



Ingvild Killi Brattestad

Master's thesis

NTNU  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Historical Studies

Ingvild Killi Brattestad

## "This bloody place Guatemala"

*The British approach to the coup d'état in  
Guatemala in 1954*

Master's thesis in History - Five-year Teacher Training Program

Trondheim, June 2015

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Quote in title: Winston Churchill to Pierson Dixon and Anthony Eden, June 28, 1954, in Moran, Charles McMoran Wilson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron: *Winston Churchill: Struggle for Survival 1940-1955 Taken from the diaries of Lord Moran*, (London: Constable & Company Limited: 1966)

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis marks the end of my time as a student at NTNU, and my time in Trondheim. I feel the way I am supposed to feel; ready to move on, but thankful for what these last five years have given me. Student life has not only offered knowledge, but friendships and memories that I will forever keep with me. My friends here in Trondheim have made these years memorable and for this you have my heartfelt gratitude.

I started this project with a vague idea that I wanted to learn more about the history of a country that I have a dear relation to, namely Guatemala. That, mixed with the fascination for the intricacies of the Cold War period, resulted in the choice of topic for this thesis. After a trip to Tore T. Petersen's office he agreed to be my supervisor, and the idea to explore this topic from a British perspective is his. Tore, I am appreciative of your valuable advice, encouragement, and solution oriented attitude, which I found uplifting..

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Lastly, a thank you is in order to my parents, Torill and Rune, for having faith in me, not just this last year, but always. I have been raised up with the aphorism: "Do your best and that will always be good enough". One listens to one's parents; I always have.

Trondheim

Spring, 2015



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# 1. Introduction

He was not making any threat but thought that we and the French should know the president's views. These were that we were entitled as independent powers to advocate the despatch of United Nations observers to the region of Guatemala. But if we took an independent line in an area vital to the United States, they would feel entitled to take an independent line in areas vital to Great Britain such as Egypt, or to the French such as Tunisia.

American delegate to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, to the British and French delegates on 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1954 preceding a vote in the UN Security Council.<sup>1</sup>

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1954, the UN received a formal complaint from the Guatemalan Minister of External Affairs, Guillermo Toriello, stating that foreign powers were undertaking a military invasion in their territory.<sup>2</sup> The US, under the Eisenhower administration, had planned to support a military invasion by Carlos Castillo Armas, with the purpose of ousting the democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. The invasion was successful and the more American-friendly Castillo Armas took power. What followed was decades of dictatorships and a 36-year long civil war that finally ended in 1996. The coup had not been possible had it not been for the support of the US. The US received no sanctions from the UN or from any other organizations, despite the fact that the case ended up in discussion in the UN Security Council.

The UN Security Council process became a political dilemma for Great Britain. The Eisenhower administration expected full support in the Council from their European ally. The Churchill government had a diplomatic goal of maintaining and strengthening the "special" Anglo-American relationship. Great Britain was forced to balance the value of the "special relationship" with the damaging consequences of supporting the US in their efforts to hide their involvement.

My thesis questions are: *What concerns guided the British actions in their approach to the complaint put forward by Guatemala in the UN Security Council? Why was Guatemala an affordable loss to British Foreign policy?*

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<sup>1</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/19.

<sup>2</sup> Cablegram from Guillermo Toriello to President of UN Security Council, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/24.

## 1.1. Theoretical demarcation

This thesis was formulated through a desire to write about a topic related to Latin America during the Cold War period. I also wanted it to fit within the branch of history known as diplomatic history. Thus I arrived at a thesis that explores the coup d'état in Guatemala in 1954 that focuses on the British perspective while taking into account the international dynamics at play. I will not go into great depth on the act of the coup itself nor will I explore the American interests in Guatemala given that it is quite extensively covered in literature. I will, however, discuss why the coup was important from the Americans' perspective as part of the historical context. Here I will note that the historical context chapter will show that the Arbenz Government was not communist, even though at the time in 1954, it was treated as such. The Arbenz government will occasionally be named as such in this thesis as well. My main analysis will investigate the British reactions to the coup d'état. I devote most of the discussion to the processes in the UN Security Council around the Guatemalan complaint. I believe this angle allows me to highlight how British management of the coup in Guatemala intertwined with their policies and interests elsewhere. This is also an analysis of the nature of the Anglo- American relationship to the extent of this case, because that relationship played a decisive role in the British approach to the coup,

The background chapter will create context for the reader leading up to the coup while the empirical analysis is set within the months' surrounding the coup itself. The attention of this thesis is on the events between the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1954, when Guatemala submitted their complaint to the UN Security Council, and August of that same year. The 13<sup>th</sup> of August the draft of the report of the Security Council process was delivered for review. It was the only document that was given to the members of the General Assembly. The decision to not object to the misleading content of that report marks the end of this thesis. This period is especially relevant as there is nothing in the material that I have studied to suggest that the government of Great Britain suspected the potential for a coup and were only informed once the Security Council received the Guatemala complaint.

During the invasion of Guatemala, the British ship, "Springford", was bombed and sunk by a plane flown by a CIA pilot. It was mistaken for an Eastern European ship.<sup>3</sup> Although this incident happened within the time frame I have researched and belongs in the sphere of the

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<sup>3</sup> Piero Gleijeses. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1991), p. 340.

Anglo-American relationship, it will not take up place in this thesis. Even though it happened in this period of time, the sources reveal that either the British Government did not know that the ship was sunk by the CIA, nor has this been treated in any correspondence that I have encountered. In the sources I have reviewed, compensation for the “Springford” incident has strictly been treated as a Guatemalan responsibility.

## **1.2.Sources and methodology**

The sources I had at my disposal are predominantly primary sources that I have gathered from the British National Archives at Kew in London. Most of them were contained in Foreign Office folder 371. I have also regarded the personal memoirs of Anthony Eden and Lord Charles McMoran Wilson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Moran’s memoirs about Winston Churchill, as well as the diary of John Colville.

During my time in the Kew archives, I worked with a semi-structured plan where I decided to focus on documents related to the Foreign Office. Because of the vastness of material, I soon realized that I would have to narrow the timespan covered in my research. Thus I mainly focused on documents dated from May 1954 to August 1954. As I read documents, I discovered that a great deal of folders amongst the Foreign Office documents concerned the Guatemalan case in the Security Council in the UN. These folders gave me a lot of insight into the greater issues that Great Britain had to consider and that the handling of the Guatemalan case could create complications in other areas of British politics. I decided to prioritize my research on the UN Security Council and focused on collecting information from these folders. Although I started out in Kew with a semi-structured plan, the primary sources I ended up discovering have been quintessential to the development of this thesis.

Nevertheless, the primary sources I looked into at National Archives tell a clear story. The challenge has been to find a new approach, as most of these sources have been open, available, and scrutinized since the mid-1980s.

When it became evident that the US had a great deal of influence on the decision making process of the British Foreign Office, I saw it as necessary to supplement my research with “Foreign Relations of the United States”, also known as FRUS. When using FRUS sources one needs to be conscious that these are printed sources that represent a selection. I am making use of only a small portion of the sources available in FRUS, notably the ones

recounting the Washington talks. But, because I have made use of these sources to recount the appearance of one single case at these meetings, I see FRUS as sufficient.

Sources that tell of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden's involvement in the case proved to be scarce. Neither the PREM series, nor the CAB series in National Archives offered any insight. Because of this the discussions in the chapters "Diplomacy in the UN" and "Four major concerns, but on above all others" will show assessments made in the Foreign Office, and correspondence with the UK delegation to the UN. Sources recounting their involvement in the case can however be found in their memoirs and in FRUS accounts of the Washington talks June 1954. These Memoirs offer very good insight into Churchill's and Eden's attitudes towards the Guatemalan case, and I have used these effectively in discussion in chapter five.

### **1.3. Findings**

My first finding is that a coup in a country as small and remote as Guatemala had surprisingly far-reaching political repercussions for Great Britain. Thus, my overarching discovery is that this conflict offers a prime example in how the post-war dynamics were more intertwined in the global community than ever before.

My second finding is that Anglo-American relations were overwhelmingly important to Great Britain in this case. As a result, the Churchill government sacrificed all of their principles to maintain a healthy relationship to the US.

My third finding incorporates perspectives on the workings of the UN. Global situations muddled the UN mandate and compromised its ability to be a fair and neutral peacekeeping organization, which ultimately sabotaged any possible intervention in Guatemala. In relation to the UN, I have found that misunderstandings arose between Great Britain and the US because they held different policies for handling the relationship of the UN and regional organizations.

My fourth finding is that even though Anglo-American relations were the most important concern for Great Britain, three other important areas of considerations can be singled out for guiding the British reactions to the coup d'état in Guatemala. They were: British aspirations for the UN, the public opinion and opposition in Great Britain and the creation of (dangerous) precedents for the future. British political principles in these areas were sacrificed for Anglo-

American relations.

My fifth finding is that a coup d'état in Guatemala seen in a broader view was not that important to the British. There were an impressive amount of complex cases Dwight D. Eisenhower and Winston Churchill had to resolve within the alliance between their states and in the international political landscape. The replacement of the Arbenz government via a coup d'état was not a critical case for Great Britain, as the special Anglo-American relationship took precedence.

#### **1.4. Historiography**

The literature providing the background for this thesis is extensive, yet narrow in focus. There exists literature covering the events themselves in Guatemala, and the American motives for such actions. The field of Anglo-American relations is a vast field in historic literature. This thesis thematically touches on both of these fields. The literature covering the British reactions to the coup d'état in Guatemala, however, is very limited, which this section will show.

This section is organized into three thematic subdivisions. One section will discuss the literature on the coup d'état in a British perspective. The second section will discuss the literature regarding the coup d'état itself and the American interests in it. The third section will present literature centered on general Anglo-American relations in the 1950s and will also show that the case of Guatemala rarely has been taken into account by other historians in this aspect. I will show how my own work corresponds to the already existing literature.

##### **1.4.1. British relations to the coup d'état**

There have been written two articles on this subject prior to my own contribution. One is by John W. Young, and the other by Sharon Meers.

Young's article about the British reactions to the coup d'état was published in 1986. He recounts the back story, the arms sales incident, as well as the proceedings in the UN. The sources he used were opened to the public in 1985 and for this reason his article filled a gap and is thus an important contribution. Even though I agree with the general account that Young presents, there are some differences in our views. Young argues that the British

arguments mattered to the US in this case.<sup>4</sup> I find this argument a little weak, as an abundance of sources show that the US were rather impatient with Great Britain. In comparison to Young's article, my thesis differs in that I explore the UN angle more intensely than he does. Young does not discuss the importance of Guatemala to Great Britain. I still believe that this is an important factor in explaining the British actions in this case, and hence I have discussed it more thoroughly.

Meers' article is about the role of the Anglo-American relationship in the case of the Guatemalan coup d'état and goes into greater detail than Young. She has benefitted from both American and British sources, and she takes into account British interests dating further back than I do. My research has largely confirmed Meers' findings, but I do not agree with her deduction that British knowledge of US complicity in the coup made FO "more ambivalent about backing Washington."<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, my research has shown that that knowledge made the FO more ready to tolerate American strategy in the UN, as it gave them a greater understanding of the precarious nature of the case for the Americans.

There is a quote used by both Young and Meers which reads that Britain "should face up to a genuine 'difference' with the US and vote, if necessary, against them." This is misleading, as the quote has an addition "But Guatemala is not the only pebble on the beach. We are about to solicit American help in resisting Greek attempts to ventilate Cyprus at the next Assembly." When this last sentence is added, the meaning is quite different. In my understanding this is important, as this quote in its entirety sums up the heart of the matter from a British perspective.

My contribution to the research is a new angle. I have found the UN to be an important factor in the discussions between Great Britain and the UN. The Guatemala case was a test to the Anglo-American relationship because of their differing views on the global role of the UN. This has not been as deeply explored in the articles by Young and Meers, as in my own work.

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<sup>4</sup> Young, "Great Britain's Latin American Dilemma: The Foreign Office and the Overthrow of 'Communist' Guatemala, June 1954" *The International History Review* Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 1986) accessed March 2015 at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105665>, p.590.

<sup>5</sup> Meers, "The British Connection: how the United States covered it's tracks in the 1954 coup in Guatemala", p. 419.

### 1.4.2. The American interests in the coup d'état

The major publications that concern themselves with the coup itself, and the American role in it, follow different approaches. Richard Immerman has written the most cited work on the field, along with Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer.<sup>6</sup> Their works are both explanations of why the coup d'état in Guatemala was deemed necessary by the American State department and also an account of the chain of events during the coup d'état.<sup>7</sup> Piero Gleijeses' account is quite similar, but through the use of Guatemalan sources and interviews, it is more detailed than Immerman's work, especially in the analysis of Guatemalan politics.<sup>8</sup> Nick Cullather's contribution is narrower in scope and with a different approach. His work is based on primary documents from the CIA, and is in that way similar to a work of printed primary sources, although not free from analysis. It is a rare piece of work as it allows for intimate details of the CIA operations PBFORTUNE and PBSUCCESS.<sup>9</sup> LaFeber has analyzed the American presence in Central America and given an account of the revolutions in the area since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

All of these works offer much the same explanation as to why the coup d'état occurred. They see both the United Fruit Company's involvement and the US fear of Soviet infiltration and control in Guatemala as factors. They differ, however, in which of these two factors have the most importance. LaFeber places the coup d'état in Guatemala in a long tradition for American economic hegemony in Central America. He argues that the loss of land under the agrarian reform threatened the power balance that was favorable to the US.<sup>10</sup> Because of this angle, which places the Guatemalan coup d'état in a much grander system of economic dependency, LaFeber sees the economic factor as more independent than other historians. For instance, he does not agree that the arms sale episode was of much importance to the US in comparison to these traditions.<sup>11</sup> Immerman, Gleijeses and Cullather all argue the United Fruit Company's involvement was via heavy lobbying and spreading communist fear, which then lead to the decision to intervene militarily. There is general agreement that Arbenz was a nationalist reformist, but that the antagonism against the UFCO, and the unwillingness to bow

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, expanded edition, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1999)

<sup>7</sup> Richard Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press: 1982).

<sup>8</sup> Gleijeses. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*.

<sup>9</sup> Nick Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Walter LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (New York: W.W. Norton 1993), p. 121-122.

<sup>11</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p.121.

to American interests was received in Washington as communist tendencies, and hence posed a threat to national security.

All of the literature above touches upon the processes in the UN in relation to the Guatemalan complaint. Their analyses, however, focus on the internal politics of Guatemala prior to the coup and the American motivation to intervene in the form of a covert military operation. These accounts have been written based on American sources and they offer no insight into the British mindset or reactions to the coup. In the context of my thesis, their accounts therefore appear quite superficial and incomplete.

### **1.4.3. The Anglo-American relationship in the 1950s**

The literature analyzing the Anglo-American relationship in the 1950s is vast, but even so, the coup d'état in Guatemala in 1954 is rarely present in these accounts. In certain works one will encounter a sentence or two, but in most there is no mention of the matter. There is little controversy in the literature as to the overall state of the Anglo-American relationship.

British foreign policy in the Winston Churchill peacetime government was turbulent. Churchill started his second period as prime minister with a goal to restore positive Anglo-American relations.<sup>12</sup> Anthony Adamthwaite argues that it was a planned strategy to diminish the British holdings in the world, and base a more restricted existence on the Anglo-American relationship.<sup>13</sup> Peter Boyle agrees with Adamthwaite's assessment of Churchill's Foreign Policy priorities. He concedes that to Churchill the Anglo-American relationship was top priority.<sup>14</sup>

D. Cameron Watt has pointed out that in the 1950s, "American hegemony was asserted in a manner which made it open for all to see."<sup>15</sup> He depicts a relationship characterized by misunderstandings and ill will. Watt argues that the blame for the bad relationship can be put on the Eisenhower administration, as they were unable to give Great Britain the support they needed through the 1950s. Watt ascribes great importance to leading personalities.<sup>16</sup> C.J.

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Boyle. "The "Special Relationship" with Washington" in *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-1955* ed. John W. Young (Leicester: Leicester University Press: 1988), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Adamthwaite. "Introduction: The Foreign Office and Policy-making" in *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-1955* ed. John W. Young (Leicester: Leicester University Press), p. 8,10.

<sup>14</sup> Boyle. "The "Special Relationship" with Washington", p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> D. Cameron Watt quoted in Saul Kelly. "A very considerable and unsung success: Sir Roger Makins' Washington Embassy, 1953-56" in *Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Relations* ed. Jonathan Hollowell (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Publishers Ltd.: 2001), p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> D. Cameron Watt. "Demythologizing the Eisenhower era" in *The "Special relationship" Anglo American relations since 1945* ed. Wm Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (Oxford: Oxford University press: 1986), p. 65-85.

Bartlett is another historian that gives the relationship between Anthony Eden and John Foster Dulles and Winston Churchill and Dwight D. Eisenhower importance for the relationship. In his opinion there existed insecurities in London because of the more aggressive approach of the new Republican administration.<sup>17</sup> Saul Kelly supports the assessment of a disparate relationship. The Anglo-American relationship “had its’ regular ups and downs” in the 1950’s, but that the solutions at the Washington meeting “removed obstacles in the way for better Anglo-American relations”.<sup>18</sup> Kelly points out that the relations could have been much worse had it not been for Roger Makins,<sup>19</sup> who was a clear Atlanticist and also enjoyed good personal relations with the Eisenhower administration.<sup>20</sup>

Daniel Williamson’s four case studies on the Anglo American alliance argue that the Anglo-American relationship changed from conflict to conflict. The relationship was, in Williamson’s interpretation, only good when the national interests of the two states overlapped. Although he claims that Great Britain, before Suez, was still a power that was able to pursue individual goals and defending her interests. David Reynolds agrees with Williamsons assessment that even though Britain’s dependence on the US was evident in the early 1950’s, it did “not preclude an independent line and, given the differences between London and Washington, what were deemed to be British interests could often only be protected by British actions.”<sup>21</sup>

All of the interpretations discuss the relationship in light of the most contentious conflicts, such as: European security, the war in Korea, the dispute in Indochina, The Middle East, and East-West tension. Guatemala is not discussed in any of the literature. My thesis will make a contribution to this field by showing the diplomacy behind the Anglo-American relationship in this particular matter. My findings fit well with the interpretations of a fluctuating alliance that worked well only when national interests overlapped. My thesis will also support the interpretation of Great Britain as dependent on the “special relationship”. In this particular case, Great Britain appears as the subordinate partner.

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher J. Bartlett. «*The Special Relationship*”: *A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited:1992), p. 59-62.

<sup>18</sup> Kelly. “A very considerable and unsung success: Sir Roger Makins’ Washington Embassy, 1953-56”, p. 132.

<sup>19</sup> Roger Makins was British Ambassador to Washington from 1953 to 1956.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly. “A very considerable and unsung success: Sir Roger Makins’ Washington Embassy, 1953-56”, p. 124-127.

<sup>21</sup> David Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) (London: Longman: 2000), p. 168.

## 1.5. Didactic relevance

The experience and methodological work involved in creating this thesis from primary sources is relevant in teaching students the principles behind the craft of being a historian. These skills are part of the curricula for history on the High School level. The topics explored in this thesis will also have relevance to my profession as a teacher in accordance to the following points in the Norwegian subject curricula for History:

For history in social sciences in 8<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> grade “Discuss causes for and effects from central international conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century”<sup>22</sup> will be relevant, as this thesis explores the effects of the bipolarity that existed globally during the Cold War because of the hostility between the US and the Soviet Union. The conflict at the core of this thesis is the coup d’état in Guatemala that was supported heavily by the US because of the American fear for Communism. It is therefore relevant to the following point in the subject curricula for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade High School: “Evaluate the importance of different ideologies to people, political movements and State development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>23</sup> Likewise it has relevance to another point that states that:” Find examples on events that have shaped the history of a non-European country post 1900, and reflect on how this country may have developed if these events had never occurred.”<sup>24</sup> A third point in the subject curricula for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade High School is to “Explore two or more international conflicts post 1945, and evaluate the conflicts seen from different perspectives.”<sup>25</sup> This thesis offers a prime example of just that in showing that Great Britain and the US looked at the coup d’état in Guatemala from different perspectives.

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<sup>22</sup> My translation: “Læreplan i Samfunnsfag”, Udir, accessed 10.05.2015

<http://www.udir.no/kl06/SAF1-03/Kompetansemaal/?arst=98844765&kmsn=583858936>.

<sup>23</sup> My translation: “Læreplan for historie – Fellesfag i studieforberegende utdanningsprogram”, Udir, accessed 10.05.2015 <http://www.udir.no/kl06/HIS1-02/Kompetansemaal/?arst=1858830314&kmsn=2002656462>.

<sup>24</sup> My translation: “Læreplan for historie – Fellesfag i studieforberegende utdanningsprogram”.

<sup>25</sup> My translation: “Læreplan for historie – Fellesfag i studieforberegende utdanningsprogram”.

## **2. Historical context**

To understand any conflict, one must know the context in which the conflict occurred. In this case, there are three different discussions that I feel are important to examine. One is the overarching international perspective, where I will explain the situation in the context of global politics. Another perspective will cover the prelude to the coup d'état in Guatemala, including an outline of the American motivation for carrying through with the coup. I am writing this thesis from a British view, and where the British politics intertwine with the coup d'état in Guatemala is through the Anglo-American alliance and the work in the UN Security Council. For this reason it is also necessary in this part of the thesis to touch on the status quo of the Anglo-American relations in the post war period.

### **2.1. In the lens of the Cold War**

The coup d'état cannot be analyzed without taking into account that it happened during the Cold War. The post-war world was more interconnected than ever before, but the reality was that it was not homogenous. It was still fractured by different Nation states, religions and systems of value in competing spheres of influence. The Second World War had rattled the international community and there was a desire to prevent another major world crisis. The United Nations was established as a body that was meant to make communication between states easier and to encourage cooperative solutions in order to maintain global peace and security. The UN General Assembly consisted of all the member states, while the UN Security Council consisted of five permanent states, and ten rotating states. The permanent states of Great Britain, France, China, the Soviet Union and the United States of America all held the right to veto decisions. <sup>26</sup>

The dominant competing political ideologies of the world post 1945 changed the international political landscape. World War II had been devastating to most countries, and the balance of power that previously existed shifted. The balance of power had included great Western European states, but these traditionally strong powers had suffered great economic and human losses. The United States had on the other hand, benefitted enormously from the war, and emerged as an economic superpower with vast resources. The Soviet Union had suffered great losses during the war, but the incredible magnitude of its resources allowed it to become the

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<sup>26</sup>R. R. Palmer, Joel Colton and Lloyd Kramer. *A History of the Modern World* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.) (New York: McGraw Hill Education: 2007), p. 867

other competing superpower in a bipolarized world.<sup>27</sup> The danger of this situation was that each of the two powers had one enemy: each other. Their conflicts of diplomatic, geopolitical and ideological character rapidly intensified and expanded to affect and entangle the rest of the world.<sup>28</sup> The US developed a specific strategy which resulted in a national document drawn up by the US State department policy planning staff in 1950, referred to as NSC-68. The policy assumed that the Soviet Union would expand into any power vacuum that emerged, and that it was necessary to exercise both patience and counter pressures, until Soviet society transformed. NSC-68 stated that the Soviet vision was completely incompatible with the American one and an informed decision to involve itself in world matters to promote "the rapid building up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world" was made as an attempt to contain the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> As the tension and mutual suspicions grew, covert activity and operations increased.<sup>30</sup>

## **2.2. A "special relationship"**

In this new global system, the US primary ally was Great Britain. The "special relationship" between Great Britain and the United States of America has been an entity since 1940. Since 1941, it was considered the safety net of Britain.<sup>31</sup> World War II left Great Britain in economic shambles. Great Britain was a damaged power overshadowed by two superpowers. One of which was her ally; namely the United States of America. In 1949, the US became party to the North Atlantic Treaty as a response to the security crisis in Europe. Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary in the post-war Labour government had promoted the idea of binding the US as close to Europe as possible as part of British Foreign Policy. The British were concerned about European security and wanted to avoid the US retreating herself to isolationism once again. US economic aid was also essential for the rebuilding of both Great Britain and Europe in general. Great Britain saw the US involvement as a relief of responsibilities, and a way to keep their position in the world.<sup>32</sup> In 1952 Eden saw three factors as deciding for British foreign policy. Those were: old responsibilities (i.e. colonies), their inability to self-sustain their own economy, and a world security system.<sup>33</sup> The US played an important role in

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<sup>27</sup>Palmer, Colton and Kramer. *A History of the Modern World*, p. 869.

<sup>28</sup>Palmer, Colton and Kramer. *A History of the Modern World*, p. 869.

<sup>29</sup> "Milestones: 1945-1952: NSC-68, 1950", United State Department: Office of the Historian, accessed April 24, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68>.

<sup>30</sup>Palmer, Colton and Kramer. *A History of the Modern World*, p. 871-872.

<sup>31</sup> Adamthwaite. "Introduction: The Foreign Office and Policy-making", p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, p.164-167.

<sup>33</sup> Adamthwaite. "Introduction: The Foreign Office and Policy-making", p. 8.

influencing these factors. After assuming a reduced role in the post war world, Britain sought to cut her losses by using the Anglo-American relationship as a proxy power.<sup>34</sup>

The US responsibilities for the free world increased as the Cold War conflict grew. While the US was relieving Great Britain of her former responsibilities, national interests did not always coincide. While their long term visions of preserving the peace and protecting the free world were the same, they also experienced differences. Eden remarked that the Americans “listen to what we have to say, but make (on most issues) their own decisions. Till we can recover our financial and economic independence, this is bound to continue.”<sup>35</sup> For Britain to utilize a super power like the US to pursue their own interests proved to be a challenge.

Differences of fundamental character arose between the alliance partners. How serious to take the communist threat was one aspect in which they differed. The Americans were in favor of a much tougher policy towards communism than Great Britain. While Great Britain believed in “co-existence” with the Communist powers, the US strongly believed in the lines drawn up in the NSC-68. Churchill in particular believed that summits after the death of Stalin could ease East-West tensions. Because of this, Great Britain was also more in favor of an open policy towards communist China, than the US.<sup>36</sup> What approach to take in the war in Korea proved to be another matter of opinion.<sup>37</sup> The bases in Egypt were a recurring discussion<sup>38</sup>, as well as what stance to take in Indochina.<sup>39</sup> Adding to that, there were disagreements over nuclear weaponry. The US were reluctant to share their secrets but still had their main European military base on the British Isles. It made Britain an easy target if war was to break out with the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup>

The severity of differences varied. There were also good reasons from the American point of view to not destroy the Anglo-American relationship. As powerful as the US was, she still needed allies to contain communism. There were three factors that made Britain a good ally. Great Britain was, even if impaired by the war, still the most powerful State in Western

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<sup>34</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Eden Quoted in David Dutton. “Anthony Eden” in *The Makers of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt to Thatcher* ed. Thomas G. Otte (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan: 2002), p. 232.

<sup>36</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, p. 172.

<sup>37</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Dobson. *Anglo-American relations in the Twentieth Century: Of friendship, conflict and the rise and decline of superpowers*, p. 116-117.

<sup>39</sup> Bartlett. «*The Special Relationship*”: *A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, p. 63-64.

<sup>40</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, p. 170.

Europe. Great Britain also had valuable allies in the Middle East.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the global influence of Great Britain in form of commonwealth and former colonies was another factor important to the American containment policy.<sup>42</sup>

### **2.3. An American presence in Central America**

The American presence in Central America can be traced back to the Monroe Doctrine from 1823.<sup>43</sup> The Monroe Doctrine stated the US attitude of non-tolerance for interference by European States in the American sphere.<sup>44</sup> The US had built up their influence slowly over time and the Monroe Doctrine marks the point in which they began to actively influence their Central American neighbours. Walter LaFeber believes that four principles revealed the US tendency to influence Central America in protection of their own interests. The four principles were: a confidence in capitalism, a willingness to use military force, a fear of foreign influence and a dread of revolutionary instability.<sup>45</sup>

By the turn of the 20th century, the power had started to shift in Central America. The US was taking more and more initiative in Central-American matters as the “natural protector”<sup>46</sup> they saw themselves as. In 1898, the North Americans defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War, which led to the end of the Spanish Empire and the takeover of the Spanish colonies by the US. In 1901, they took over the responsibility of the building of what would become the Panama Canal, thus pushing out Great Britain<sup>47</sup> and at the same time US investments in Central America rapidly increased: from 21 million dollars in 1897 to 93 million dollars in 1914.<sup>48</sup> In 1905, the Roosevelt Corollary was added to the Monroe Doctrine as part of Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” diplomacy measures. It stated that the US would act as a regional police power to maintain order in the hemisphere. The addition of the Roosevelt Corollary shows how much the power had shifted in only 80 years. The Monroe Doctrine was originally implemented to enable the Central American states to liberate themselves from the European powers, while the Corollary of Roosevelt was a statement of American power over the other Latin American States. In short, the US had banned outside European interference, and in

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<sup>41</sup> Bartlett. *“The Special Relationship”*: A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds. *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century* p.174.

<sup>43</sup> “Milestones: 1801-1829: Monroe Doctrine 1823”, United State Department: Office of the Historian accessed April 1, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/monroe> .

<sup>44</sup> “Milestones: 1801-1829: Monroe Doctrine 1823”.

<sup>45</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Expression first used by Jorge Ubico in an appeal to the US Foreign Secretary, James G Blaine in 1881.

<sup>47</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p. 35.

1905 they promoted outside American interference, creating a powerful historic precedent for American foreign politics from that time on.<sup>49</sup>

These policies and priorities survived into post war times and within these policies and developments, the US maneuvered their support for Central American regimes. The regimes that received American support were the ones that would benefit the US the most and the vast US investments in various Central American countries guided most of their policy decisions. According to LaFeber's principles, the coup d'état in Guatemala was a prime example of US influence.

## **2.4. The coup d'état**

Many times it is impossible to prove legally that a certain individual is a communist; but for cases of this sort I recommend a practical method of detection – the “duck test”. The duck test works this way: suppose you see a bird walking around a farm yard. This bird wears no label that says “duck.” But the bird certainly looks like a duck. Also he goes to the pond and you notice he swims like a duck. Then he opens his beak and quacks like a duck. Well, by this time you have probably reached the conclusion that the bird is a duck, whether he is wearing a label or not.<sup>50</sup>

– Richard C. Patterson Jr., former US Ambassador to Guatemala.

### **2.4.1. Arévalo and Arbenz' social reforms**

In 1951, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman was elected president in the Republic of Guatemala. Arbenz followed the reformist government of Juan José Arévalo, the first government to be elected in a democratic and free election in the history of Guatemala. The coup d'état in 1954, in many ways, has its roots in the Arévalo government as Arbenz continued and developed the reformist policies of the Arévalo government.<sup>51</sup> The reforms included, for example, an extensive agricultural programme. Guatemala was then, and still is, a country characterized by great differences in living standards between the different strata of the population. Richard Immerman has estimated that 2.2% of the population owned over 70% of the land. The land ownership structure in Guatemala left them in a situation where less than 10% of the land was

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<sup>49</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p. 38-39.

<sup>50</sup> Richard C. Patterson Jr. quoted in LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p.116.

<sup>51</sup> Gleijeses. *Shattered hope: The Guatemalan revolution and the United states 1944-1954*, p. 134.

accessible to 75% of the population, and where only 50% of the arable land was in use.<sup>52</sup> In 1952, Arbenz' introduced agrarian reforms that were designed to redistribute some of the arable land, and in its implementation it provided around 100.000 peasant families with useful land.<sup>53</sup> Apart from the agrarian reform, Arbenz also wanted to further develop the social reforms introduced by Arévalo.<sup>54</sup>

These reforms alarmed both the US government and the big landowners in Guatemala. The biggest landowner of them all was United Fruit Company (UFCO). Immerman calculates that approximately 25% of UFCO earnings came from Guatemala in the years 1950-'55.<sup>55</sup> It has been argued that the threat to foreign investments in Guatemala played a substantial role in motivating an American backed military invasion in Guatemala.<sup>56</sup>

The Arévalo and Arbenz governments' policies were encouraging to workers on the plantations. Strikes and protests became common. When nationalists in Guatemala accused the big foreign companies of American imperialism, the US citizens in turn responded with accusations of communism. This situation was further impaired by UFCO lobbying. The reforms and opposition towards the UFCO were interpreted as communist activity by the US.<sup>57</sup> Another tendency in Guatemalan politics that caused mistrust in the US was the increasingly open communist presence. The Arévalo government reforms and general willingness to move towards a more social policy threatened the Ladinos<sup>58</sup> traditional power in Guatemala. It became increasingly crucial to obtain political support, but naturally, Arévalo struggled to find support from the right wing political parties. The lack of right wing support resulted in communists being allowed to occupy important government roles. This development was closely monitored by the US as the mingling with communists made the Eisenhower administration nervous.<sup>59</sup>

Once the US State department branded Guatemala as a communist-infiltrated country, the eventual political decision to intervene militarily was made more likely. The idea of a Soviet puppet State in the American's own back yard, so to speak, was not appealing. In the early

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<sup>52</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 28.

<sup>53</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 65-66.

<sup>54</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 63.

<sup>55</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 73.

<sup>56</sup> LaFeber. *Inevitable revolutions-The United States in Central America*, p. 121.

<sup>57</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 73-81.

<sup>58</sup> Ladinos represent the class of Guatemalans that are closer related to Europeans than indigenous Mayans, and are traditionally the ruling class.

<sup>59</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 91.

Cold War period, the terms socialist, communist and Soviet were synonymous in American eyes. American politicians failed to isolate the changes happening in Guatemala from the global situation, and thought that the socialist tendencies were a certain sign of Soviet infiltration.<sup>60</sup> The American sphere of influence was not an area where the US was about to let Soviet infiltration succeed. In hindsight, historians have disputed how real the Soviet threat was in Guatemala. At the time, though, it *seemed* very real. The connection between Guatemala and the Soviet Union was most likely very exaggerated, as there was no cooperation between either the Arévalo nor Arbenz governments and Moscow.<sup>61</sup> Whether the threat was real or imagined ultimately carry little significance. The perceptions present at the time would have guided the American course of action. Communist infiltration in Guatemala had become such a perceived threat, and it was acted upon.

#### **2.4.2. Covert operations of the CIA**

Beginning with the Truman administration and continuing with the Eisenhower administration, the US planned an operation via the CIA to render the potential Guatemalan threat harmless. The plan was known as operation PBSUCCESS and was preceded by PBFORTUNE, which had existed since 1952.<sup>62</sup> In October 1953, Arbenz learned about the US plans to topple his government. In an act of desperation, Arbenz decided to defy the US, and bought arms from behind the Iron Curtain. The Guatemalan arms arsenal was dated, because the US had placed an arms sales embargo on Guatemala in 1949.<sup>63</sup> The new weapons came from Czechoslovakia, and arrived on the Swedish ship, *Alfhem*.<sup>64</sup> The arms purchase made by the Guatemalan government made the Eisenhower administration certain of Soviet involvement. As a response to the arms purchase from Czechoslovakia, the Eisenhower administration decided without any legal justification, to inspect ships bound for Guatemala. Dulles requested if Great Britain could stop any ship with arms bound for Guatemala. Anthony Eden refused the request to search ships. He agreed, however, to discourage British ships from bringing arms to Guatemala.<sup>65</sup> Winston Churchill could not understand why they could not do as Dulles said, and send a squadron to search the ships, thus Eden took a lead in

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<sup>60</sup>Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup>Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup>Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p. 29.

<sup>63</sup>Gleijeses. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, p. 128.

<sup>64</sup>Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 155.

<sup>65</sup>Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 160.

that decision.<sup>66</sup> There is little to suggest that the Churchill government knew what was about to happen in Guatemala at this point. Operation PBSUCCESS was authorized shortly after.<sup>67</sup>

PBSUCCESS was designed as a covert operation much in the same design as that in Iran in 1953.<sup>68</sup> This operation, however, would not include the MI6. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas and a small group of insurgents would act as the front of the operation. Armas was an exiled Guatemalan opposed to the Arévalo, and later, Arbenz governments. Colonel Armas worked with the support of President Somoza of Nicaragua and President Gálvez of Honduras. Armas was going to make use of Nicaraguan and Honduran military bases. Military, economic and moral support from the CIA was going to ensure that the Armas group of insurgents would be successful.<sup>69</sup>

Colonel Armas moved into Guatemala over the Honduran border on the 17th of June with the intentions of staging a coup d'état. The idea was that they would restore order in Guatemala and save the people from Communist oppression. The CIA and the Eisenhower administration believed that a small force would be enough because they believed that they would receive massive support from the people of Guatemala once they were inside the country. They had prepared by exposing the population to anti-communist propaganda because the success of the operation depended on the army turning on Arbenz.<sup>70</sup> In the end, it turned out that the support for Armas was not as widespread as hoped, and the Armas attacks were badly organized. The completion of the mission drew out. The operation in the end was successful because the National Army turned on Arbenz and refused to fight at the same time as Eisenhower commissioned two additional airplanes to be sent.<sup>71</sup> The airplane attacks were designed to make as much noise and commotion as possible so that even though there were only a few airplanes, it seemed like a massive air attack. Panic struck in the capital, and Arbenz notified his people of his resignation on the 27th of June 1954.<sup>72</sup> While the invasion was in motion, Arbenz sent a formal complaint to the United Nations asking for help.

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<sup>66</sup> Sir Norman Brook Notebook: Cabinet Minutes June 18, 1954, CAB 195/12/30 Accessed April 24, 2015, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7739515#imageViewerLink>.

<sup>67</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 160.

<sup>68</sup> Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p 39-40.

<sup>69</sup> Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p 49.

<sup>70</sup> Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p 41. Gleijeses. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, p. 246.

<sup>71</sup> Cullather. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala 1952-1954*, p 97- 98.

<sup>72</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 3-4.

### **3. Diplomacy in the UN**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June the president of the United Nations Security Council received a complaint from the Guatemalan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guillermo Toriello. The complaint stated that foreign states had violated Guatemalan territory on several occasions and on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, with military force as well. The Guatemalan government felt obliged to appeal to the United Nations. The states accused in Toriello's cablegram were primarily Honduras and Nicaragua, but he also had high suspicions of the US. He specifically pointed out that the arms that were dropped in Guatemala and the planes circling the capital were American made. "Certain foreign monopolies" were accused directly, and there is little doubt that this was a comment aimed at the United Fruit Company, as they were also mentioned as likely recipients of the arms drop.<sup>73</sup>

What followed this appeal was a process in the UN that can be described as nothing less than unfair to Guatemala. Their right to a fair hearing was not respected by the international community. The UN mandate to be a just organization that would protect the rights of all states alike was seriously compromised. The proceedings following the Guatemalan appeal to the UN gives an understanding of how The UN was left impotent in the globally bipolarized Cold War period.

This chapter states that in this case of the Security Council, decisions were not made in reference to moral questions of right or wrong, but rather in accordance to which viewpoint could garner the most allies. As a result of this mindset, observers from the Organization of American States were dispatched to investigate the situation in Guatemala in lieu of UN observers. Great Britain, as a permanent member of the United Nations, was not without shame in this process as Great Britain engaged in negotiations with the US during the proceedings in the UN. These negotiations resulted in Great Britain having to drastically moderate their position to please the Anglo-American alliance. This chapter will explore what incidents did, or did not, influence the British position.

#### **3.1. The British policy in the UN**

The instructions from the British Foreign Office on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June reveal the basis for the British attitude in the Security Council. The Foreign Office instructed the UN delegation, to

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<sup>73</sup> From Guillermo Toriello to president of UN Security Council. June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/24.

“keep in line with your United States colleague”.<sup>74</sup> It is also clear from this telegram that “In any event we shall have time to consider the form of any resolution with the United States.”<sup>75</sup> These statements by the Foreign Office state that they intended to cooperate with the US in the Security Council. This communique was sent on the day of the first meeting, before Dr. Eduardo Castillo-Arriola, Guatemalan representative to the UN, had presented the Guatemalan case. The communication shows that pleasing the Americans was the primary British concern from the beginning. They were unwilling to decide on any policy without first conferring with the US.

Because of the special nature of the Anglo-American relationship and the proximity of Guatemala to the US, it is plausible that Great Britain felt a certain obligation to wait for the American reactions. On the day of the first Security Council meeting, the Foreign Office was still requesting information about the nature of the situation in Guatemala.<sup>76</sup> The account of Castillo-Arriola and those of the US, Honduras and Nicaragua, left a confusing impression. Guatemala branded Honduras, Nicaragua and the US as aggressors, but all of these countries denied any involvement. US representative to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. pointed out that in his government’s knowledge, no foreign aggression had been committed against Guatemala.<sup>77</sup> Given the conflicting statements, it was natural for Great Britain to look to America for reactions before going out with a firm stance themselves.

One explanation to why the British were so attentive to the American politics could also be that Foreign Office needed to know more about the situation in Guatemala to organize an informed opinion on which state to side with. Such an explanation should not easily be rejected, but developments later in the case nevertheless point to a different reason for the Foreign Office to await communication with the US.

In the early stages of the proceedings, there existed different opinions within the Foreign Office as to which policy was most prudent. Certain insecurities in following the American approach were present. Rosalind Chevallier, a Foreign Office official revealed some of the complexities:

There is thus a strong possibility that, if we are to keep in line with the Americans – and surely we cannot afford to do otherwise – we shall have to consider taking or

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<sup>74</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762.

<sup>75</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762.

<sup>76</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/1.

<sup>77</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762.

supporting action which will seem to show that the United Nations is becoming only a mouth piece for the two opposing sides.<sup>78</sup>

Talk amongst commentators<sup>79</sup> said that Guatemala would be regarded something of a test case for the UN. Implicating that the UN now had to be able to stand up and demonstrate that it was an organization that could protect small states against outside aggression. Chevallier had little faith in the possibility of convincing the Americans to take this into consideration, owing to the recent US praise of Castillo Armas for his mission against Communism. That posed a dilemma for the Foreign Office, as it would be difficult to both uphold the UN mandate and follow the American line of Policy.<sup>80</sup>

Kenneth Pridham, another Foreign Office official, did not agree with Chevallier's assessment. While he agreed that the Guatemalan case would be a test case, he came to the opposite conclusion. He asserted that Great Britain should act on principle, and treat the "unfriendly, unpleasant Guatemala" the same way as they would any friendly state. He believed that an investigative body should be sent to Guatemala, and that if no other state, for example Russia, would suggest this, Great Britain should. He believed that the "strong moral sense of the American people [would] assert itself."<sup>81</sup> This discussion inside the Foreign Office strongly suggests that at this point they did not know about the role of the Americans in the coup d'état. If the Foreign Office had known about the American role in the coup d'état, it is unlikely they would have been discussing the moral sense of the American people. While Chevallier was ready to follow the direction of the Americans, this difference in opinion shows that there were voices in Foreign Office that believed that Great Britain could have the power to influence the American policy.

Another element to this discussion is the lack of mention of American involvement in the coup which leaves two options for interpretation. Either Great Britain trusted that the American version of the accounts was truthful and that the American government had no knowledge of the invasion; or the extent of American involvement was not a decisive factor in which policy to execute. The development of the British policy strongly suggests the latter.

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<sup>78</sup> Minutes by R. M. B. Chevallier, June 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/6.

<sup>79</sup> Sources do not state what kind of commentators, but in the context it is likely that they were political media commentators.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes by R. M. B. Chevallier, June 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/6.

<sup>81</sup> Minutes by K. Pridham, June 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/6.

Great Britain received word from Honduras quite quickly saying that, while it was true that the Honduran military was not involved in the invasion of Guatemala, Castillo Armas had been given extensive freedom of preparation and use of the country's airport, a base for operations and radio facilities. In Nicaragua, the insurgent aircrafts had been allowed to operate from Nicaraguan bases.<sup>82</sup> It was not until the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, however, that the British delegate to the UN, Sir Pierson Dixon informed the Foreign Office that the attitude of his American colleagues, led one to assume that they played an active part in the coup d'état:

It is legitimate to suppose that United States Government or Agencies are implicated in this putsch. The putsch seems to be going wrong. We shall be lucky if United States Government agrees to any investigation. Investigation by United Nations would be salt in the wounds, and it would seem to them to be outside interference likely to perpetuate near communist regime in [a] vital part of [the] American continent.<sup>83</sup>

The most interesting part about this development are the British reactions to it. In place of being a reason for giving up support for the US, the US involvement in the coup d'état served as an argument for Great Britain to give in to American wishes. A plausible assumption in regards to this reaction is that Great Britain was prepared to support the US regardless. Given this assumption, a likely interpretation is that Great Britain was careful to exercise a firm policy in order to avoid a full clash with the Americans. Waiting and attaining an understanding of the American stance would make it easier.

### **3.2. Articles 34, 35, 39 and 52 of the UN charter**

The most defining discussion for the outcome of the case arose between the members of the Security Council on the matter of whether it was legitimate to refer it to the Organization of American States (OAS), or whether the case should remain solely a UN matter. As most states agreed that the UN could not make an informed decision on which actions to take without having established the facts, the outcome would be to either send UN observers or OAS observers to the area. The outline of the discussion was that the US wanted the case referred to the OAS, and they had the support of Colombia and Brazil. Guatemala strongly rejected the idea of their case being referred to the OAS. Guatemala eventually had to see her wishes of a UN investigation ignored by the Security Council.

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<sup>82</sup> Memorandum by M.C.G. Man, June 22, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/15. Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 22, 1954 FO 371/108742/A1076/8 .

<sup>83</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/17.

The basis for Guatemala's appeal to the Security Council were articles 34, 35 and 39 in the UN charter.<sup>84</sup> Article 34 states that "the Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security." Article 35 also states that "Any member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation [ ] to the attention of the Security Council." Article 39 states that "The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measure shall be taken [ ] to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Guatemalan appeal was legitimate under these articles, but the Brazilian representative introduced a resolution based on Article 52 of the same charter and asked for the case to be referred to the OAS. He argued that there were long traditions in the Americas for inter-American disputes to go to the OAS. He received support from Colombia.<sup>85</sup> Article 52 was important to the case as it stated that members of the UN that were also members of a regional organization should: "make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council." It also stated that the Security Council should "encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements." This could happen on the initiative from the states involved or by referral from the Security Council.<sup>86</sup>

Article 52 is important in reviewing the UN proceedings because it is the only substantial argument that would legitimize a referral of the case to the OAS that Cabot Lodge could present his Security Council colleagues. Article 52 offered a favorable argument for Lodge. Paragraph 4 of article 52, however, stated that it "in no way impairs the application of articles 34 and 35".<sup>87</sup> This paragraph along with the explicit wish from Guatemala for the case not to be referred to the OAS offered equally solid grounds to opt for UN observers. The articles seemed to be exclusive of each other. As both courses of action offered adequate arguments, it would come down to convincing the other members of the Council to vote in their favor.

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<sup>84</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 19, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/1.

<sup>85</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office June 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations «Charter of the United Nations and the statute of the international court of justice», accessed April 27, 2015, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> «Charter of the United Nations and the statute of the international court of justice».

It is unknown whether the Soviet Union representative, Semjon Tsarapkin, understood how right he was in his reasons for vetoing the resolution based on Article 52. His understanding was that referring the matter to the OAS would not stop the aggression. Quite on the contrary, it would give time for the aggressors to succeed; something he believed was the American aim.<sup>88</sup> Instead of passing the resolution, the Security Council voted unanimously in favor of a new resolution that asked all states to stop the bloodshed in Guatemala and any assistance to such actions.<sup>89</sup>

### **3.3. A defensible policy**

The Russian veto put Great Britain in an awkward position. The Brazilian resolution had not been passed, but it was expected that either they or Guatemala would re-open the case. Pierson Dixon and the Foreign Office started to explore different options. Dixon recognized that he could not openly support the Soviet line, but did not believe that Great Britain could conscientiously follow the American line presented by Lodge. Lodge had contended that the situation in Guatemala was nothing more than a civil war.<sup>90</sup> Deeming the situation a civil war would imply that it was not the UN's obligation to pursue it. The information about Honduran and Nicaraguan complicity suggested otherwise.

Primarily Dixon had tried to convince the Americans to opt for a policy that included sending UN observers, but pressuring the US proved useless. The Foreign Office felt that to avoid putting themselves in an indefensible position, they could not ignore the Guatemalan request, and they had to involve UN observers. Sending observers from the UN had the benefit of assuring the acceptance of the neutral states and, most likely, the Soviet Union.<sup>91</sup> The Foreign Office suggested several arguments as means of pressuring the US. At the Geneva conference the Americans themselves had been quite insistent that the moral authority of the UN had to be safeguarded. Not sending UN observers in this case would be damaging to the moral authority of the UN. Dixon was also to put forward an argument stating that US would need the support of the General Assembly to be able to send peace observers to Siam (Thailand today). To vote against UN peace observers in Guatemala would be conflicting. They also wished to draw parallels to the case of Greece in 1946, which had a similar profile, and where

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<sup>88</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 21, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762.

<sup>89</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 21, 1954, FO 371/108742/A10762. Telegram from UN Secretary General to Foreign Office, June 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/6.

<sup>90</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 22, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/8.

<sup>91</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/10.

the Western powers had voted for UN observers.<sup>92</sup> The attempt to pressure the Americans had no effect on the American policy; they were not willing to agree to United Nations observers. Lodge conveyed President Eisenhower's views to Dixon.<sup>93</sup>

He was not making any threat but thought that we and the French should know the President's views. These were that we were entitled as independent powers to advocate the despatch of United Nations observers to the region of Guatemala. But if we took an independent line in an area vital to the United States, they would feel entitled to take an independent line in areas vital to Great Britain such as Egypt, or to the French such as Tunisia.<sup>94</sup>

The Foreign Office could not have received a clearer message from President Eisenhower: The US was not interested in discussing the matter. Earlier that day, Dixon had hinted that he believed that the US was involved in the coup or the "putsch" as he called it. This threat seemed to confirm the suspicions.

This clear statement caused the Foreign Office to modify their approach considerably. Sending observers from the UN would have been the best solution for Great Britain, but the Foreign Office still thought that they could find an acceptable solution. The Foreign Office, in consultation with Minister of State, Selwyn Lloyd, thought the best approach would be to accept the Guatemalan case on the agenda, and then for the Brazilian delegate to call for an adjournment. Adopting the item on the agenda would affirm the authority of the Security Council and it would send a positive signal. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, the Inter-American Peace Commission (IAPC) decided to send a fact finding commission to Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras.<sup>95</sup> The IAPC was an investigative body under the OAS. The Security Council could therefore argue that the OAS investigation was the fastest solution to the problem.<sup>96</sup>

Even though the solution to send OAS observers was based on weaker grounds, the Foreign Office thought it would be acceptable. As far as Great Britain was concerned, there was a big difference between handing a case over to a different organization, and having a different organization do part of their work for them.

The day before the next Security Council meeting, the Foreign Office was confronted with additional problems in the UN. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State, John Foster

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<sup>92</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/10. Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/19.

<sup>93</sup> This threat was also aimed at France. Hoppenot, the French delegate to the UN was also present.

<sup>94</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/19.

<sup>95</sup> Telegram from Roger Makin to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/18.

<sup>96</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to UK delegation to UN, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/23.

Dulles had given Lodge instructions to object the adoption of the agenda.<sup>97</sup> To avoid adopting the matter on the agenda could easily look like the Security Council was not taking action. Dixon explained to Lodge that he could not vote against the adoption of the agenda. The dilemma was that it would also be a disaster to the Anglo-American relationship if Great Britain were forced to vote against the US. Because of this, Dixon met with Lodge to lay down tactics for the Council meeting. Two risks had to be omitted. First; they could not risk another veto by the Russians. Secondly; they had to avoid that a suggestion to send United Nations observers was floored. If this suggestion was put forward, Dixon would feel obliged on the behalf of the British Government to vote for United Nations observers and the Anglo-American rift would have been certain. The following proposition was put forward: "What was needed was that the Council should be told of the decision of the O.A.S. to send observers; then after suitable speeches, the Council could be adjourned by a procedural vote, which would not of course be subject to a veto."<sup>98</sup> These covert talks between the US and Great Britain is testament to how closely they followed each other while making decisions in the UN.

The British delegate to the UN, D.T. Holland, was not comfortable with the American argumentation, which he felt would justify an adjournment, but not a refusal to put the Guatemalan appeal on the agenda. To keep Guatemala out of the proceedings in her own appeal would be the obvious result of this maneuver.<sup>99</sup> Great Britain had tried to pressure the US to follow a more preferable course, but that had proven impossible. They had therefore taken up a policy they thought they could defend.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June in the Security Council, the procedural maneuver that Lodge and Dixon had planned ensured that the Guatemalan complaint was not put on the agenda. Henry Cabot Lodge held the position as president of the Security Council, so he had a certain level of control over the proceedings. He first asked if anybody had any objections to the adoption of the agenda. The Brazilian representative argued that introducing the Security Council in the matter would only confuse things now that the IAPC had already started their investigation. Colombia, China, Turkey, Brazil and the US, all spoke against adoption of the agenda, while the Soviet Union, Denmark, New Zealand and Lebanon were for it. Great Britain and France

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<sup>97</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Selwyn Lloyd June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/32.

<sup>98</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/20.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from D.T. Holland to C.G. Fitzmaurice, June 30, 1954, FO 371/112376/UP219/2.

had decided to abstain. This resulted in the agenda not being adopted, since that would have taken at least seven votes.<sup>100</sup>

The Soviet Union had protested strongly against the direction the meeting was taking. Tsarapkin floored a suggestion that the Guatemalan representative should be allowed to speak, but it was voted down ten to one.<sup>101</sup> The voting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June ended in the same result as Tsarapkin had managed to avoid by a veto on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Because of the procedural maneuver that Dixon and Lodge had planned, the protests were just words. Without the veto, the Soviet Union had no options for actions, except to vote.

Dixon's reactions after the vote speak of an unfair procedure:

Most members were very uncomfortable owing to the decision of the United States and the Latin Americans to block the adoption of the agenda. It was my concern to minimise the damage both to the United Nations and to the Anglo-American relations of this decision.<sup>102</sup>

His reflections afterwards suggest that Colombia and Brazil were cooperating with the US in the UN. When seven votes were needed, and only four voted for the adoption, the British and French votes did not really matter for the end result. What had become clear though was that the US had more allies in the Security Council than the Soviet Union. The UN was supposed to be a neutral body, but in this case it was certainly not. Even when the members had been uncomfortable with the course of action that had been heavily promoted by the US, their votes nevertheless supported it. The Soviet Union had made some valid points in both meetings. Whether they were aware of how right they were in their assumptions is unknown. What is certain is that the majority of the Security Council members did not support them.

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<sup>100</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

<sup>101</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

<sup>102</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/33.



#### **4. Four major concerns, but one above all others**

The decision to hand over the Guatemalan case to the OAS for investigation marked the beginning of a different phase in the type of work carried out by the Security Council. In the second phase, during and after the coup d'état, four major concerns can be singled out for the Churchill government in the further handling of the case. These were: the aversion to creating negative political precedence that would be damaging in the long run, the British political traditions and their ambitions for the UN as an international apparatus, the domestic public opinion and political opposition in Great Britain, and the Anglo-American relationship.

The theory that I would like to explore in this chapter is that Great Britain suffered political consequences that originated from discord between these four major concerns. In essence, the Churchill government could not maintain political balance and they were forced to prioritize. Due to the importance of the Anglo-American alliance, many of the decisions Great Britain made were not fully of their own invention. These priorities resulted in Great Britain having to pay dearly in terms of public opinion. They had different end goals compared to the Americans when searching for a solution to the Guatemalan case in the UN.

Misunderstandings between the US and Great Britain arose in their differing policies towards the UN. These misunderstandings were due to the fact that the two states played very different roles in the coup d'état. The Americans wanted to bury the case as quickly as possible. That course of action would be damaging to the British public opinion, as well as for their aspirations and politics regarding the UN. Great Britain ended up in a position where they had to balance their needs against the needs of the US for the sake of the Anglo-American alliance. For several reasons, the Churchill government ended up giving a lot in the end. One, simply being, that the US had a very strong presence on the American continent. Another reason was that an abrupt change in Great Britain's ability to influence the further development of the case arose once it was handed over to the Organization of American States (OAS). Even if the British Foreign Office wanted to reverse previous decisions, it was no longer possible. A third reason was that Great Britain realized that this was a case that would have to end up on the American side of the balance sheet so as to protect the Anglo-American alliance. Assessing the situation, concerns of public opinion and opposition in Great Britain, the worry of creating a damaging precedent and the British aspirations for the UN all had to take second priority to the Anglo-American alliance.

#### 4.1. A toothless investigation

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1954 a compromise was reached between Great Britain, France, and the US. This compromise resulted in Great Britain agreeing to handing the Guatemalan case over to the OAS, rather than the UN. It was however important to Great Britain that the UN did not rid itself of the matter. The terms for the agreement with the OAS were that the OAS should have the responsibility of establishing facts through their agency, the IAPC (Inter American Peace Committee). The IAPC was then to write a report and deliver it to the UN. Based on this report, the UN Security Council would make an informed decision on what actions to take next, if any.<sup>103</sup>

Guatemala sent simultaneous appeals to both the UN and the IAPC on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June<sup>104</sup>, the appeal to the IAPC was withdrawn, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June they refused the IAPC entry into the country.<sup>105</sup> IAPC was eventually allowed into the country on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June by the Guatemalan government<sup>106</sup>, right before Jacobo Arbenz resigned. A likely explanation to this ambivalence towards the OAS stems from earlier experiences at the Caracas conference in March 1954. The Caracas conference had proven to the Arbenz government that they could not depend on any support from the other Latin American States. At Caracas the US had put forward a resolution that heavily implied the right for other American states to intervene in the internal affairs of an American state in order to contain communism. This was not something that any of the Latin American states desired, as they had long experienced American hegemony. Guatemalan Minister of Foreign Affairs Toriello had spoken strongly against it, and received massive applause for it, but ultimately the resolution had been passed with only Guatemala voting against it.<sup>107</sup>

The US control over the OAS proved to be an advantage to them as the IAPC made their preparations for the pending investigation. The IAPC observers were dispatched for Mexico City on 29<sup>th</sup> of June.<sup>108</sup> The agency had planned their investigation so that they would first visit Guatemala, and then visit Honduras and Nicaragua. In effect this meant that Honduras could not be visited until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, which meant that whatever evidence of Honduran

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<sup>103</sup> Record of meeting at the United States UN delegation headquarters, June 24, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/41.

<sup>104</sup> A different source states the 21<sup>st</sup> of June (comments by M.C.G. Man July 17, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/108) Whether it was 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of June does not make a difference for the analysis. I have however chosen to reference Makins in the text because this source is closer to the event in time.

<sup>105</sup> Telegram from Roger Makins to Foreign Office, June 26, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/36.

<sup>106</sup> Draft reply to parliamentary question, July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/76.

<sup>107</sup> Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, p. 147-148.

<sup>108</sup> Parliamentary debate, June 30, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/66.

support to Castillo Armas would have disappeared by the time they had been scheduled to arrive.<sup>109</sup> The new acting Government in Guatemala, led by Colonel Monzon<sup>110</sup>, caused an additional delay to the investigation. He notified the IAPC on 30<sup>th</sup> of June that their country was unable to organize a suitable reception, and therefore asked the IAPC to postpone their visit.<sup>111</sup>

The final IAPC report was reviewed by the Foreign Office in mid-July. The delay caused by the IAPC and the way in which the whole trip was planned was in Foreign Office official MCG Man's mind a clever move:

Although the IAPC displayed considerable activity and put on a good show of wanting to get down to the facts, their decision on June 23 to visit Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua in that order in fact was a clever move which effectively barred any action from being taken[.]<sup>112</sup>

Before any kind of observation had been conducted in any of the three countries, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua met for peace talks. The result of the peace talks was that all three states notified per telephone on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July that there were no longer any hostilities between them, and hence there was no longer a need for an investigation. The investigation simply never happened, as the IAPC returned to Washington from Mexico immediately.<sup>113</sup> The new leaders in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the IAPC had all contributed in sabotaging the entire investigative mission. One cannot know what would have happened if a UN group of investigators had been sent instead of OAS investigators. It is likely, though, that UN observer would have taken a more neutral attitude and insisted on a more thorough investigation. Nevertheless, one can claim with certainty that by allowing the OAS to conduct the investigation, the UN lost its possibility to influence the direction of this case.

Article 39 in the UN charter, stated that the UN security council was obliged to find the facts and establish whether Guatemala had indeed been subject to foreign aggression. The IAPC chairman had been familiar with this, but it seemed that it would be impossible to meet the requirements in the current situation. After the unfruitful journey of the IAPC, the Foreign Office started to realize that they might not be able to keep their promise to bring the case

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<sup>109</sup> Comments by M.C.G. Man, July 17, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/108.

<sup>110</sup> There was a transition with several juntas before Castillo Armas took power. Colonel Monzon was the leader of one.

<sup>111</sup> Draft reply to parliamentary question, July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/76.

<sup>112</sup> Comments by M.C.G. Man, July 17, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/108.

<sup>113</sup> Comments by M.C.G. Man, July 17, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/108.

back to the UN for further procedure.<sup>114</sup> The handing over of the observation mission in Guatemala to the OAS represents a turning point both for the UN and Great Britain's influence in the matter. The actions, or lack thereof, by the IAPC had a rippling effect, of which most were not good news for the British Foreign Office and the Churchill government. The problems arose both from the inactions of the IAPC, and from Dixon's statements in the UN. As well as the statements made in Parliament.

The White Paper on the change of regime in Guatemala was published in October 1954. There it stated that "as peace and order had happily been restored in Guatemala, the *Junta de Gobierno* of Guatemala saw no reason why the Guatemalan question should remain on the agenda of the Security Council. The Security Council has taken no action on this suggestion and remains seized of the problem."<sup>115</sup>

#### **4.2. Avoiding a dangerous precedent**

The IAPC report presented to the Foreign Office was worthless. The observation committee had not established any facts, nor had they visited any of the three countries involved. The British Foreign Office believed that the IAPC could have done valuable work even if they had only visited Honduras and Nicaragua. The Foreign Office was less than impressed by the report. "The report is (as expected) a weak and unworthy document and cannot but cast doubt on its members. It has certainly not lived up to expectations." was the judgement by one Foreign Office official.<sup>116</sup>

The IAPC was not able to meet their obligations which in turn meant that Great Britain would struggle to meet with the obligations they had laid themselves. The IAPC had left for home and Guatemala had withdrawn her complaint. The repercussions being that the UN Security Council would struggle to be able to claim further ownership over the case. Selwyn Lloyd had to admit that to give up ownership over the Guatemalan complaint could create a very serious problem. After all, the government that now claimed that there was peace and stability between Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua was not the same government as the one that had originally appealed to the UN. Selwyn Lloyd put forward a scary scenario for the Western powers

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<sup>114</sup> Telegram from Selwyn Lloyd to Washington July 6, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/86.

<sup>115</sup> «Report on Events leading up to and arising out of the Change of Régime in Guatemala, 1954" October 1954 FO371/108934/AG1015/237.

<sup>116</sup> Comments by M.C.G. Man , July 17, 1954, FO371/108742/A1076/108.

[A]ny suggestion that the Security Council should not be concerned with an allegation of aggression just because the government that made the allegation has fallen, might have most dangerous implications. Suppose the Soviet Union invaded e.g. Yugoslavia and swiftly succeeded in establishing there a puppet government which withdrew Yugoslavia's appeal under Article 39 before the Security Council had had time to consider it; would we not wish to maintain that the Council had an obligation to establish whether there had been a case of aggression?<sup>117</sup>

Lloyd's example was identical with what had happened in the UN over the Guatemalan case. Presented with the Yugoslavia example, and giving attention to the general state of affairs during the Cold War, the answer to that question is self-evident. In the early days of the UN, the organization was guided by the charter, but as in all legislative bodies, precedent had an influence on decision making. The Foreign Office was painstakingly aware that the decisions they made in the matters before them in the UN could set precedent for future crises and situations. All of the actions by the Western powers, that were not necessarily considered to be fully just by international actors, could at a later time be used by the Soviet Union to justify future incursions. That kind of scenario was exactly what the British Foreign Office wanted to avoid.

There were cases on the UN agenda that had never been removed. This meant that there existed a possibility for the Guatemala case to be left aside with no further actions. The US State Department's attitude was straightforward in that they wanted no more action to be taken in the UN, and they saw "no reason for creating a precedent that uncompleted items should be given a decent burial."<sup>118</sup> The Foreign Office's concerns were that these old cases did not include cases that belonged under chapter VIII of the charter.<sup>119</sup> The Foreign Office was keen to use the Guatemala case quite differently. The Guatemala case was the first case that had touched on the topic of division of responsibilities between the UN and regional organizations. It was desirable to use the Guatemala case to establish that the UN was paramount in such matters. There was a desire to take this opportunity to promote the British ambitions for the UN as a universal organization. In a way the dispute between the roles of the regional organizations and that UN was at the heart of the matter.<sup>120</sup> When asked what actions would be taken by the western powers if it so happened that an Asian state was to invoke the right to use chapter VIII (use of regional arrangements) of the UN charter to solve

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<sup>117</sup> Telegram from Selwyn Lloyd to UK delegation to UN, July 13, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>118</sup> Copy of notes by P. E. Ramsbotham from P. M. Crosthwaite (UK delegation to UN) to Barbara Salt (British Embassy Washington), July 13, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/111.

<sup>119</sup> Chapter VIII of the UN charter deals with regional arrangements.

<sup>120</sup> Minutes by C.L.S. Cope, June 30, 1954, FO 371/112376/UP219/1.

problems in Asia, Selwyn Lloyd could only answer that that was a hypothetical question.<sup>121</sup> It was important that the case went to the UN for a proper closure to send the right signal to other countries party to the UN charter.

### **4.3. Different ambitions for the UN**

The Americans did not care about these scenarios. They prioritized differently. Because of their own complicity in it, they wanted the case buried as soon as possible. In their view, the actions being taken should be limited to sending a report from the IAPC to the Security Council for information only.<sup>122</sup> The Americans also saw their actions as justifiable because of their differing view on the role of the UN. Although the proceedings over the Guatemala case in the UN had very much been according to US design, the sentiments in the US related to the UN was quite different from the ones in Great Britain. While the British concerned themselves with the greater purpose of the UN as a universal organization, the US held different attitudes. The debate over Chinese participation in the UN was the singular case that created the most US ambivalence towards the UN. The Knowland-Johnson faction, led by Senator William F. Knowland and representing a new isolationist trend, threatened to pull the US out of the UN altogether if China was granted access. Disappointment over how the Guatemalan complaint (and communism in South- East Asia) had been handled in the UN led to an increase in support for the Knowland-Johnson faction. While maintaining the effectiveness of the UN was an important part of the British foreign policy, political discussions in the US suggest that there was not a consensus there about the paramountcy or universality of the UN.

The way the US acted in the Guatemala case further supports this divergent attitude. After the crucial vote on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, Lodge held a speech in the Security Council that Dixon deemed to be very close to a new kind of Monroe Doctrine. Lodge said:

If the [UN] Charter had in fact abrogated the constitution of the O.A.S., the Senate would never have approved the Charter. It was of the utmost importance that the United Nations should be supplemental to, and not a substitute for nor an impairment of the O.A.S.<sup>123</sup>

The attitudes connected to these singular cases stemmed from a policy dating further back in

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<sup>121</sup>Parliamentary debate, June 29, 1954, FO 371/108743/A1076/56.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from C.L.S. Cope to Peter E. Ramsbotham, July 14, 1954, FO 371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>123</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

time. It had its roots in the Monroe Doctrine as Dixon pointed out, but it had also been something that the US along with the American States had promoted as far back as the San Francisco Conference in 1945. The San Francisco Conference had resulted in the creation of the UN Charter<sup>124</sup>, and the American policy then resulted in the implementation of Article 52 in the Charter.<sup>125</sup> It should not have come as a surprise to Great Britain that the US now protected their right to self-government in the Americas.

The different attitudes towards the role of the UN caused misunderstandings between the allies. In the case of the coup d'état in Guatemala the US did not respect proper UN protocol, and undermined the moral authority of the organization rather than support it. When the British Foreign Office communicated their worries to the US, they were met with little understanding, which caused friction between the two allies.

In explaining the British abstention in the UN, Pierson Dixon had laid down some terms for agreeing to allow the OAS to handle the matter. The reasoning he had presented was that the OAS, in a British view, was a “responsible and competent regional organization”.<sup>126</sup> The Foreign Office had also stated that the OAS was an organization that they respected.<sup>127</sup> So far Great Britain and the US were in agreement. What was most important to British interests, however, was that the IAPC was to report back to the Security Council. They felt that it was a good compromise between the UN and OAS, that OAS conducted the investigation, while the UN upheld the right to assess the possible options for action based on the report. The compromise would ensure the moral authority of the UN and at the same time respect the wish of the American states to utilize their regional organization.<sup>128</sup> The Foreign Office's purpose for these terms had been to keep in line with their policies and aspirations for the UN as a universal apparatus. On 26<sup>th</sup> of June, Pierson Dixon revealed the importance of this stance, and also underlined the difference in British and US policy in a telegram to the Foreign Office:

A conceivable policy would be to rally to and perhaps extend the United States conception of the relationship between the United Nations and a regional organisation. But this, of course, would strike at the heart of the conception of the United Nations as a universal organisation on which Her Majesty's Government's policy has been based since its foundation. We could in any case hardly announce so fundamental a change

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<sup>124</sup> «Charter of the United Nations and the statute of the international court of justice»

<sup>125</sup> 473- Minutes by WKK White 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1954 FO 371/112376/UP219/1.

<sup>126</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

<sup>127</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

<sup>128</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 25, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/34.

of policy suddenly as we would have to do if it were to have a bearing on the Guatemala question.<sup>129</sup>

Another dimension to this discussion is the geopolitical concerns that have not been explicitly stated in the sources, but which naturally also would have had an impact. A superpower like the US was not dependent on the UN to exercise their influence in the world. Hence maintaining the functionality and credibility of the UN in the long run was less important to the US. Their concerns were, as discussed, to maintain their control in the American sphere, and to not let the UN become completely universal. Great Britain, having lost much of their pre-war grandeur and global standing, needed the UN in a very different way. They needed it to be universal. Their dilemma was also that the UN could not function effectively without the US as a member.

Already it seems clear that the Foreign Office must have known that they were taking a risk. If the IAPC investigation did not go smoothly, they would be vulnerable for critique by the opposition parties in the British parliament. In the end, it did not go well.

#### **4.4. Regrets at home**

The Churchill government yielded to American pressure and had to take a good amount of heat for it in parliament. The reason for the course of action in the UN was Anglo-American solidarity but this could not be mentioned in the parliamentary debates. This made defending the British support for OAS observers difficult. When asked about the American's role in the matter, Lloyd avoided responding.<sup>130</sup> Questions regarding the Guatemalan case were answered with either that they were not obliged to share what instructions Dixon had received, or that they had to await the IAPC report to comment. Prior to the completion of the investigation, Selwyn Lloyd defended the British position with the same reasons as those given in the Security Council and by stating that the Security Council was not divesting itself of responsibility.<sup>131</sup>

Before Jacobo Arbenz was toppled and Guatemala withdrew their complaint to the UN, the position the Churchill government had taken in the UN was somewhat defensible. That is not

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<sup>129</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, June 26, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/40.

<sup>130</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 12, 1954, FO371/108931/AG1015/147.

<sup>131</sup> Parliamentary debate, June 29, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/56. Parliamentary debate June 30, 1954, FO371/108744/A1076/73. Parliamentary debate, July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/76. Parliamentary debate July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/80.

to say that they did not receive critique. Selwyn Lloyd was struggling with accusations of marginalizing the Guatemalan case, which the opposition pointed out was both wrong because of principles connected to the UN as an organization, and because of the nature of the case itself. William Warbey, member of the Labour Party, asked in response to Lloyd: "...is he saying that it was only a little murder and that, therefore we should not bother much about it?"<sup>132</sup> And why had the government not insisted on an intervention, as they had done in Korea? Charles Royle from Labour asked on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July if "it [was] now the policy of the Government that the United Nations Organization as such should only deal with aggression when the aggression arises from Communist countries?"<sup>133</sup>

As the Churchill administration struggled to come up with justifiable answers, the preferred strategy in parliament was to blame the Russians. Lloyd responded that "Not at all.[] On 20<sup>th</sup> of June there was one veto on a certain course of action and, as I say, I do not think it requires much imagination to understand what would have happened."<sup>134</sup> This statement was quite ironic as the course of action that Tsarapkin vetoed on 20<sup>th</sup> of June, was the same as the one the Security Council eventually voted in favor of.<sup>135</sup>

Chetwynd, another member of the Labour party, wanted to know if it had not been a complete farce that the IAPC committee was supposed to be able to give them the facts, when they had not visited any of the three countries involved. Selwyn Lloyd disagreed and again blamed the Russian veto. He argued that if the Soviet Union had not vetoed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, the situation would have been completely different. Lloyd meant that without the Russian veto, the OAS would have been able to carry out their mission more quickly<sup>136</sup> Lloyd's statement had little root in the actual course of events, as it was the decision making in the IAPC that had made the mission unfeasible. The Russians had all along opted for UN observers, which was a more neutral body, so the failure to obtain facts had nothing to do with the veto.

The Churchill government opted for a policy in the UN that the Foreign Office thought was just barely defensible. As the IAPC mission was failing, that policy was now proving difficult to defend in Parliament. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, Labour's Richard Acland, requested the case be debated again "In view of the unsatisfactory nature of all the answers to all these questions

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<sup>132</sup>Parliamentary debate, July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/84.

<sup>133</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 5, 1954 FO371/108743/A1076/81.

<sup>134</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 5, 1954 FO371/108743/A1076/81.

<sup>135</sup> This has been explained in chapter three "Diplomacy in the UN".

<sup>136</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 12, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/102.

about Guatemala.”<sup>137</sup> Lloyd could see that the debates in Parliament were not about to get any easier. The problems that he saw were that after the debate on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, the Government was under severe pressure to make sure the Guatemalan complaint was handled properly in the UN. Simultaneously, he could not see how the UN would be able to reopen the case when the complaining state had withdrawn its complaint.<sup>138</sup>

There was little Lloyd could say. The opposition started to question the value of the IAPC report which they had not yet seen, and accused the UN of washing the case from its agenda.<sup>139</sup> As long as the government did not have a legitimate report to show, they opted for publishing a White Paper about what facts the government had about the case as a last resort.<sup>140</sup>

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, Great Britain formally recognized the Castillo Armas government.<sup>141</sup> Great Britain was late in recognizing the government because of the strong feelings in Parliament. The 26<sup>th</sup> of July was seen as the latest they could possibly wait. At that point there were fears in the Foreign Office that “if we delay recognition any longer we shall find ourselves alone with the Russians”.<sup>142</sup> Surely because of American feelings they did not want to be the last state to recognize, alone with The Soviet Union.

#### **4.5. The Anglo- American touchstone**

As the government was butting heads in the Parliament, the Foreign Office was in discussion with the Americans. The Americans did not want the Guatemalan complaint or the IAPC report on the official UN agenda. They thought it sufficient to leave it on the general agenda, without further discussion. The Foreign Office would bend as far as allowing the IAPC report to be put on the daily agenda on the next Security Council meeting for brief consideration with a formal decision to not take it further, but they could not accept complete inaction.<sup>143</sup> This course of action was considered to be safe, as the chairman of the Security Council at the time was from Brazil. Brazil had originally put forward the suggestion to leave the investigation of aggression against Guatemala to the OAS, and had voted in the same way as

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<sup>137</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 5, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/82.

<sup>138</sup> Telegram from Selwyn Lloyd to Washington July 6, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/86.

<sup>139</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 12, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/102.

<sup>140</sup> Parliamentary debate, July 14, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/103.

<sup>141</sup> Telegram from Foreign Office to Guatemala, July 23, 1954, FO371/108947/G1051/3.

<sup>142</sup> “Guatemala: recognition of new régime” comments by M.C.G. Man, July 16, 1954, FO371/108947/G1051/8.

<sup>143</sup> Minutes by CLS Cope, July 12, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

the Americans in the case.<sup>144</sup> The Brazilian chairman could give an advantage in course of procedure by allowing the matter to be put to a vote quickly and without much debate.<sup>145</sup> The suggested compromise by the Foreign Office to allow the IAPC report on the agenda would have the advantage of avoiding accusations of “hiding the corpse”.<sup>146</sup>

The Americans continued to push the British by using the Anglo-American alliance as leverage in negotiations. The American representative, Zimmerman claimed that in the cases of Morocco, Tunisia and British Guiana, the US had acted contrary to their conscience, suggesting that Great Britain should now act on discord with theirs.<sup>147</sup> CLS Cope was not impressed, as he felt the cases bore little resemblance to the Guatemala case. These other cases had not invoked chapter VIII of the UN charter. To British politics that was an important dimension as it touched on the set of problems related to the US, Great Britain and their differing aspirations for the UN.

That was not the real issue for Zimmerman. The real purpose behind bringing up these cases, Zimmerman stated, was to show that the Anglo-American alliance was about giving and taking.<sup>148</sup> Zimmerman indicated that the US expected more cooperation from Great Britain. That seemed to provoke Cope, from the British perspective they bent over backwards for the sake of Anglo-American solidarity. He recalls saying to Zimmerman:

I asked him whether he really thought that the balance sheet hitherto would be weighted heavily in the United Kingdom's favour and in particular whether he thought it right that both the important U.N. issues at the moment [] should appear on the same side of that balance sheet.<sup>149</sup>

One case was the question over Guatemala and the other was the question over Chinese representation in the UN.<sup>150</sup>

American Secretary of State, Dulles, had stated that the Guatemala case “...might well be the touchstone of the Anglo-American alliance.”<sup>151</sup> Great Britain did not want their alliance with the Americans to be a frail one, and so they had given in to American pressure on several occasions over this case. This was largely because Dulles and the State Department had made

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<sup>144</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office June 20, 1954 FO 371/108742/A10762.

<sup>145</sup> Minutes by MCG Man, July 12, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/78.

<sup>146</sup> Telegram from Selwyn Lloyd to UK delegation to UN, July 13, 1954 FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>147</sup> Letter from CLS Cope to Peter E. Ramsbotham, July 14, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>148</sup> Letter from CLS Cope to Peter E. Ramsbotham, July 14, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>149</sup> Letter from CLS Cope to Peter E. Ramsbotham, July 14, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>150</sup> Letter from CLS Cope to Peter E. Ramsbotham, July 14, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/91.

<sup>151</sup> “Guatemala” comments by R. L. Speaight, June 24, 1954, FO371/108743/A1076/65.

it clear that they expected British support. Cope's drawing the line shows that in negotiating with the Americans, the Churchill government had been kept at the very edge of what they could justify. It points to an attitude that Great Britain had given enough, and that giving in to American pressure in the way that they had, was not about giving back for favors in the past, but rather that they were expecting something in return in the future.

In this respect, the Americans showed little empathy with the British perspective.

Pierson Dixon noted to the Foreign Office on 24<sup>th</sup> of July that Even though they have had to make hard decision to concede to the American concerns in this matter he did not believe that they could expect much in return:

Even so, their point of view is so far removed from ours on this question that they would not, I think, be able to grasp how difficult it is for you to come this far towards them. I do not believe, therefore, that we shall be able to get any counter concession from them in return.<sup>152</sup>

Great Britain finally surrendered all principles when reviewing the Security Council report to the General Assembly. On 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1954, the Security Council was to meet to review their report of the proceedings in the case of the Guatemalan complaint on foreign aggression. Dixon noted that the report was flawed. His own speech was recorded incorrectly, with many of his points taken out. The very strong speech that Lodge held on 26<sup>th</sup> of June was also inadequately recorded, as well as the Soviet objections.<sup>153</sup> Everything that had been controversial about this case had been hushed down in the report, which would be the only document distributed to the members of the General Assembly. Dixon deemed it unwise to protest on the contents, as that might cause a “post mortem” that surely would not benefit Great Britain. “This choice of evils is typical of those we have had to face during this affair.”<sup>154</sup> He remarked suggesting that this was one of many morally dubious decisions that he and the Foreign Office had made.

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<sup>152</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office, July 24, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/119.

<sup>153</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office August 13, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/128.

<sup>154</sup> Telegram from Pierson Dixon to Foreign Office August 13, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/128.

## 5. An affordable loss

I have laid out the wishes of the US State Department in the two foregoing chapters. In my opinion, these wishes guided the British decision making process on how to react and act in the case of the Guatemalan complaint to the UN. The decisions made put the Government at a disadvantage because of sacrifices made in other areas of their politics. These decisions were clearly not the ones that the Foreign Office would have made if they had been in a position of complete independence. In an alliance, however, what benefits the alliance the most could be what benefits the state itself. Anthony Eden has remarked in his memoirs his own views on the British reactions to the coup d'état in Guatemala:

Though there was no need to shed tears over the fall of a government with communist leanings, whose record was cruel, I was not entirely happy with the proceedings, nor was opinion at home. Yet our motives were clear enough. Her majesty's Government agreed to co-operate with the United States Government, or at least not to oppose them, taking the view that first priority must be given to the solidarity of the Anglo-American alliance. If allies are to act in concert only when their views are identical, alliances have no meaning.<sup>155</sup>

His words sum up the aspects of British politics I am trying to present. Bearing this in mind, this chapter will explore the various underlying reasons as to why Guatemala received little support from Great Britain. One aspect of this is that there were several conflicts in the world at the time that highlighted the differences in British and US foreign politics. Even though the alliance partners shared an overarching global goal of keeping communism at bay, they differed in how to achieve it. An array of individual conflicts actualized these differences, and created insecurities between the allies. The other aspect is that Guatemala held few national interests to Great Britain, and none of these would be compromised by a shift in governments. The theory I will explore in this chapter is thus: To submit to the Americans preferred course of actions was an agreeable way to show goodwill in the alliance. Great Britain could hope to achieve something in return. Guatemala was an affordable loss.

To make this argument I will look into the discussions held at the Washington talks. This meeting coincided with the coup d'état in Guatemala. The meetings ran from the 24<sup>th</sup> of June

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<sup>155</sup> Eden. *Full circle. The memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden*. (London: Cassel & Company ltd.: 1960), p. 138.

until 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1954.<sup>156</sup> The coup itself and the processes in the UN for a solution in this matter were in full motion when Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden arrived in Washington.

The discussions at this meeting will in that capacity give an indication as to which conflicts the US and Great Britain regarded as in most need of resolving between the two powers. It will also serve to clarify the second grade priority of Guatemala's coup d'état amongst these conflicts. Proportionally, Guatemala was little discussed during the meeting, something that will suggest that compared to all the other conflicts, Guatemala was ultimately not that important to British Foreign politics.

### 5.1. The Washington talks

The June 1954 talks in Washington were held on a request from Winston Churchill with the objective of discussing matters that bore importance to both states.<sup>157</sup> It had a high priority to him; he had worked to organize it for a long time.<sup>158</sup> Churchill had planned the meeting since April the year before with the objective of discussing the atomic and hydrogen sphere, and as an occasion to try and convince Eisenhower to meet with the Russians.<sup>159</sup>

The talks in Washington were increasingly regarded as a meeting to untangle disagreements and renew the specialness in their relationship.<sup>160</sup> When Eisenhower agreed to the meeting, he stated that he was “...deeply concerned by the seemingly wide differences in the conclusions developed in our respective governments, especially as these conclusions relate to such events as the war in Indochina and to the impending conference at Geneva».<sup>161</sup> Although these two states agreed on most major aspects of international politics, major differences also existed something that became evident in individual cases. At the Geneva conference, this dimension of the relationship had become indisputable.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, Anthony Eden held a speech in House of Commons that caused

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<sup>156</sup> President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, April 26, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) ed. David M. Baehler, John A Bernbaum et. Al., and Ed. In chief William Z. Slany (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office: 1986), VI, part 1 : 1061 (Hereafter FRUS).

<sup>157</sup> President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, 26<sup>th</sup> of April, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1061.

<sup>158</sup> Charles McMoran Wilson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Moran. *Winston Churchill: Struggle for Survival 1940-1955, Taken from the diaries of Lord Moran* (London: Constable & Company Limited: 1966) , p. 596.

<sup>159</sup> John Colville. *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1985), p. 691.

<sup>160</sup> Colville. *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955*, p. 691.

<sup>161</sup> President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Winston Churchill, April 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1061.

resentment in the US. The resentment was linked to Eden's mention of a non-aggression agreement in South-East Asia, which had not been presented to the Americans beforehand, and the fact that he did not mention John Foster Dulles during the speech. This was interpreted as a deliberate insult. Some media reported that the US was looking for stronger allies in Germany and Japan.<sup>162</sup> The frailty of the Anglo-American relationship was not a secret. Even though a break in the Anglo-American alliance was not very likely, these sentiments give an indication as to how gravely a clearing of the air was needed.

A difficult task lay ahead of Churchill and Eden. The goal was to return to London having created stronger bonds to the US and to have eliminated the insecurities in their alliance. The conflicts on the international arena, concurrent with the coup d'état in Guatemala, were some of the most complex situations the world has seen. The differences between the US and Great Britain were tied to these complexities.

## **5.2. The situation in Guatemala is discussed**

While resolving the Guatemalan issue was important to the Americans, Churchill and Eden failed to see what importance it held to Great Britain. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden landed in Washington. It was the same day that the UN Security Council was going to vote for, or against the adoption of the Guatemalan complaint on the agenda. John Foster Dulles brought up the matter in the car on the way from the airport.<sup>163</sup> While the Guatemalan case in the UN was important to the US for evident reasons, there are several indications that this matter was not as important to Great Britain. When it was brought up to Eden in the car, he recalls in his memoirs that he "hurriedly informed [himself] of the business".<sup>164</sup> When they arrived at the first meeting at the White House, it was brought up again by Dulles. He outlined the American point of view on how it should be handled in the Security Council. Eden in great part agreed with him and said he would instruct Dixon to abstain.<sup>165</sup>

Eden was not without reservations over this decision, but he and Churchill held different opinions on how compliant they should be with the Americans. A discussion arose between

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<sup>162</sup> "Weekly political summary 19<sup>th</sup> of June -25<sup>th</sup> June" from Washington to Foreign Office, June 26, 1954, FO371/109101/Au1013/28.

<sup>163</sup> Eden. *Full circle. The memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden*, p. 136.

<sup>164</sup> Eden. *Full circle. The memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden*, p. 136.

<sup>165</sup> Memorandum of a meeting of Secretary of State Dulles and Foreign Secretary Eden on 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1075.

Churchill and Pierson Dixon on the subject of the vote in the UN. The problems Dixon saw with the OAS solution was not that it had an effect on any national interests or the global situation. The problems arose in the moral sphere. Dixon upheld that it was “a moral issue [and] surely a question of right and wrong.” He got nowhere with Churchill who had remarked that it was important to remain some sense of proportion. More specifically about the proportional importance of Guatemala he stated: “I’d never heard of this bloody place Guatemala until I was in my seventy-ninth year.”<sup>166</sup> Judging by this statement, it would be utter foolishness to jeopardize Anglo-American solidarity for Guatemala. In Lord Moran’s opinion, however, Eden seemed to agree with Dixon that a decision to comply with the Americans was not without problems. Even though Eden agreed with the American line of thought, he understood what their behaviour in the Security Council would stir up. He remarked to Dulles during dinner one night regarding the British decision to abstain “It will mean a lot of trouble to me, explaining that in the House of Commons.”<sup>167</sup>

Churchill had the outmost confidence in the specialness of the Anglo-American relationship. He was more worried about the possibility of Eden starting a quarrel with Dulles over a small matter, than the moral implications of ignoring the complaint from Guatemala. Sir John Colville recalls Churchill saying that Eden “was sometimes very foolish: he would quarrel with the Americans over some petty Central American issue which did not affect Great Britain and could forget about the downtrodden millions in Poland.”<sup>168</sup> It seems that to Churchill problems within the American sphere of influence were the American’s responsibility. Churchill felt that he and Eden as leaders of Great Britain should concentrate their efforts on problems closer to home. His prominent belief in the Special relationship became apparent in the familiarity with which he shared his opinions with Dulles and Eisenhower. Churchill spoke most openly about his own feelings about the coup d’état in Guatemala. Churchill expressed that he had never been in favor of the Communist government in Guatemala, and that he had “always believed that it would have been much better to have organized world peace on the basis of a few strong regional organizations, which might then choose representatives to a central world organization.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Moran. *Winston Churchill: Struggle for Survival 1940-1955 Taken from the diaries of Lord Moran*, p. 603.

<sup>167</sup> Memorandum of conversation, by the Unites States representative at the UN (Lodge) June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1107-1110.

<sup>168</sup> Colville. *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955*, p. 694.

<sup>169</sup> Memorandum of conversation, by the Unites States representative at the UN (Lodge) June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1107-1110.

### 5.3. A confluence of conflicts

It is clear from both Churchill and Eden's statements that Guatemala was not a priority for Great Britain during this meeting. It is natural to ask which cases overshadowed the coup d'état in Guatemala? The Washington talks were informal in nature, but there was an understanding between Churchill and Eisenhower about which topics were of most importance to both states. The matters that received the most attention in the course of the long weekend were: the conflict in Indochina, European security and the possibility for an EDC agreement, admission of Communist China to the UN, the possibility of a "big three meeting" between Great Britain, the US and the Soviet Union, and downsizing British military presence in Egypt and Korea. There was no satisfactory agreement between the US and Great Britain on any of these issues.

One of the main issues discussed at the meeting was the topic of European security. The US goal for the talks was to convince Churchill that EDC (European Defence Community) was the best way to rebuild and secure Europe. While Indochina was an important piece in the US strategy to defeat communism, Europe was exceedingly important. The Americans had no desire to see European countries turn over to communism. The EDC was based on the belief that Germany under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer could be more of an ally, than an enemy.<sup>170</sup> For Great Britain, and especially France, this was a sensitive topic, as they had suffered far greater losses during World War II than the US. They were hesitant to grant Germany liberties. The talks resulted in Dulles convincing Eden that EDC was the only viable option, and they would make a joint effort to achieve it.<sup>171</sup>

The question over Chinese admission to the UN and the possibility for a "big 3 meeting" can both be related to fundamental differences in US and British policy. The US Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Winthrop Aldrich, put it this way: "While Britain is not willing to "appease" Communist powers, they may accept more limited definition of that word".<sup>172</sup> Eden and Churchill believed that the best way to handle the Soviet threat was by a policy of "peaceful coexistence". Elements in that policy indicated that it was necessary to communicate with the biggest communist powers, China and the Soviet Union. Churchill had become positively obsessed, according to his personal physician, on the idea of a "big 3

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<sup>170</sup> Statement by President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill, June 29, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI:1132.*

<sup>171</sup> Memorandum of discussion at the 205<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council, July 1, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI:1133-1137.*

<sup>172</sup> The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Aldrich) to the Department of State June 18, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI: 1065-1067.*

meeting” between the US, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. He could see no possibility for peace without including Georgy Malenkov, then the leading figure in Soviet Union politics.<sup>173</sup> In the same vein, Great Britain along with Commonwealth and other European countries believed that the global situation would only get worse by keeping China out of the UN.<sup>174</sup> The US did not have much faith in such a policy. Dulles believed that a policy like that was simply an easy way out because Great Britain failed to see an escape from the threat of atomic attack. The US had started to explore the possibility for a heavy build-up of defense.<sup>175</sup>

This fundamental difference in the view of communism appeared in discussions around the communist threat in Indochina as well. Indochina was important because it represented a clash between the western powers and the Soviet Union. The US had a very clear vision of how the struggle against communism could be won. Indochina was a place in which that struggle had become very real. For Great Britain, it was impossible to support local intervention, and under no circumstances would Churchill allow British soldiers to be stationed there. Churchill believed that an organization for Asia, not dissimilar to the structure of NATO, would present the best option.<sup>176</sup> The talks did result in a compromise between the two, but not a definite agreement. The US were not prepared to agree to a partition arrangement in Vietnam that would guarantee Communist domination, even if it would also guarantee non-Communist domination on the south side of the partition line. A leading principle in the US argumentation was that to accept Communist domination in certain areas, and to ensure it, were two different things.<sup>177</sup>

While Egypt represented a key position to the British, Churchill still felt that the Suez Canal was strategically important, but not important enough for Great Britain anymore to devote so many resources to.<sup>178</sup> The British needed the American guarantee that they would keep weapons and resources away from Egypt. The agreement Churchill had in mind was to move British troops out of Egypt, and to replace them with American forces.<sup>179</sup>

In Korea, Great Britain had no real national interests except to support the Americans in their

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<sup>173</sup> Moran. *Winston Churchill: Struggle for Survival 1940-1955 Taken from the diaries of Lord Moran*, p. 498.

<sup>174</sup> Memorandum of a meeting of Secretary of State Dulles and Foreign Secretary Eden, June 27, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1112-1113.

<sup>175</sup> Memorandum of discussion at the 205<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council, July 1, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*:1133-1137.

<sup>176</sup> Prime Minister Churchill to President Eisenhower, June 21, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*:1069-1071.

<sup>177</sup> Memorandum of a meeting of Secretary of State Dulles and Foreign Secretary Eden, June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1086-1094.

<sup>178</sup> Prime Minister Churchill to President Eisenhower, June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1069-1071.

<sup>179</sup> Hagerty diary, June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol.VI*: 1099-1101.

war against communism. At the time of the Washington meeting, Churchill felt that it was time to remove some of the forces stationed there, as the British economy was suffering from keeping soldiers there. To re-administer these forces would be a good way to relieve some pressure from the economy.<sup>180</sup>

#### **5.4. The irrelevance of Guatemala**

Alongside these conflicts, there were several reasons as to why Guatemala was not important. The most prominent reason is that to achieve goals of major importance to their state affairs, Great Britain needed the cooperation from the US. Guatemala may have been important to the US, but Churchill could not allow it to take center stage with more important conflicts in need of resolving. At the talks in Washington they were making decisions in conflicts that were threatening to the world peace. The coup d'état in Guatemala was tragic enough for the Guatemalan people, but it was hardly a matter that could consume the world in global conflict.

With respect to political interests, Churchill and Eden would surely receive bad press and have to answer some tough questions in parliament. If they could achieve an agreement with the Americans to send home thousands of soldiers from Korea and Egypt, British public opinion would be much more profoundly impacted. It would most likely positively overshadow a questionable decision in the UN regarding a country that probably only half of Oxford had ever heard of before.

The only bilateral interests Great Britain had in Guatemala were the ones related to British Honduras (today Belize), and a favorable trade agreement. British Honduras was a British colony bordering Guatemala. It was important to keep a good diplomatic relationship because Guatemala had a history of claiming the Belizean territory. When discussing recognition of the Castillo Armas government in July, the Foreign Office believed that a good diplomatic relationship was well within reach. Arbenz had threatened the balance of trade on an earlier occasion and Foreign Office believed they had to be on guard to avoid a similar outcome with Castillo Armas in power.<sup>181</sup> Although not speaking strongly for, or against, either of the two alternative Guatemalan governments, it suggests that which government prevailed in the dispute in June mattered little to Britain. The lack of any other interests in Guatemala, gave

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<sup>180</sup> Memorandum of conversation, by the counselor of the Department of State (MacArthur), June 26, 1954, *FRUS, 1952-4, vol. VI*: 1071-1073.

<sup>181</sup> "Guatemala: Recognition of new regime" minutes by M.C.G Man, July 16, 1954, FO371/108947/G1051/8.

Great Britain very little reason to disagree with the US.

Although Great Britain had intervened in Korea despite having no actual national interests there, there is one important difference between these two cases. Great Britain and the US shared a common long term goal, namely to fight off communism to protect the free world. In Guatemala, they were already winning in this aspect. All Britain had to do to ensure one less communist friendly government was to agree with the US to not do anything.

Mr. J. G. Ward, Foreign Office, put it in comprehensive terms when he wrote in a memorandum that:

On the merits of the Guatemala business, I think we should face up to a genuine “difference” with the US and [sic] vote if necessary against them. But Guatemala is not the only pebble on the beach. We are about to solicit American help in resisting Greek attempts to ventilate Cyprus at the next Assembly.<sup>182</sup>

A genuine disagreement between Great Britain and the US in the UN never came to be. This quote indicates that Guatemala, more than anything, represented a bargaining chip to Churchill and Eden. Even if Eisenhower saw the Anglo-American negotiations in the UN as an act of defiance more than as good will, to *not* have yielded to the American pressure would have been a serious violation of the Anglo-American alliance.

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<sup>182</sup> Minutes by J.G. Ward, July 20, 1954, FO 371/108742/A1076/116.

## 6. Conclusion and summary

In this thesis I sought to find the answers to these questions: *What concerns guided the British actions in their approach to the complaint put forward by Guatemala in the UN Security Council? Why was Guatemala an affordable loss to British Foreign policy?*

The 1954 coup d'état in Guatemala was a distant conflict for the British government, but it became a real political dilemma once it was taken up for consideration in the UN Security Council. The problems this case posed for Great Britain did not stem from possible dangers to British national interests in Guatemala. On the contrary, Great Britain shared the American's long term ambitions to contain communism, so the toppling of a perceived communist friendly government was in the interest of British foreign policy.

The main dilemma was whether to follow the American plans, which could be damaging to British politics, or to refuse to support the American line of policy and risk a rift in Anglo-American relations. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles expected full support from the Churchill government, and negotiating with them proved hard for the British. This case is an example on how the Anglo-American relationship was an essential part of the Churchill Government's foreign policy. Great Britain was forced to follow and defend a policy that they felt uncomfortable with to maintain good relations with the US.

The areas of British politics that could suffer from this decision were mainly related to British political aspirations for the UN to work as a universal apparatus. The main concern in this aspect was that dubious proceedings in the UN would damage the moral authority of the UN. It was also a concern that the American ambitions for the UN were not compatible with their own. This realization appeared over the question of the role of regional organizations in the workings of the UN apparatus. The conflicting ideas consisted of the British wanting the UN to be paramount, while as for the US it was more important that the UN did not impair the workings of the regional organization for the Americas, OAS.

The British aversion to creating an unfavorable precedent in the UN was undeniably at the heart of this matter. Both in regards to the moral authority of the UN and the universal paramountcy of the UN, this case proved a challenge. Because of the US complicity in the coup, the Americans were unwilling and unable to comply to a more favorable approach in the British view. Churchill and Eden were forced to give in.

Other important findings are related to the position of the UN. The diplomatic battles that were fought in the UN, in this case proves that in June 1954 the UN was not a neutral body,

but rather an arena for the two superpowers. In the case of the Guatemalan complaint, the Russian objections were justified, but they could not muster support for their views. The result being that the UN mandate was compromised.

The British decisions on the Guatemalan case in the UN were a break from British political tradition, which created political repercussions for the Churchill Government. This was most notable in parliamentary debates. The Churchill government was left in a position that was hard to defend in Great Britain because the UN could no longer claim ownership of the case after Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras had all claimed that the aggression had stopped.

Despite these political repercussions, Guatemala was an affordable loss to Churchill and Eden. This was in large part due to other conflicts that held greater importance to British national interests. It was deemed necessary to sacrifice the Guatemala case for a better chance at a good outcome in the other conflicts of interest existent in the Anglo-American alliance.

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