colonialism as another market for consumer products and to provide imports that were not readily available in Western Europe, former colonies had found capitalism not to lead to an increase in their wealth so much as an increase in the wealth of the colonial center due to them (Holsti 10, 1995). Especially if this is looked at as a zero-sum game (meaning that the amount of wealth is constant) then the colonial centers and other developed nations were becoming wealthy at the expense of the colonies. Therefore, there was a certain amount of disenchantment with capitalism, and a lack of trust in it as a system that could provide the agency desired to improve their countries. Socialism appeared to be a system that would help the impoverished people of these countries to at least have enough to survive, which was tempting to those who wished to improve living conditions in these countries.

In the Latin American region, there was a similar pattern of planning for disruption of the revolutionary governments. During the Carter administration, there was more positive coercion, in attempts to win over revolutionaries to capitalist ideals. Under the Reagan administration, however, it was deemed important to prevent and crush the spread of communism, so a more negative approach was taken. Since trying to win over revolutionaries had not worked, the revolutions needed to be crushed. Due to a desire to not have ground troops engaged in battle in Central America, this was often through subversion. There were long-range plans involving military training of ex-patriots of Latin American countries, and the training, arming and financing of counter-revolutionary groups, such as those willing to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Although there was a lack of understanding or an intentional lack of insight into the

internal situation that creates revolutions, there was a lot of planning for infiltration and overthrow (LeFeber 1993).

The Latin American region was also considerably destabilized during the seventies and eighties. Because of rapid decolonization, the Caribbean was still working out systems of governance and economy. Although less recently decolonized, Central America was dealing with extremes of poverty, and, in some cases, exploitative governments. There were economic problems, and continued instances of guerilla warfare. The Reagan Administration attempted to deal with economic instability with aid packages, especially to countries seen as favorable to American aims. Nicaragua, for example, had been receiving American economic aid since the carter administration, partially in an attempt to make the Sandinista government more favorable to Washington. When the instability exploded into revolution, however, the situation was a little more difficult for the United States to navigate. In Grenada, for instance, poverty and instability was followed by a Marxist regime, desiring change and improvement of economic conditions.

## **Research Design**

The research for this project began with secondary sources. I intend to provide background by explaining Cold War sentiment, showing the conflicts between America and the Soviet Union. It will be shown here that the American policy of containment played a large role in the interventionist mentality. Since the spread of communism needed to be prevented, it was vital to ensure that it did not spread close to American

borders. Also, starting during World War II, America and the Soviet Union had a lack of trust in their relationship, which only became worse once the war was over and there was no reason for alliance left. These two super powers had opposing ideologies, and each wanted to have as much of the world in their camp as possible. This led to other countries getting caught in this power play (Gaddis 1982: 30; Lewis 1987).

The next portion of the project is also setting the stage, by looking at the aftermath of Vietnam, and its specific bearing on American foreign policy. This portion focuses on secondary sources like Schulzinger's *A Time for Peace; The Legacy of the Vietnam War*. This segment of the paper shows how the considerations of the Vietnam War affected Reagan's vision of the post war revolutionary world. In dealing with a large amount of decolonization, many countries felt that the democracy-sanctioned governments that they had were not effectively caring for the needs of the people.

### **Factors to Consider**

In looking at the cases of Grenada and Nicaragua, there are several important factors that affect the cases. While trying to figure out why these two interventions took such different courses, the internal situations of the countries have to be analyzed. The fact that there was an intervention in both is already a large similarity, which suggests other commonalities.

The variables to look at here are the causes of intervention. These include linkages to the Soviet Union and Cuba, including the flows of both armaments and money. This is to be expected, since neither revolution was in anyway sanctioned or

approved of by the U.S., but needed money and arms. This should be looked at in economic documents, and primary sources on what was going on in these countries, since they were being sanctioned and monitored. Also, the presence of Cuban or Soviet military personnel should be looked into. This provides for another measurement of ties to communism. In Latin America, it was not unusual to have mostly weaponry and financial support from the U.S.S.R, while being provided with advisors, troops, and more weapons from Cuba.

Additionally, the statements made by the new revolutionary governments are important. Openly communist sentiment, and the occurrence of elections are to be investigated. This can be seen in the new constitutions and statements released by the new governments. Since they were often overthrowing a U.S. recognized government, the revolutionaries were under economic sanctions from America and therefore had to apply to the U.S.S.R. for some sort of economic support. Economic support would be seen as ties or linkages, and this therefore led to a feeling that these governments needed to be subverted or removed. In Nicaragua, although the government had Marxist roots, there was an attempt at maintaining good relations with the U.S. This was somewhat less of the case in Grenada, where despite a similar need for economic assistance, the system of relationship between America and Latin America was being challenged.

Also, the size and training of the military forces of each country would be useful to investigate as a factor shedding light on reasons for different interventions. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas had been fighting for years, and were experienced at guerilla warfare. In Grenada, however, the revolution was incredibly brief, to surprise, perhaps,

of even the revolutionaries. A less entrenched military force made Grenada an easier military target. The recent dissent leading to massacre in Grenada made the government less stable, and the populace more favorable to some kind of intervention. The situation had reached a critical stage, and the people were no longer fully in support of the government. Although this seems to be a minor factor, it is an important one, because a populace that is sympathetic will find ways to aid and assist an army, as was often the case in Vietnam. In Nicaragua, the people were more connected to and in favor of the government, as opposed to Grenada, where there had been a large amount of faith in Bishop, but the government no longer had nor carried the favor of the people after his murder. A comparison of the overall populations would be a place to begin, along with the actual records of the battle in Grenada, and data collected from those who were sent to infiltrate the Sandinista regime. These factors all seem to have led to the ground invasion in Grenada, which was seemed unusual among the pattern of covert operations in Latin America. They also help to explain intervention in Latin America in general (Lewis1987: 11-13& 50).

Another important aspect is the ground situation in each of these countries – the internal situations that cause revolutions that appear dangerous. What is important here is the behavior of their various dictators, and the economic situations that created an atmosphere ripe for revolution. It seemed that America had taken these revolutions as a personal affront. In some aspects, this is justified, because part of the status quo that the revolutionaries were struggling to throw off was the system of dependencia (Holsti 1995: 10-13,). As described earlier, this was part of colonially instituted system that kept the Third World in need of many good from the First World, including sometimes food,



since the growing of cash crops leaves little room for any type of subsistence farming. This was part of the system that created an environment for the growth of revolution. The institutionalization of exploitation made progress hard in these countries, and the governments that were in place were sanctioned because they had had good trade agreements with America (Joefield-Napeir, 1991: 87-99).

### **Cases**

The cases that I investigate for this study are Grenada and Nicaragua. These two cases present different facets of American intervention. One shows the use of covert action, while the other shows overt use of military force. These cases have a lot of commonalities as well. Both were economically depressed, and the revolutions sprung from a desire to have better economies as well as removal of a dictator. They were also openly opposed to the situation of being under the control of America. In fact Bishop made statements to that effect, saying that they did not consider themselves as being in America's backyard. This and open support of the Soviet Union in UN against the Security council's condemnation of the invasion of Afghanistan, lead show linkages to the Soviet Union. Another concerning characteristic was the close friendship between Maurice Bishop and Fidel Castro, who felt that they had a lot in common as fellow Caribbean revolutionaries. Many of these similarities are commonalities throughout Latin America. The intervention in each can be used to help view U.S. intervention in Latin America, and in general, Cold War interventions (Payne 1991).

Having set the stage, I will show that economic depression and the emergence of a college-educated student class led to unrest, and resentment within these countries. Once these governments are in place, their actions and interactions with the rest of the world often confirmed the American fears that they were socialist governments with ties to the Soviet Union and Cuba, and that they could be used as launching pads for further spreading communism. Domino theory, which was so prevalent during the Vietnam War, never really was retired. It was not restated in the same way, but a main fear after the Cuban revolution was that more countries in the Caribbean area would become communists. A fear of this is seen in the allegations that Nicaragua was assisting the Salvadoran revolution, as well as in the threat of the international airport being built in Grenada (Lewis 20-25, 1987).

The obvious communist linkages of these governments caused the U. S. to feel threatened. The sentiments of the Reagan administration on both revolutions and countries that attempted to go against the established system of democracy and American hegemony was seen as dangerous. Also, Reagan felt that Carter had not been harsh enough on Nicaragua and on foreign policy in general. He wanted to prove to the world to some extent, that American military might was still prevalent. Also, according to Jeane Kirkpatrick, a serious force in the Reagan government, dictators that followed American trade agreements and did not really bother anyone outside of their circle, were acceptable, and friendly. This was generally the Cold War argument that was made for the backing of regimes with terrible human rights violations, but were not actually communist.

Unfortunately, this did not turn out as expected, and the authoritarian governments proved no more amenable to change than their dictatorial counterparts. Instead, both were highly oppressive, and the U.S. justification for those that it had backed was weakened. What was left was to say that it was an improvement on Communism. When these authoritarians were replaced by leftist revolutionaries, they became more dangerous. This section will rely on some memoirs, including George Shultz's *Turmoil and Triumph; My Years As Secretary of State*. It will also contain secondary sources, and some primary documents on foreign policy decision made during this time frame. It will include analysis of the two revolutions that took place, especially Nicaragua, since there was a long history of American support for the Somoza government.

I will lead into the actual investigation of the cases with a look at the history of American relationships with Latin America, which should show a certain predisposition to intervention or general interference. Based in part on proximity, America had a vested interest in the politics and economics of Latin America, and assuring both the flow of their agricultural goods, and that their governments would remain favorable. Castro's Cuba was seen as almost a blemish and a failure (LeFeber 110, 1993).

The next area to investigate is the internal situation in each country. This will be assessed using the variables stated above, to understand the causes of intervention. What will be interesting to look at here is not only what causes intervention, but what internal factors are related to the type of intervention that eventually took place. I intend to show that the collapse of the People's Revolutionary Government and the massacre of Bishop and many of his supporters, created an atmosphere in which some kind of

intervention was called for. In Nicaragua, the government seemed more stable, and therefore, was harder to attack with overt force. The fighting force was also far more entrenched, as the revolution was long and bloody. Also, in Grenada, there was little semblance of safety for citizens or others on the island. The prior situations of economic depression, and economic destruction by previous leaders are also similarities that cause the revolutionaries to want an entirely different system (Joefield-Napier 86-95, 1991; Kimmens 47-50, 1987).

The policies of both governments that seemed to be objectionable to America, as well as their ties to known communist governments will be examined here. What was actually taking place within the countries and their governments seems like a very salient matter that would be the deciding factor to intervene. Having already shown a certain predisposition towards intervention, especially in this region, the internal situation should prove to be the deciding factor for intervention. This section consists of various primary sources, including documents from the time, statements by or memoirs of government officials, both American and Latin American. There will also be some use of secondary sources. In this section I intend to compare the two cases, and show that the similarities are possibly regional, and the differences, peculiar to the unique experience of instability that each felt.

### **Nicaragua Case**

Nicaragua was controlled by the Somoza family for a large part of the twentieth century, until the revolution in 1979. Between 1937 and 1979, they were either in power, or

seemed to have a lot of control over decisions made. Although General Anastasio Somoza took a brief hiatus from 1947 to 1950, as Minister of War he was still in control of the armed forces, which, seems to be where most of the power for control lay in Nicaragua. Looking at the period which leads up to the Nicaraguan Revolution, therefore, involves a look at the Somoza family. Since, as Booth relates, the state becomes a political actor against which revolutionaries, formerly dissatisfied citizens, begin to mobilize, the governance and position of the state of Nicaragua is an integral part of the dissatisfaction that grows to revolution.

Due to a strong anti-communist stance, Somoza was backed and funded by the United States, at a time, as discussed above, when the main foreign policy issue was the Cold War and prevention of the spread of communism. Since they all maintained a strong stance against communism and were not seeking Soviet aid, the Somozas were seen as less of a threat to American foreign policy and security issues than a government that was more populist, but was socialist, or appeared to lean in that direction. Much of the turmoil between Nicaragua and other Latin American countries during the Cold War had to do with Communism. In Guatemala in 1954, where communism was thought to be getting a bit of a hold, Nicaragua was among four other countries (the others being El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela) suspected by the government to be planning an invasion.

Anti-communism was not the only reason that the U.S. supported the Somoza regime, although it did play a very large part. Nicaragua was also helping to further both political and economic aims of the United States in the region. Backing in the

Organization of American States and maintenance of an open economy (Morley, 1994:35)

Table 1 – Nicaragua Chronology

2/12/1950	Somoza decides to run again in upcoming elections on 5/21
5/6/1950	President Roman y Reyes dies in U.S.A.
5/7/1950	Somoza is selected as president of Nicaragua
5/21/1950	Somoza wins election – reward for voting for him is a card required to work in most businesses
5/2/1951	Somoza takes oath of office to become Nicaraguan president
11/15/1953	Somoza insists he is not a dictator
4/5/1954	Martial law declared after an assassination attempt on Somoza fails
4/7/1954	Six rebels and 2 national guards killed in restoring order after assassination attempt
	Somoza changes constitution to allow him to run for reelection
11/19/1954	Repeal of exchange taxes to increase trade
1/11/1955	Nicaraguan troops invade Costa Rica, after months of friction
8/9/1955	Uncertainty as Somoza seems to pursue reelection while allowing negative views of his candidacy in the press
9/21/1956	Somoza is wounded in an attempted assassination
9/29/1956	Somoza dies and his son, Luis Somoza Debayle, inherits the presidency
2/24/1959	Opposition forces to Somoza government sign an agreement of solidarity with each other
2/5/1963	Schtick wins elections in Nicaragua as part of Somoza party, but in accordance with new law that would not put a Somoza in power for a 4-year term
2/7/1967	Anastasio Somoza Debayle wins election and becomes president
1968	Central America has economic decline
8/31/1971	Congress dissolves itself, transfers power to Somoza until assembly is formed to change constitution next year
4/8/1972	Junta selected to take control of Nicaragua when Somoza steps down
5/1/1972	Somoza steps down and Triumvirate takes control
12/24/1972	Massive earthquake in Managua – high death toll and America sends aid
9/3/1974	Somoza reelected
12/29/1974	Leftist revolutionaries crash a party, kill 3 guards and capture more than 20 hostages
12/31/1974	Revolutionaries free hostages and fly to Cuba
1/24/1975	Somoza blames Castro for the spread of socialist revolution in the region
8/2/1975	Guerrillas in Nicaragua grow in numbers
3/1/1977	Bishops of Nicaragua accuse Somoza's regime of cruelty towards civilians in

	fighting leftist guerrillas, including rape, torture and executions
10/20/1977	Somoza's regime uncovers a coup plot; guerrillas say that they want to overthrow Somoza and hold elections
10/30/1977	Sandinistas win backing from non-Marxist groups and Somoza regime seems unstable
1/10/1978	Pedro Chamorro Cardenal, long-time editor of an anti-Somoza newspaper, is shot and killed while driving
1/12/1978	Riots break out after the funeral of Cardenal
1/24/1978	Strike called to protest Cardenal's murder
1/26/1978	Somoza's resignation called for
9/14/1978	Military rule instituted as fighting continues in Nicaragua
7/12/1979	Revolutionaries promise elections in Nicaragua
7/19/1979	Somoza overthrown
12/1981	Reagan decides to support contras
4/1/1981	Reagan confirms Carter's decision not to send aid to the Sandinistas
4/10/1982	Nicaragua gets aid from Soviets
3/26/1983	Sandinistas accuse U.S. of attempting to overthrow their government and of attempting to destabilize their economy
3/29/1983	U.S. is alone in professing the belief that conflict in Nicaragua is strictly internal, U.S.S.R. accuses U.S. of funding and arming rebels
4/1984	Nicaragua brings U.S. to International Court of Justice

The second term of General Somoza began and ended abruptly, and was marked by conflict and strife throughout. (see table 1) In 1950, after he had declared that he would run again in the May elections, the current president, Roman y Reyes, passed away. His untimely death on May 6, 1950, was barely weeks before the scheduled election on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Somoza was selected by the Congress as president on May 7<sup>th</sup>, and went on to win the election. This election, although allegedly free, did not give people much of a choice. Although there was an opposition party, the ballots were not secret, and voting for Somoza resulted in a card needed for work. Although it seems that economic issues increased later, jobs were still a necessity. Therefore, there was a strong economic coercion to vote for Somoza, despite the opinions that may have been held on

his ability to govern. Since the ballots were not secret, it seems dangerous at best to vote against such a powerful candidate in a state that could be described as a police state. This makes the election not truly free, since voting against Somoza could cause at the very least, a loss of ability to work, and even possibly persecution and violence later.

Despite this, in 1952, he expressed that he did not feel that he was a dictator. Since he was educated in the United States, he had an idea of the freedoms in America. Somoza stated that there was a lot of freedom in Nicaragua, even allowing the existence of an opposition party, and it had seats in Congress. Unfortunately, since the military played such a big role in the running of the country, and the press was controlled in large part by the president, this statement of freedoms appeared false. The growth of attacks against the state and head of state showed a growth of the organization of those who oppose the regime. As Booth discusses, simply being dissatisfied is not enough. A large amount of coordination and organization is required for successful revolutionary activities. The growth of organizing mechanisms in the Sandanista movement is shown by a growth, not only of revolutionary activities, but the increasing severity of these activities. Isolated assassination attempts can easily be disregarded as unrelated to any growing national movement.

An assassination attempt in 1954 showed that there was increasing activity among Somoza's detractors. The assassination attempt created days of turmoil within the country, eventually leading to a declaration of martial law in an attempt to retain order. This effort was not entirely successful, as at least eight people were killed in the attempts to maintain decorum. Six of them were stated to be "rebels" and two were members of the National Guard. Days later, three more rebels were killed, two of whom



had been officers of the National Guard. One of them was from Costa Rica, which seemed to damage already strained relations between the two countries.

Throughout Somoza's second term, Nicaragua had issues with other countries in the region. Since, as Booth states, there were parallel revolutionary ideas in the area, it may have been that preventing a spread of revolution abroad was seen as an attempt to also keep it from coming home. Neighboring rebel governments might begin to assist revolutionaries and guerrillas within the country (as the Sandinistas did to some extent) and lead to greater internal instability. In 1955, Nicaraguan troops invaded Costa Rica, after months of turmoil and various allegations. Growth of communism and the receipt of Soviet armaments by Guatemala began to erode relations between the two countries, especially when some of these arms were alleged to have been found on a Nicaraguan beach, after being delivered by submarine.

After having changed the constitution in 1954 so that he would be able to run again, Somoza seemed to have reservations about his candidacy in 1955. Despite acting like a candidate who was running, he became harder to reach, and allowed the press to raise concerns about his running again. This bred a lot of uncertainty in the country about the motives and goals of the president. A large part of the reason for the concern was the known limitations on freedom of speech. Despite Somoza's earlier claim in 1952 that Nicaraguans had complete freedoms, the press was known to be under strict governmental control. Therefore, statements questioning Somoza's decision to run again were taken as confusion on his part. In September of 1956, shortly after having been reelected, Somoza was wounded in an assassination attempt and later perished from his wounds. His son, Luis Somoza Debayle, took over the presidency.

His term too, was fraught with turbulence, including a short-lived revolution in 1961, after which he passed a law limiting the presidency to four years instead of six, and preventing his brother, General Anastasio Debayle, who was the leader of the armed forces, from succeeding him before one term had passed. Both elections in the sixties were marked with riots and turbulence, showing that the dissatisfaction of the citizens had not ceased.

In Nicaragua, a revolution seemed unavoidable. Decades of guerilla violence and dissatisfaction with the Somoza government led inexorably to a governmental overthrow. After years of rule by the same family, mainly through the use of the military, a natural disaster led to the breaking point. When aid for earthquake recovery was instead appropriated by the government, discontent that had been simmering all the while came to a boil. The Sandinista movement was formed, named after a famous guerilla fighter in Nicaraguan history. They began to wage a guerilla war against the Somoza government. Following the assassination of an anti-Somoza newspaper editor, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the attacks intensified. Within a year, the Somoza government had been deposed. Having been a presence in Nicaragua for decades (Sandimo, for whom the Sandinistas were named, fought against American Marines in the 1950s), The U.S. played a greater role in the revolution in Nicaragua. The human rights under the Somoza regime were so deplorable that giving military aid against the Sandinista was impossible under the Carter administration. Since Carte had committed himself to human rights globally, this was not an occasion where America could fully intervene to protect its interests. Instead, advisors and financial support was given to

Somoza, and eventually, when it became inevitable, the Sandinista government was treated with care but given assistance (Kimmens 1987: 37-41.).

In this instance too, the situation was complex and tricky. A lack of trust between the new leaders in Nicaragua and America was fueled by America's support of the Somoza regime, and American fear of the Marxist roots of the Sandinistas. Both sides were afraid that despite a tenuous friendship, the other would suddenly prove their fears to be justified. With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Nicaraguan fears began to come true.

The Sandinista government had long expected Washington to create a counterrevolution. The Reagan administration wanted to put across a stronger line on foreign policy, especially when it pertained to communism. Since the Sandinista government had Marxist ideals, it was both viewed by the administration and portrayed to the public as being a Soviet-Cuban actor that was deeply involved in the Salvadoran revolution, and therefore was exporting violence, revolution, and communism to its neighbors. The administration began a course to destroy the Sandinista government (Kimmens 1987:37-41).

First, the last \$15 million in aid under Carter was deferred, and thus never received by Nicaragua. Then, the new administration began to impose economic restrictions on various levels, along with plotting counterrevolution. By being one of the main lenders in international lending agencies, America also has a large amount of leverage to block aid from international sources. This, when considered along with strategies to make Nicaragua less attractive for American investors or lenders, decimated the amount of aid that the new government received in 1983. As will be later

discussed in Grenada, the Nicaraguan revolutionaries had inherited a country and economy that were practically destroyed. Not only was there a lot of international debt and little infrastructure, but the country was also physically damaged by the length of the war, and the military state that had existed previously, and various natural disasters. With no assistance, it would be nearly impossible to rebuild the economy (Kimmens 37-41, 1987). This would be a useful prevention of progress and a crippling matter to the Sandinistas, since part of the public appeal was an attempt to improve economic conditions.

In general, as discussed above under dependency, the U.S. appointed dual strategies to pressure governments suspected of communism. This consisted of economic pressure by reducing or not granting aid, and political pressure by assisting opposition forces within the country. At first, there were some attempts to sway the Sandinista government to policies and practices more fitting with American foreign policy. This began with various attempts to pressure the new government. One of the first strategies attempted was to use the surrounding governments to pressure the Sandinistas away from radical changes. The desire of the American government to create ties between Nicaragua and other governments, however, also decreased the practicality of the overt use of force. At first, the new revolutionary government in Nicaragua seemed to be moderate and have reasonable aims. In July 1979, shortly before gaining control of the country, promises were made to have the first free elections in the country. Problems arose for the U.S. when the government seemed to be moving in a leftist direction. Although originally a coalition of forces from various sectors of the society, including business people and the Catholic church, once in power there seemed

to be a change. A main issue was the possibility of support for the overthrow of the government in El Salvador, which led to the removal of American aid.

Reagan agreed with this decision made by Carter, and confirmed it in April of 1981. About a year later, Nicaragua announced a multi-million dollar agreement for aid with the Soviet Union. This show of obvious links to the U.S.S.R. altered relations between the U.S. and the Sandinista government. Although President Reagan had decided to support the contras in December of 1981, this solidified a necessity of undermining the current regime in Nicaragua. Coupled with receipt of armaments from communist countries, in part to send to revolutionaries in El Salvador, the new Nicaraguan government seemed very dangerous. Reasons for maintaining secrecy, however, were numerous. When an admission to assistance of rebel forces in order to pressure the government was made, Congress immediately passed an amendment disallowing the CIA and Defense Departments from engaging in activities to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Central America was an area where both the Congress and the public were paying attention to foreign policy, and for the most part, they were not in agreement with what took place. Some of this can be traced to the known human rights violations of several of the countries there (Shultz 1993:288-290; Morley 1994: 223).

Since priests in Nicaragua had spoken out that under Somoza, torture, rapes, and unnecessary killings were taking place, many were apt to view his deposal as a good thing for the populace. This made getting support for placing pressure on the new government of Nicaragua very difficult. Also, after the Vietnam War and Watergate, there was a decrease in trust for the executive, despite Reagan's efforts to recast both the

presidency and Vietnam. Since the United States had officially recognized the government of Nicaragua, they were restricted to covert subversion, but it was less than successful. Near the end of 1984, both economic pressures and continued support of counter-revolutionary elements had not changed anything (Kimmens 1987:60). Added to this, the Nicaraguan government did not accept pressure easily from America. In early 1983, they accused the U.S. of attempting to damage their economy and of working against the government. In 1984, the Nicaraguan government sought the International Court of Justice, and the ruling was that all attempts to damage or overthrow the government needed to stop (Kimmens 1987: 154-175). These continued actions on the part of the Nicaraguan government pretty effectively prevented any overt actions by the American government, as did the fact that sufficient instability was never really attained. In Grenada, it would seem that there was always a lack of full stability, and internal destabilization allowed for immediate military action.

### **Grenada Case:**

Similar to Somoza, Eric Gairy was involved in the politics of Grenada for decades. Although he had created a military state by the time he was ousted by the New Jewel Movement, his humble beginnings were populous, and in the name of labor reform. It seems ironic that his political beginnings were marked by the same riots and struggles for improvement that he put down two decades later.

In the 1950s, under colonial rule, Gairy was a labor organizer and led protests for workers' rights. In fact, in 1954, when he was elected governor of the island, the British

were concerned about his rise to power due to his riotous past. Despite these original misgivings, and a turbulent period when the government of Grenada was dissolved in 1962 on allegations by the British of misuse of money, he remained active in Grenadian politics. The election later that year went to Herbert Blaize and the national party. In 1967, Gairy became the leader of the country once again, and remained in control until the coup in 1979.

Table 2 – Grenada chronology

1951	Gairy begins to become a known figure and political leader – involved in a demonstration
March 1951	Gairy leads a week – long demonstration and is arrested
9/24/1954	
Gairy wins election	
6/18/1962	Grenadian Government is dissolved by the British; Gairy suspected of squandering money
9/13/1962	Gairy loses election and Herbert Blaize is elected Chief Minister
March 1966?	Grenada gets home rule and statehood
8/25/1967	Gairy wins election – Labor party back in power
1/9/1971	Unrest and demonstrations have been taking place for a while in Grenada
1973	Growth of NJM in opposition to Gairy
	NJM leaders assaulted
2/7/1974	Grenadian independence with Gairy as PM
3/13/1979	NJM overthrows Gairy
4/16/1979	Grenada and Cuba announce diplomatic relations
10/16/1979	Coard signs treaty to allow the landing of Soviet planes at new airport
6/21/1980	Attempted assassination of Bishop
1/1/1981	Bishop gives at speech to fellow Caribbean leaders and accuses the U.S. of attempted overthrow
8/26/1981	U.S. and NATO exercises seen as a practice for invasion by Bishop
2/6/1982	Reagan states a belief that Grenada has joined with the U.S.S.R., Cuba, and Nicaragua to plot Marxism in the Western hemisphere
7/26-	Bishop goes to Moscow and creates both political and

28/1982	economic agreements with the Soviet Union
10/1982	Bishop's leadership criticized and called weak; Coard resigns from Central Committee
11/1982	Other Caribbean Community members attempt to convince Grenada to hold free elections
3/13/1983	Bishop gives a speech condemning American foreign policy and increasing the verbal hostility between the countries
3/23/1983	Reagan gives a speech speaking about the impending danger of spreading communism in the hemisphere
5/31-6/9/1983	Bishop travels to Washington to meet with National Security Advisor and Dep. Secretary of State
8/26/1983	IMF approves \$14.1 loan for PRG
10/14/1983	Deputy Prime Minister Coard and General Hudson Austin place Prime Minister Maurice Bishop under house arrest
10/18/1983	Whiteman states that he and 3 others resign and that Coard is in sole charge of the gov't
10/19/1983	Hudson Austin reports the death of Bishop and 3 others in the cabinet; many supporters of Bishop are also murdered; implementation of "around-the-clock shoot-on-sight curfew"
10/21/1983	U.S. announces that 10 ships intended for Lebanon have been rerouted to Grenada
10/23/1983	OECS asks for U.S. help restoring order in Grenada
10/25/1983	U.S. and other Caribbean troops land in Grenada
12/3/1984	Herbert Blaize wins elections in Grenada as head of a coalition party

Starting in the early seventies, various sections and groups in Grenadian society began voicing complaints about the government and its use of power. Riots and turbulence began in 1971, and the country began to seem unsafe (Todd, 1971:23). Since these grievances were not dealt with in a satisfactory manner, the revolutionary ideas led ultimately, to a coup. The 1970s were a period of escalation of both revolutionary violence and of resistance and repression as the response from the government. This seems to follow the pattern in Central America described by Booth, wherein a lack of a



desired response from the state encourages rather than putting down revolutionaries. They feel ignored and marginalized, and rather than becoming afraid to attack again, the rebellious factions gather more followers and eventually revolt.

There are again similarities to the Somoza government as the rebellion began to grow. Although any political dissonance was blamed on the opposition party, it seemed that various sectors of the society, including a growing class of college – educated youth, workers, and nursing students were dissatisfied with the increasingly repressive nature of the government. The claimed grievances against the government included that the island was a police state, with a secret police force, said to have been composed of criminals (Johnson, 1971:12). Despite this, some felt that he attempted good leadership, an example of which being his visit to Venezuela in October of 1972. This meeting addressed various methods of agricultural growth, and economic expansion, culminating by creating a program that would lead to cooperation between the two countries(*New York Amsterdam News* Oct 28, 1972: D15). The opposition to Gairy's rule was growing and becoming more organized, however. As Booth discusses, the commonality of having grievances against the state and the fact that the issues had not been addressed, led to a consolidation of Gairy's detractors. In 1973, the New Jewel Movement was formed. This year was marked by riots, and the leaders of the Movement were alleged to have been beaten by the secret police. One of the main grievances against Gairy at this time was the push for full independence from the British (Lewis,1987:18, Heine, 1990:14) .

Independence was obtained on February 7, 1974, and had been negotiated in large part by Prime Minister Gairy. Since home rule and partial statehood had been

granted by Britain to the island in 1966, total independence seemed not to be a pressing need. Many of those opposed to the idea acknowledged that little would change, in respect to trade relations with Britain, and the social and political hierarchy within the island. Therefore, full independence seemed like a formality only, and there were better ways of directing this energy. No longer having a final check on decisions made was of primary concern to those who felt that Gairy's abuses would only grow without London's oversight. His decision not to consult the citizens of Grenada on this important decision, and to nearly unilaterally decide that it would be a good thing for the country was to many another example of how little Gairy acknowledged the people of Grenada (Heine, 1990: 12). It appeared to some that part of the motivation for independence was power, especially since it appeared that Gairy had a history of misusing power – the government was disbanded by London in 1961 because he was accused of appropriating public funds. Although many felt that independence was not harmful in itself, the way in which it was implemented led to greater concerns about the fitness of Gairy to rule. Even the celebrations for independence included rioting, as dissidents expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which it had been attained (New York Amsterdam News (1962-1993). New York, N.Y.: Jan 26, 1974. p. A1). In fact, as independence celebrations were underway, Maurice bishop was arrested, it seems mostly for his role in leading the opposition to Gairy's rule.

Both riots and political actions by the NJM increased throughout the seventies. In 1976, several candidates ran in the election, and they formed the majority of the opposition in the Parliament constructed after this election. Eventually, however, they did not feel that they were making sufficient headway through these means. On March

13, 1979, while Gairy was attending a United Nations meeting in New York, the NJM surrounded the army barracks and took over the country in a coup that was marked by its lack of bloodshed (Heine 1991:14, Shultz 1993:324).

The foreign policy pursued by the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG – formerly the NJM) gave America ample reason to believe that it was a possible threat as a communist stronghold. Not only did the PRG have a communist agenda and institution, it had ties to both the Soviet Union and Cuba (Morales 1994; Heine 1991). . . Almost immediately after seizing power, diplomatic relations with Cuba were declared on April 16, 1979 (Seabury & McDougall 1984:10). The New Jewel Movement (which became the PRG when it seized power) modeled itself on Marxist-Leninist views, and desired to improve Grenada's economic and social climate. The Gairy regime was both corrupt and oppressive, and Maurice Bishop sought to bring change to the island. A young intellectual who had studied in the United Kingdom, he was surrounded by like-minded fellow dissenters, who also wanted reform (Morales 1994; Heine 1991). They started off as protestors that Gairy did not want to listen to, and eventually decided that protesting alone was not enough. Since these protests and the desires of the public were not being taken seriously by the democratically-elected Gairy, they decided to take control of the island's government, and implement reforms intended to improve the country (Joefield Napier 1991:88-104).

The New Jewel Movement looked at the various problems of the society. It intended modifications in every sector, including health care, education, and decreasing unemployment. In the seventies, the Grenadian economy was very unstable, mostly due to structural failures. A lack of structures set up to improve tourism and agriculture, led

to instability in these areas, especially since agriculture can be so easily affected by weather and external pricing. In Latin America, modernization and moving away from mostly agricultural products is difficult at best. Because there is a demand for the exports of these countries (sugar, fruit, spices), there is little incentive for the U.S. to have them reduce the agricultural sector of their economy. (Joefield Napier 89-102, 1991).

A lack of internal cohesion in the leadership of the New Jewel Movement led to its eventual demise, as there were two factions, espousing different ideologies. On one hand, some members did hold communist, Leninist views, mostly in the faction led by Coard, which staged an internal coup and assassinated nearly half of the government. The faction led by Bishop, seemed to be more concerned with the needs of the island and the people, than with implementing strongly socialist policies. Opinions differ as to whether the movement was intentionally socialist, or whether this seemed to be the only escape route from capitalism that was not highly beneficial to them. Certainly it had strongly socialist ties, which, given the time period, would be concerning at best to Washington. Whether or not the PRC began socialist, it eventually made ties with various known socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union.

In July of 1982, an agreement was signed between the U.S.S.R. Grenada, discussing the transfer of arms, the training of Grenadian military in the Soviet Union, and of sending officials to Grenada. Based on the factors described above, this definitely shows linkage to the Soviet Union, and therefore, in the bipolar Cold War world, makes Grenada a threat. The possibility of a Soviet post does not seem far-fetched, despite the paranoia of the times, as this shows that there was a multi-level agreement between

Grenada and the U.S.S.R. This is furthered by the fact that the Soviet Union was willing to absorb a substantial amount of the costs incurred, including the travel, training, and living expenses for Grenadian military personnel in the U.S.S.R.

Grenada was also shown to be forming alliances with various other communist countries, including the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and Castro in Cuba. These links, along with the presence of advisors and armed forces from other communist countries, help to justify American fears not only of revolutions, but that this case, specifically, was of a communist nature. Throughout the rule of the PRG, Grenada faced pressure and disapproval from other Caribbean nations. Many were shocked at what was the first coup in the English-speaking Caribbean, and also felt that free elections should be held. Even at the end, just prior to the invasion, other Caribbean states sought American assistance in restoring order. This is a marked difference from Nicaragua, which had stronger ties to other neighboring countries, and also a more stable government. Also, immediate ties to communism left no doubt about the future of the regime. Unlike the Sandinistas, who began with a desire for democracy and therefore were treated with hopeful skepticism, Grenada's immediate ties with Cuba left no room for such niceties. Instead the U.S. government intermittently ignored and accused the PRG of spreading communism in the region (Pastor 1991: 200). Beginning in 1982, however, the Reagan administration clearly denounced Grenada as a leftist and destructive influence in the region.

In the beginning of 1983, relations continued to be verbally hostile. Other regional governments disapproved of the methods, saying that the Reagan administration was too extreme. The lack of democracy in Grenada was a concern,

however, especially since the PRG ignored suggestions from other regional governments to hold elections. The failure to do this, and the impounding of those deemed dangerous to the government, all served to distance Grenada from other nations of the English-speaking Caribbean. The internal struggles within the party – some felt Bishop was too soft, others were pressuring him to release political prisoners and normalize relations with the U.S., eventually gave the Reagan administration the chance it required. The trip made by Bishop to the U.S. in June did not seem to change relations much. Instead, they remained strained, and relations within Grenada seemed to worsen. By October of 1983, the PRG seemed to be splitting apart due to in-fighting, as Bishop was placed under house arrest, and then Coard, who had resigned only days earlier, was declared to be in sole charge of the government. The situation immediately worsened, and gave the U.S. a window of opportunity for military intervention.

The October 19, 1983 assassination of Bishop, other members of his cabinet, and various supporters among the people, left Grenada in a chaotic state. With the implementation of the “around-the-clock shoot-on-sight curfew (Shultz 1993:325)”, concern for the medical students was justifiable. This presented an opportunity for the removal of a dangerous regime, which was becoming increasingly leftist and violent. At the same time, fellow Caribbean nations, feeling that the situation in Grenada was out of control, asked for American assistance in restoring order (Shultz 1993: 346; Seabury & McDougall 1984:11-12). On October 23, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States petitioned Washington for this assistance, and on October 25, it was granted. The general unpopularity of Coard, contrasted with the high public opinion of Bishop, made the reaction of the island’s citizens to the invasion more favorable. Since elections were

restored and democracy renewed in 1984 victory of Herbert Blaize as a coalition candidate, it could be justified that the American military involvement actually did assist in returning it to the island (New York Times (1923-Current file). Dec 4, 1984. p. A14).

### **Conclusions:**

Given the Cold War mentality of paranoia and the fear that the Soviet Union was looking for a base in the Western Hemisphere, intervention of some sort from America was to be expected. Latin American revolutions were a cause of destabilization within a region a region that America had long felt a need to protect. Instability was seen as dangerous, since it could lead to a power vacuum. Also, especially during the Reagan administration, revolutions and upheavals within the region were believed to have Soviet and Cuban backing. In the cases studied here, the revolutionaries certainly did have ties to both countries, so this may not have been that much of a stretch. Allowing communism in Latin America was opposed to U.S. national security goals. Containment required both prevention of the spread of communism, and securing areas that were of geopolitical interest. Communist revolutions in Latin America were therefore on both counts an issue that needed to be resolved. Thus these governments had to either be dissuaded from their less than capitalistic paths, or else deposed. Communist revolutions were also seen as being dangerous for the countries involved, as mentioned above by Kirkpatrick. The changes brought about would still come with abuses of power, and will reduce the comfortable familiarities that stood under dictators that were part of the previous system.

The atmosphere after both Vietnam and Watergate was to both curb the executive branch and for Congress to take a more active role in foreign policy. During the eighties, covert intervention was very prevalent in Central America because of the heavy scrutiny, both on the executive and the region. It was generally a pattern in the region due to the close political and economic ties that America historically had with the area. In order for the other countries not to feel threatened or that the United States was taking too strong of a position, overt action had to be limited. Maintaining governments that were not hostile to American safety, however, was also important. As Kirkpatrick described above, dictators who were part of the culture were felt to be less harmful, even to those they governed. Seen as being less repressive and stringent than communists, they were also credited with being more stable. Since the majority of communist governments had come about due to revolutions, they often took some time to become stabilized. The fact that a revolution had taken place however, seems to show that the previous government had at least become destabilized.

These factors led to a regional pattern of either supporting autocrats, like Somoza, or of using covert means to remove communist revolutionary governments. It would seem that a few key differences and opportunities led to the use of force in Grenada, although the regional pattern, which was displayed in Nicaragua, was covert action and subversion. Although both countries showed links to the Soviet Union and Cuba, Grenada had continually been more overt in anti-American rhetoric, whereas the Nicaraguan government mostly made accusations and not just inflammatory statements. In Grenada, it was more difficult to initiate covert operations, partly because of the small size of the island and partly because most possible oppositions to the



government had previously been arrested (Pastor 1991:208). Therefore, America had limited methods of either affecting a change to a more central ideology, or of assisting pressures on the government without direct military action. Although this may have been the only viable solution, certainly various situations made it more likely, including the second coup. The mostly young, college-educated PRG seemed to be heavily influenced by Marxism-Leninism, and neglected any original show of maintaining relations with America. Instead, these relations were strained from the start, as relations with Cuba were declared only days after the government came to power. Also, Grenada had much weaker ties to its fellow Caribbean countries after the revolution. Many felt that elections needed to be held and did not approve of the revolution. Also, the PRG did not strengthen many of these ties during its reign, reaching out instead to other communist and revolutionary governments, to which it felt more connected. The lack of attempts at diplomatic relations with America gave the government less legitimacy.

This made Grenada seem more likely to become a Soviet base in the West. There were other signs of this possibility, including the building of and an international airport, and the strong ties to Cuba. Both Cuban military advisors and personnel were present in Grenada. The strength of Soviet influence increased drastically as Bishop was overthrown. The faction led by Coard was even more strongly influenced by the Soviet Union and Marxism-Leninism. This meant that covert pressure were even less likely to be successful in swaying the government, although Coard's lack of popularity could have provided the basis for yet another revolt. The paranoia that had caused political opponents of the PRG to be incarcerated, however, had increased, and the fact that the entire island was under lockdown seemed to show this.

In Nicaragua, there were several reasons why overt intervention would not have been viable. As a start, before gaining power, the Sandinistas promised elections, and the revolutionary forces included people from many different socio-economic backgrounds. The government was recognized by the U.S. and had close ties with many other countries in the region. Central America in particular was being closely scrutinized by Congress – the arms and money given to the Contras were done so without congressional approval and against Congressional order. Actual invasion would not only have been unconstitutional if ordered by Reagan, but would have damaged American relations with the rest of Latin America as well. Also, a conflict in Nicaragua was likely to be long and reminiscent of Vietnam – prior to the overthrow of Somoza, the Sandinistas had been a long – struggling guerrilla force. Along with this, the government and internal situation of Nicaragua were far more stable than in Grenada. Both had economic issues which led to the revolutions, but the second coup in Grenada created massive destabilization, and divorced the government from the people.

Overall, the factors came together in such a fashion that October 1983 was a perfect time for military action in Grenada that would have very few repercussions. The island was heavily destabilized, had lost all support of its nearest neighbors, and did not have a very large fighting force. There were also plausible reasons for an American invasion (the students of the medical school). There was not a strong army, meaning that the action would be over quickly, and there was a real emergency. This would decrease internal repercussions from Congress and the public, and the dissatisfaction of the people of Grenada with the events leading up to the invasion, as well as the disapproval of the other islands of the PRG would decrease external consequences.

In contrast, the government of Nicaragua was backed by a large fighting force, which had fought more than a year to simply overthrow the Somoza regime. This meant that both the public and the Congress would see involvement here as similar to Vietnam, and at best a civil war in which Americans had no place. Since the Congress did not approve of covert action against the Sandinista government, it is highly unlikely that they would have approved an over military presence. A large part of the foreign policy of the Reagan administration was reaction to Vietnam, a sure win in Grenada was infinitely preferable to an interminable struggle in Nicaragua. With the war lasting only a few days in Grenada, and the crisis situation that prevailed in the island, it could well be seen as assisting democracy and preventing communism from taking root. Since elections followed within months and there was a return to democratic governmental change, it would be difficult to argue that this was not at least an outcome, even if not the only goal. Not only did Nicaragua never become sufficiently destabilized, but it also managed to get a ruling against the U.S. to stop actions to destabilize it in the International Court of Justice. This government was not going to be easily overthrown, and if an attempt was made, American credibility would be damaged, when a large goal of the administration was to improve this and show that communism would not be allowed in the American sphere.

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