The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Latin American Anticommunist International: Chile, Argentina and Central America, 1977-1984

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it). The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party. I declare that my thesis consists of 99,984 words.

Abstract

The Latin American Anticommunist International: Chile, Argentina and Central America, 1977-1984, addresses both Chilean and Argentine support for the Extreme Right counterrevolutionary movements in Guatemala and El Salvador. Drawing on archival research in seven countries and online documents from several more, this thesis reveals the extent of the connections between the civil wars in Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the anticommunist dictatorships that dominated the Southern Cone in this period. Despite the thousands of miles separating these two subregions of Latin America, the military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina understood events in Central America as a direct threat to the anticommunist struggle on which they staked their legitimacy at home. In response, the two dictatorships used bilateral channels and transnational ties cultivated through international organisations such as the World Anti-Communist League to provide ideological and material support to both the armed forces and semi-autonomous Extreme Right 'death squads' in Guatemala and El Salvador, offering their own 'models' of anticommunist governance as solutions for their besieged allies to the North.

This thesis places the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' response to the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador in the context of the wider international history of this period. It shows how the Extreme Right Chileans, Argentines, Guatemalans and Salvadorans at the heart of this story also worked together – and with allies in the United States – to coordinate a transnational response to the rise of international human rights scrutiny, democracy promotion and associated shifts in US foreign policy in the region. In doing so, it demonstrates how this 'Latin American Anticommunist International' exerted an influence on the political systems that emerged at the end of the Cold War.

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List of Abbreviations

ACC – American-Chilean Council, United States/Chile

ACWF – American Council for World Freedom, United States

ALN – *Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista* (Nationalist Liberation Alliance), Argentina

ANEP – *Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada* (National Association of Private Enterprise), El Salvador

APACL – Asian People's Anti-Communist League

ARENA – *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (Nationalist Republican Alliance), El Salvador

ASC – American Security Council, United States

ASI – *Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales* (Salvadoran Industry Association), El Salvador

BCRA – *Banco Central de la República Argentina* (Argentine Central Bank), Argentina

BPR – *Bloque Popular Revolucionario* (People's Revolutionary Bloc), El Salvador

CACIF – *Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras* (Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations), Guatemala

CAL – *Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana* (Latin American Anticommunist Confederation)

CCE – *Cámara de Comercio e Industria de El Salvador* (Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce and Industry), El Salvador

CEA – *Conferencia de Ejércitos Americanos* (Conference of American Armies)

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency, United States

CEUA – *Comité de Estudiantes Universitarios Anticomunistas* (Committee of Anticommunist University Students), Guatemala

CIS - Council for Inter-American Security, United States

CONDECA – *Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana* (Central American Defence Council)

CONJEFAMER - *Conferencia de los Jefes de las Fuerzas Aereas Americanas* (Conference of Commanders in Chief of American Air Forces)

CUC – *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (Peasant Unity Committee), Guatemala

DC – *Partido Democráta Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party), Chile

DCG - *Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan Christian Democracy), Guatemala

DINA – *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional* (National Intelligence Directorate), Chile

EGP – *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (Guerrilla Army of the Poor), Guatemala

ERP – *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (Revolutionary Army of the People), El Salvador

ESA – *Ejército Secreto Anticomunista* (Secret Anticommunist Army), Guatemala

ESMA – Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (Navy Mechanics School), Argentina
FAN – *Frente Amplio Nacional* (National Broad Front), El Salvador
FAR – *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (Rebel Armed Forces), Guatemala
FARN – *Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional* (Armed Forces of the National Resistance), El Salvador
FARO – *Frente Agropecuario de la Región Oriente* (Agricultural Front of the Eastern Region), El Salvador
FECCAS – *Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños* (Salvadoran Christian Peasants' Federation), El Salvador
FDR – *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Democratic Front), El Salvador
FFS – *Frente Femenino Salvadoreño* (Salvadoran Women's Front), El Salvador
FMLN – *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front), El Salvador
FPL – *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación de Farabundo Martí* (Farabundo Martí People's Forces of Liberation), El Salvador
FSLN – *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front), Nicaragua
FTC – *Federación de Trabajadores del Campo* (Federation of Rural Workers), El Salvador
JRG – *Junta Revolucionaria de Gobierno* (Revolutionary Junta), El Salvador
LP-28 – *Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero* (Popular Leagues 28th February), El Salvador
MLN – *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Movement), Guatemala
MIR – *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Movement), Chile
MNS – *Movimiento Nacionalista Salvadoreño* (Salvadoran Nationalist Movement), El Salvador
MR-13 – *Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de noviembre* (13th November Revolutionary Movement), Guatemala
NSC – National Security Council, United States
OAS – Organization of American States
ORDEN – *Organización Democráta Nacional* (National Democratic Organisation), El Salvador
ORPA – *Organización del Pueblo en Armas* (Organisation of People in Arms), Guatemala
PCN – *Partido de Conciliación Nacional* (National Conciliation Party), El Salvador
PCS – *Partido Comunista Salvadoreño* (Salvadoran Communist Party), El Salvador
PDC – *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party), El Salvador
PGT – *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* (Guatemalan Communist Party), Guatemala
PID – *Partido Institucional Democrático* (Institutional Democratic Party), Guatemala
PN – *Partido Nacional* (National Party), Chile

PRT – *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* (Argentine Communist Party), Argentina
TIAR - *Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca* (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, commonly known as the Rio Treaty)
Triple-A – *Alianza Anticomunista Argentina* (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance)
UBA – *Universidad de Buenos Aires* (University of Buenos Aires), Argentina
URNG – *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity), Guatemala
UN – United Nations
WACL – World Anti-Communist League
WYACL – World Youth Anti-Communist League

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Introduction

'Central America – as the name says – is the focal point of the continent…What happens there interests and affects all Americans, northern or southern, citizens of the United States or of the disunited republics.'[1] So began an editorial in *El Mercurio*, Chile's principal right-wing regime-loyal newspaper, in June 1979. A little over a month later, the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN) entered Managua, Nicaragua, marking the first successful armed left-wing revolution in Latin America since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Over the two years beforehand, not only Nicaragua but almost the entire Central American isthmus had become a key battleground in the Cold War, drawing interest from across the Americas and far beyond.

The military dictatorships in Chile (1973-90) and Argentina (1976-83) both shared *El Mercurio*'s conviction that events several thousand miles away in Central America were of direct relevance to the Southern Cone. In fact, both had been providing support to the counterinsurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador since 1977. This assistance escalated in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979, ranging from military training and arms sales to political and material support for Extreme Right politicians and death squad leaders. Southern Cone involvement only declined once a combination of factors over 1982-84 – both domestic and international – made Southern Cone-style 'solutions' to the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador impossible. Even so, Chilean and Argentine involvement in the region in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as broader Extreme Right mobilisation in the same period, would have long-lasting ramifications not only for Central America but for the way concepts like human rights and democracy were perceived and interpreted across the Americas and beyond.

What follows is an international and transnational history of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador between 1977 and 1984. On one level, this is a history of Chilean and Argentine foreign policy toward these two Central American republics as the internal conflicts in both reached their most violent stage. Yet, it is also an examination of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' place within a much wider transnational anticommunist network which centred on Central America in this period, drawing in anticommunists from

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[1] 'De qué sirve la OEA?' 9 June 1979, *El Mercurio,* press cutting in *Información de prensa del Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores Don Hernán Cubillos Sallato*, tomo II. abril a junio de 1979, Box 3, Hernán Cubillos Sallato Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, CA, USA.

across the Americas and beyond. From the late 1970s into the early 1980s, members and supporters of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships – from the Generals to intellectuals, journalists and paramilitary members closer to the margins – worked with fellow American anticommunists against the perceived subversive threat emanating from Central America. They plotted behind closed doors at World Anti-Communist League conferences and participated in seminars on 'inter-American security' organised by the US New Right. Officials from the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships met with prominent members of the Central American Extreme Right, including leaders of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran death squads, both in their embassies in Central America and in the very seats of government in Santiago and Buenos Aires. These connections played a vital part in facilitating both Chilean and Argentine support for the counterinsurgency in Central America.

In these various settings, representatives of both dictatorships expressed a confidence that they had valuable knowledge and experience to share with their Central American counterparts. Rather than a distant conflict, Southern Cone military leaders perceived events in Central America as part and parcel of the very same 'struggle against subversion' they were engaged in at home, and upon which their dictatorships staked their legitimacy. It followed that success for the armed Left in Central America would subsequently threaten the security of the entirety of Latin America. This belief – that the entire region faced a common 'subversive threat' – lay at the core of the Extreme Right ideological outlook which the Chileans, Argentines, Guatemalans and Salvadorans at the centre of this story held in common. I use the term Latin American Extreme Right to refer to this coherent body of thought shared by radical anticommunists across Latin America during the Cold War, although with ideological roots going back much further. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Latin American Extreme Right comprised Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships – across the Southern Cone and Central America – and a vast array of non-state groups across the Americas, from *Los Tecos* in Mexico to Cuban exiles in Miami.

This Extreme Right was but one part of a much broader and heterogenous Latin American Right. In this period, anticommunism also existed across much of the political spectrum in Latin America. However, I argue that the Extreme Right was distinct from a wider Right and other anticommunists more generally in its rejection of liberal democracy, preference for extra-judicial violence to address the international 'communist threat', and its all-encompassing definition of that threat. The Extreme Right saw communist 'subversion'

everywhere. Besides its more obvious political form – in literal communist parties – these anticommunists perceived 'subversion' wherever their traditional views on gender, race, sexuality and religion, were under threat.[2] It was this extremely broad definition of 'subversion', as well as the more specific geopolitical threat posed by the expansion of Soviet or indeed Cuban influence, which drove the Latin American Extreme Right's virulent anticommunism. While this anticommunism was the key factor binding the Latin American Extreme Right together, many of these Extreme Rightists shared a wider set of beliefs, including a commitment to neoliberal economics (some were members of the Mont Pelerin Society), conservative Christianity (most often Catholic), and a specific interpretation of Latin America's 'Hispanic' postcolonial inheritance and place within 'Western Civilisation'. While chapter one examines these wide-ranging Extreme Right ideas about 'subversion', including their relationship to race, gender, and history in more detail, this thesis is not an intellectual or social history of such ideas. Instead, it explores how the existence of this shared ideology shaped international and transnational interactions in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, this Extreme Right outlook was strong enough to draw together disparate actors thousands of miles apart to create a network which I term the 'Latin American Anticommunist International'. This transnational network played as big a part as traditional diplomacy in mediating the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador.

At a time of unprecedented international human rights scrutiny during which both Southern Cone dictatorships were battling international isolation, the Latin American Anticommunist International offered a covert means to forge ties with Central Americans on the Extreme Right. Organisations such as the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and its Latin American chapter, the *Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana* (CAL, Latin American Anticommunist Confederation) provided the dictatorships a direct line to Extreme Right leaders in both Guatemala and El Salvador, safe from the prying eyes of the international community.

Within this network, individuals assumed an outsized importance. One of the tasks of this thesis is to trace the interactions between a large cast of protagonists across the Americas as

[2] These cultural aspects of Extreme Right anticommunism have been explored by scholars such as Valeria Manzano and Benjamin Cowan. See Valeria Manzano, 'Sex, Gender and the Making of the "Enemy Within" in Cold War Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 1 (2015), 1–29; Benjamin A. Cowan, *Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

they evolved over time and space. The appendix – 'Key Individuals' – also contains biographical information arranged by country on those actors who appear in multiple chapters, so as to provide a reference point for the reader throughout. As we shall see, perhaps the central node in the Latin American Anticommunist International was the Guatemalan Mario Sandoval Alarcón, leader of the Extreme Right *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (MLN – National Liberation Movement). Sandoval Alarcón acted as the central conduit for burgeoning friendships between Southern Cone and Central American delegates to WACL and CAL conferences. At such events, Sandoval Alarcón and his acolytes mixed with Chilean politicians and intellectuals such as Gustavo Alessandri Valdés, Extreme Right Argentine *nacionalistas* working on behalf of the military dictatorship, Salvadoran businessmen, and an array of anticommunists from across the Americas. WACL also received the patronage of senior government figures, among them General Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay (host of the 1977 CAL and 1979 WACL conferences) and General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán (guest of honour at the 1977 CAL conference). Through these meetings the Southern Cone militaries were able to provide support to Central America's semi-autonomous death squads, bypassing traditional diplomatic and military channels.

Where a sole focus on organisations such as WACL risks an all too simplistic picture of transnational collaboration and shared views, attention to diplomatic correspondence reveals how Southern Cone involvement in Central America also fractured along national and local lines. The precise ideological basis of the two Southern Cone dictatorships, the rivalry between them and the important differences between the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador all influenced the extent of Southern Cone assistance and the form it took. And nor was the influence of these factors static. What follows, like all histories, is a study of change over time. The escalation of the conflicts in Central America, associated political upheaval and regime change in Guatemala and El Salvador and the domestic security of the Southern Cone dictatorships all shaped the rise and fall of Chilean and Argentine support for these counterinsurgencies.

These were not the only upheavals occurring in this period. The story of the two dictatorships' role in Central America was also shaped by wider changes in the international system. For one, the political crisis in the isthmus in the late 1970s and early 1980s was a fundamentally American concern, where American is understood in relation to the hemisphere in its entirety, not the United States exclusively. US power was a central feature of the Cold War in Latin America. The Latin American Extreme Right's response to events in Central America and the actions of Central American protagonists themselves were deeply conditioned by the

wider hemispheric context and US foreign policy (or perceived inaction) in its so-called 'backyard'. As such, the transition between Jimmy Carter's presidency (1977-81) and Ronald Reagan's first administration (1981-85) profoundly shaped the nature and extent of both Southern Cone dictatorships' involvement. Beyond the White House, US conservatives engaged directly with the Latin American Anticommunist International. These and other transnational inter-American ties not only provided a space for the Latin American Extreme Right to contest US foreign policy, but an opportunity to try and influence its future course.

Neither the Latin American Extreme Right nor US foreign policy were immune to the effects of global shifts in this period. The meteoric rise of the international human rights movement and the associated institutionalisation of human rights in US foreign policy in the late 1970s, followed by the beginnings of the 'Third Wave' of democratisation in the 1980s posed challenges to Chilean, Argentine and broader anticommunist internationalism in this period. In analysing the Latin American Extreme Right's response to and attempts to limit the rise of human rights and 'democratisation', this thesis helps to explain how both concepts came to be constrained and defined so narrowly in the post-Cold War world.

It is also important to acknowledge that the conflicts in El Salvador and Guatemala had an enormous human cost. The Salvadoran Civil War (1979-92) left at least 75,000 dead, the vast majority killed at the hands of the state, and millions more displaced. Against the backdrop of a decades-long Civil War (1960-96), in the early 1980s the Guatemalan military perpetrated a genocide against the indigenous Maya population. The genocide accounts for a large proportion of the death toll for the entire conflict which has been estimated at as many as 200,000.[3] Indeed, 95% of army massacres over the course of the Guatemalan Civil War were committed between 1978 and 1984, within the period covered by this thesis.[4] While ultimate culpability lies with the local actors who directed, oversaw and committed these crimes, it is important to explore the wider international context in which these individuals operated, and the international influences to which they were subjected. Likewise, by examining the Chilean and Argentine perspective on, and involvement in, the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador, it is possible to comprehend

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[3] Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio*, 2.
[4] Ibid, 257.

their significance within the history of Latin America's Cold War, of which violence formed an integral part.[5]

Methodology and Sources

I employ a methodology that combines diplomatic, international, transnational and global approaches to history to explore Southern Cone involvement in Central America. This allows me to capture a story of cross-border collaboration which does not fit neatly into any of these categories. A study of this scope is an ambitious task, requiring international and multi-archival research in both Europe and the Americas. Government documents from Chile and Argentina make up the core of the source base. Most of these documents are from the two countries' foreign ministries and predominantly consist of reports from the embassies in Central America, with a smaller proportion comprising dispatches sent from the foreign ministries to the embassies, or, in the Chilean case, exchanges between the foreign ministry and other parts of the Chilean government. In Argentina, the foreign ministry archive has benefitted from a major push over the last decade or so toward declassification and digitisation of documents relating to the last dictatorship. A significant proportion of the documents relating to Argentine activity in Central America are available online, as are the records of the decisions made by the dictatorship's ruling junta (*Actas de la Junta Militar*) and limited records relating to the Argentine Central Bank's involvement in financing the dictatorship's foreign policy.[6] Used in isolation, these documents tell the diplomatic history of Chilean and Argentine relations with Guatemala and El Salvador, revealing how domestic and international factors together shaped foreign policymaking and bilateral relationships.

Yet, for the most part, the archives of the Chilean and Argentine armed forces are not accessible and – given the centrality of the military to both dictatorships - our understanding of Chilean and Argentine policymaking therefore remains incomplete. I have compensated by drawing on approaches from international history. International history can be distinguished

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[5] On violence in twentieth-century Latin American history, see Greg Grandin and G. M. Joseph, *A Century of Revolution Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[6] The Argentine Foreign Ministry's online archive can be accessed at http://desclasificacion.cancilleria.gob.ar/; Actas de la Junta Militar can be accessed at https://www.argentina.gob.ar/defensa/archivos-abiertos/instituciones-de-archivo/archivo-del-ministerio-de-defensa/edificio-condor/documentos-digitalizados; Actas Secretas del Banco de la República Argentina are hosted by the BCRA website. They are listed and linked in this article: https://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201503/99242-banco-central-actas-dictadura-militar-desclasificacion-apertura-archivos-secretos-derechos-humanos.html. All accessed 4 November 2021.

from diplomatic history in terms of its subject: international histories look beyond diplomatic relations to interactions elsewhere in the international sphere, be that in supranational organisations or economic relations between countries. Increasingly, the incorporation of multiple archives in different countries and different languages has led to the emergence of international histories that offer a multitude of perspectives on their subject.[7]

The inclusion of both Chile and Argentina in this study means that it benefits from insight into each dictatorship's careful surveillance of the other's activities in Central America. As both dictatorships' involvement in the isthmus escalated, so did tensions between the two countries over their southern border. As such, the Chilean and Argentine embassies in Central America kept a close eye on one another's activities, often reporting in far more detail than is present in either country's foreign ministry records. Likewise, I draw on US documents – intelligence reports from the Digital National Security Archive and records from the Reagan Library and the Argentina Declassification Project – and some British Foreign Office documents which provide insight into Extreme Right activities in Central America which were often deliberately obscured in the protagonists' own records of events.

More importantly, however, the greatest methodological strength of this thesis lies in its combination of diplomatic and international history with transnational history. In recent decades, the emergence of global and transnational approaches has both challenged and enriched our understanding of international history, and – in this case – the history of the twentieth century and the Cold War. Often uttered within the same breath, global and transnational histories are generally understood to have been born of the widespread recognition of globalisation as a phenomenon around the turn of the millennium when historians began to view the past through the lens of progressive and myriad connections at all levels of society over time, where the nation state was just one of many perceptive fields through which individuals understood their place in the world.[8] Although both global and transnational approaches share this origin story, they offer distinct perspectives.

Of the two terms, global history has proven the most hotly contested and difficult to define. To its critics, writing global history means privileging the global, in the sense of planetary,

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[7] Zara Steiner, 'On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More', *International Affairs* 73, no. 3 (1997), 531–46.

[8] For an overview (and defence) of the 'global turn' see Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History', *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018), 1–21.

cross-regional histories, above all other contexts, risking the erasure of crucial local, national and regional dimensions. And while such 'universal' histories have been attempted, more often than not proponents of global history are far less ambitious, advocating merely that historians place their subjects within their full global context, acknowledging the ways in which historical actors conceptualised themselves as operating at local, national, regional *and* global scales. From this perspective, doing 'global history' can be as simple as, in the words of Sebastian Conrad, 'writing a history of demarcated (i.e. non-"global") spaces, but with an awareness of global connections and structural conditions'.[9]

By this definition, this is a global history: the analysis which follows is attentive to how the Extreme Right Latin Americans who form this study's principal subjects understood themselves as part of a global ideological struggle – the Cold War – which in turn deeply shaped their actions and beliefs. Yet, more than fifteen years on from the publication of Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War*, this conceptualisation of the history of the Cold War is hardly a revolutionary take. If we are to accept these capacious parameters for what constitutes 'global' history, then one might struggle to find a recent international history of the Cold War (particularly in the so-called Global South) that does not satisfy this relatively low threshold. In this respect, the methodological value of the present study lies not in the adoption of a global perspective, but in its incorporation of transnational methods.

Writing transnational history means paying attention to connections and movement outside of the formal parameters of the state and exploring how this movement has shaped the historian's fundamental interest: change over time. The 'transnational turn' has made possible a widespread reassessment of the roles of different actors and processes beyond the state, be that the study of global progressive movements such as the rise of feminism or a recognition of the historical importance of individuals, local communities, multinational corporations and international and transnational institutions.[10] In this thesis, it is the movement of actors – and their ideas – that is the principal focus. Extreme Right Latin Americans in positions of power within the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships used both diplomatic and transnational ties to cultivate relationships with the Extreme Right both within and beyond government in Guatemala and El Salvador. Transnational connections were similarly central to the relationship

[9] S. Conrad, *What is global history?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 13.
[10] C. A. Bayly et al., 'AHR Conversation: On Transnational History' *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (2006).

between the Latin American Extreme Right and the US New Right. Transnational approaches allow me to track the Latin American and US anticommunists at the heart of this story as they moved in and out of the parameters of the state, offering a far fuller picture than a solely diplomatic approach might afford.

Moreover, the transnational approach adopted here helps to reveal the importance of what Patrice McSherry has described as the 'parastatal' structures of the Southern Cone dictatorships in coordinating their involvement in Central America.[11] McSherry defines parastatal as the 'hidden part of the state' which 'augmented the lethal capabilities of the military dictatorships while allowing them to retain the appearance of legality and a certain legitimacy'.[12] As McSherry shows in relation to Operation Condor, these parastatal structures blur the state/non-state binary, deliberately appearing separate from the state and often entirely absent from diplomatic records. My research builds on McSherry's research by demonstrating how a transnational approach can reveal similar structures at work in Chilean, and especially Argentine, involvement in Central America.[13]

Documents relating to the individuals and non-state organisations that made up the Latin American Anticommunist International thus form the other key part of the archival foundation of this research. My analysis of the World Anti-Communist League relies heavily on the documents held in the 'Archive of Terror', officially known as the *Centro de Documentación y Archivo para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CDyA) in Asunción, Paraguay, and various collections in the Hoover Institution Library and Archives in California. The Hoover Institution also holds documents relating to the Council for Inter-American Security (CIS) and associated US New Right groups. I also draw on digitised documents from the *Centro de Investigación y Documentación* (CIDOC) at *Universidad Finis Terrae*, Santiago, which holds a large collection of private papers relating to prominent members of the Chilean Right – including members of the junta – during the dictatorship.[14]

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[11] J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 27–28.
[12] McSherry, 28.
[13] McSherry's book includes a chapter on the 'Central America Connection' largely focused on Argentina and Honduras. McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* chapter 7.
[14] For the digital archive, see https://cidoc.uft.cl/archivo-cidoc/, accessed 10 November 2021.

This transnational approach has also helped compensate for problems I experienced in accessing Central American archives. Where access to Chilean and Argentine archives is generally good, if limited in the ways indicated above, archival research in Central America remains challenging. The constraints imposed by this reality have directly shaped this research project: privileging Chilean and Argentine perspectives on Central America provides access to a far richer source base – particularly in terms of government records – than could be achieved with a focus solely on Central America. Access to the Salvadoran Foreign Ministry archives is virtually impossible, and while I was able to visit the Guatemalan Foreign Ministry archives, I had access to very little material once inside. Nor are the prospects for the future bright: access to Guatemalan archives has rapidly deteriorated even over the four years since I began this research, meaning I was unable to access the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* (AHPN), Guatemala's National Police Archive which has played such an important role in efforts to achieve transitional justice in Guatemala since the chance discovery of the documents on a police base in Guatemala City in 2005.[15]

Nonetheless, the aforementioned sources on WACL and CIS do shed light on the presence of Central American participants in those organisations. Moreover, I have drawn on two non-state archives in Central America, the *Centro de Investigaciónes Regionales de Mesoamérica* (CIRMA) in Antigua, Guatemala and the *Centro de Información, Documentación y Apoyo a la Investigación* (CIDAI) at the *Universidad de Centroamericana* (UCA), San Salvador. The collections of news clippings, solidarity publications, and Leftist periodicals in these collections have helped shed light on contemporary knowledge of the Chilean and Argentine presence in Guatemala and El Salvador. In the Salvadoran case, I also drew on Salvadoran and US investigative journalism on the Extreme Right in the 1970s and 1980s as well as memoirs by prominent Extreme Rightists.

An important – if perhaps obvious - point that remains is that the writing of an international and transnational history does not equate to the dismissal of histories which use national or sub-national categories as their principal units of analysis. Rather, international and transnational histories can *only* be written by drawing on what we already know from such

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[15] On the recent assault on the AHPN and wider efforts to combat corruption, see Kirsten Weld, 'No Democracy Without Archives' *Boston Review*, 9 July 2020, https://bostonreview.net/global-justice/kirsten-weld-no-democracy-without-archives, accessed 4 November 2021. On the AHPN's dramatic discovery and subsequent role in transitional justice in Guatemala, see Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

studies. Existing work on the history of Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador at a national and local scale has been indispensable. This research has benefitted from an engagement with existing histories of the Extreme Right and dictatorship in the Southern Cone, chief among them Sandra McGee Deutsch's *Las Derechas* (1999), Verónica Valdivia Ortíz de Zárate's work on the domestic politics of the Pinochet dictatorship and Federico Finchelstein's exhaustive research on the Argentine Extreme Right.[16] Work by scholars of Central America, among them Carlota McAllister, Julie Gibbings, Jeffrey Gould, Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Greg Grandin, have provided the vital context against which to analyse the Chilean and Argentine perception of events in Guatemala and El Salvador in this period.[17] Roberto García Ferreira and Arturo Taracena Arriola's edited volume *La Guerra Fría y el anticomunismo en Centroamérica* (2017), Jennifer Schirmer's *The Guatemalan Military Project* (1998) and other contemporary and historical accounts have likewise played a vital role in informing my understanding of the Extreme Right in Guatemala and El Salvador.[18]

What follows also builds on contemporary and historical accounts of the connections between these two subregions of Latin America. First and foremost, I have been inspired by the

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[16] Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Verónica Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, *Su revolución contra nuestra revolución: Izquierdas y derechas en el Chile de Pinochet (1973-1981)* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2006); Verónica Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, '"¡Estamos en guerra, Señores!". El Régimen Militar de Pinochet y El "Pueblo", 1973-1980', *Historia* 43, no. 1 (2010), 163–201; Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); See also Carlos Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007); Anthony W. Pereira, *Political (in)Justice: Authoritarianism and the Rule of Law in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

[17] Carlota McAllister, 'A Headlong Rush into the Future: Violence and Revolution in a Guatemalan Indigenous Village' in Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, *A Century of Revolution Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Julie Gibbings, *Our Time Is Now: Race and Modernity in Postcolonial Guatemala*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Jeffrey L. Gould and Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920–1932* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London: Verso, 1988).

[18] Roberto García Ferreira and Arturo Taracena Arriola, eds., *La guerra fría y el anticomunismo en Centroamérica* (Ciudad de Guatemala: FLACSO Guatemala, 2017); Ignacio Martin-Baró, 'El llamado de la extrema derecha', *Estudios Centroamericanos* 37, no. 403–404 (1982), 453–66; Aaron T. Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982' (PhD Dissertation, Washington, D.C., American University, 2016); Jennifer G. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Kirsten Weld, 'The Other Door: Spain and the Guatemalan Counter-Revolution, 1944–54', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51, no. 2 (2019), 307–31.

existing scholarship on the Argentine dictatorship's involvement in Central America, most importantly Ariel Armony's ground-breaking book, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America* (1997) and the exhaustive research using recently declassified sources that has been done by scholars at the Universidad de Buenos Aires under the direction of Julieta Rostica since 2015.[19] Both journalistic and historical accounts of the World Anti-Communist League have been invaluable in pinpointing how the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships utilised this organisation in particular to cultivate clandestine ties to fellow anticommunists in Central America. Where Anderson and Anderson's 1986 volume *Inside the League* remains unparalleled in breadth and detail, more recent historical research has revealed the organisation's early roots and the different motives driving its constituent chapters.[20] The breadth of the present study – drawing in four countries and two distinct subregions of Latin America – is only possible through building on this strong foundation of existing work.

Research Questions and Historiography

This thesis is guided by four main research questions and related sub-questions that shed light on the nature of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America and underscore this episode's relevance to the history of the transnational Right, inter-American relations and the international politics of the 1970s and 1980s. First, this thesis asks, quite simply, what was the nature of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' involvement in Guatemala and El

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[19] Ariel C. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977-1984* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997); Julieta Carla Rostica, 'Las dictaduras militares en Guatemala (1982-1985) y Argentina (1976-1983) en la lucha contra la subversión', *Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 60 (2015), 13–52; Julieta Carla Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', *Estudios* 36 (2016), 95–119; Julieta Carla Rostica, 'La Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana. Las conexiones civiles y militares entre Guatemala y Argentina (1972-1980)', *Desafíos* 30, no. 1 (2018); Julieta Rostica et al., 'La masacre de El Mozote en El Salvador: una aproximación a la responsabilidad argentina', *e-l@tina. Revista electrónica de estudios latinoamericanos* 18, no. 71 (2020); McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* chapter 7.

[20] Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1986); Luis Alberto Herrán Ávila, 'Las guerrillas blancas: anticomunismo transnacional e imaginarios de derechas en Argentina y México, 1954-1972', *Quinto Sol* 19, no. 1 (2015), 1–26; Mónica Naymich López Macedonio, 'Historia de una colaboración anticomunista transnacional: los Tecos de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara y el gobierno de Chiang Kai-Shek a principios de los años setenta', *Contemporánea: historia y problemas del siglo XX* 1, no. 1 (2010), 133–58; Kyle Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Marcelo Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51, no. 3 (2019), 523–48.

Salvador in the late 1970s and early 1980s? And relatedly, what can this teach us about the international history of the conflicts in Central America and of the two Southern Cone dictatorships? In responding to this question and sub-question, I make a new contribution to the international history of both the Southern Cone and Central America.

The international history of the civil wars in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s has long been written from the perspective of US foreign policymaking in its so-called 'backyard', with one of the earliest and most detailed accounts, by William Leogrande, published less than two years after the ink had dried on the Guatemalan Peace Accords of 1996.[21] Leogrande, like many other early chroniclers of the civil wars on the isthmus, had worked as a congressional staffer in the 1980s, and his work provides valuable insight into how the United States reacted to the revolutionary threat in Central America.[22] With the declassification of documents in US archives in the last decade, these accounts have been built upon with new histories of US foreign relations in the last decade.[23] While these works are useful for understanding the intricacies of US policymaking, they, by definition, replicate the trope of Central America as the United States' 'backyard'. This scholarship effectively severs the isthmus from the rest of Latin America and by extension limits analysis to the bilateral relationships between the United States and each country.

In contrast, this thesis builds on recent work over the last decade which, following the standard set by Tanya Harmer's influential study on Allende's Chile, tell the international history of Latin America from a regional Latin American perspective.[24] While there have been advances in applying this approach to Central America, the literature remains patchy and Nicaragua-centric. Mateo Jarquín, Gerardo Sánchez Nateras, Emily Snyder and Eline van Ommen, among others, have all shed light on the Nicaraguan Revolution's international significance, drawing on

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[21] William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[22] Cynthia Arnson, for example, served as a foreign policy aide in the House of Representatives during the Carter and Reagan administrations. Cynthia Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

[23] Russell Crandall, *The Salvador Option: The United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Evan McCormick, 'Freedom Tide?: Ideology, Politics, and the Origins of Democracy Promotion in U.S. Central America Policy, 1980–1984', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 4 (2014), 60–109.

[24] Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*, Allende's Chile & the Inter-American Cold War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

sources from across the Americas and beyond.[25] In terms of Central America and the Latin American Left, Snyder's work explores Cuba's relationship with revolutionary Nicaragua and Andrea Oñate Madrazo has applied a similar lens to Cuban relations with the Salvadoran FMLN. Others have highlighted how the presence of exiles in Central America connected the conflicts there to the dictatorships of the Southern Cone.[26]

Insofar as historians have written histories of the relations between the Southern Cone anticommunist dictatorships and Central America, the focus has predominantly been on the Argentine dictatorship and the aforementioned work by Ariel Armony and Julieta Rostica, among others.[27] New research by Laura Sala promises to shed greater light on the assistance that the Guatemalan military received from its counterparts across Latin America, while Roberto García Ferreira has sought to uncover connections between Central America and the Uruguay both in this period and the decades beforehand.[28]

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25 See the special issue edited by Tanya Harmer and Eline van Ommen on the international history of the Nicaraguan Revolution, *The Americas* 78, no. 4 (2021); Mateo Jarquín, 'Red Christmases: The Sandinistas, Indigenous Rebellion, and the Origins of the Nicaraguan Civil War, 1981-82', *Cold War History* 18, no. 1 (2018), 91–107; Gerardo Sánchez Nateras, 'The Sandinista Revolution and the Limits of the Cold War in Latin America: The Dilemma of Non-Intervention during the Nicaraguan Crisis, 1977–78', *Cold War History* 18, no. 2 (2018), 111–29; Emily Snyder, 'Internationalizing the Revolutionary Family: Love and Politics in Cuba and Nicaragua, 1979–1990', *Radical History Review* 2020, no. 136 (2020), 50–74; Eline van Ommen, 'Sandinistas Go Global: Nicaragua and Western Europe, 1977-1990' (London, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2019); Mario Vázquez and Fabián Campos Hernández, eds., *Mexico ante el conflicto centroamericano. Testimonio de una época* (Mexico: UNAM, 2016).

26 Andrea Oñate-Madrazo, 'Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970–1992', (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2016); Javiera Olivares Mardones, *Guerrilla combatientes chilenos en Nicaragua, El Salvador y Colombia* (Santiago de Chile: Ceibo Ediciones, 2017); Victor Figueroa Clark, 'Nicaragua, Chile and the End of the Cold War in Latin America', in *The End of the Cold War in the Third World New Perspectives on Regional Conflict*, ed. Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergeĭ Radchenko (London: Routledge, 2011); Victor Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean Internationalism and the Sandinista Revolution, 1978-1988' (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011).

27 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*; Rostica, 'Las dictaduras militares en Guatemala (1982-1985) y Argentina (1976-1983) en la lucha contra la subversión'; Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)'; Rostica, 'La Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana. Las conexiones civiles y militares entre Guatemala y Argentina (1972-1980)'; Lucrecia Molinari, 'La Dictadura Argentina Frente al Estallido de La Guerra Civil Salvadoreña (1977-1982): Proyección Continental y "Experiencias Compartidas"', *Diálogos Revista Electrónica de Historia* 19, no. 2 (2018), 232–68; Rostica et al., 'La masacre de El Mozote en El Salvador'; See also Emiliano Francisco Balerini Casal, 'La asesoría militar argentina en Honduras', *Diálogos Revista Electrónica* 19, no. 2 (2018), 198; Facundo Cersósimo, '"El Proceso fue liberal": Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)' (Tesis de Doctorado, Buenos Aires, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2014); Magdalena Lisińska, 'Las "fronteras ideológicas" y la última dictadura militar en Argentina (1976–1983): el caso de las operaciones encubiertas en América Central', *Anuario Latinoamericano – Ciencias Políticas y Relaciones Internacionales* 6 (2018).

28 Laura Sala, 'Escuelas Contrasubversivas de la Guerra Fría: la formación de Oficiales Guatemaltecos en América Latina, 1977-1981', in *El lugar de Centroamérica en la Guerra Fría Latinoamericana: avances, desafíos y agendas de investigación* (Congreso Centroamericano de Historia 2021, Virtual, 2021).

By contrast, Central America is absent from the general surveys of the history of Chilean foreign policy.[29] Fernando Camacho Padilla's recent article on the Chilean dictatorship's response to the Nicaraguan Revolution is the only other work which uses Chilean foreign ministry documents to address the Pinochet dictatorship's response to events in Central America, and it is limited to a discussion of how the regime perceived the Revolution, rather than its wider involvement in the isthmus.[30] Indeed the sole officially endorsed history of Chilean military assistance to El Salvador over the course of the twentieth century, written by General Humberto Corado Figueroa, a Salvadoran general, defence minister (1993-95) and former scholarship holder for training in Chile, skips the entire period of the Salvadoran Civil War.[31] Corado Figueroa's narrative drops off in 1978 and recommences following the peace accords of 1992, itself a testament to Chilean efforts – detailed in the chapters that follow - to conceal the Pinochet dictatorship's role in Central America. This is thus the very first account of Chilean involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[32]

An examination of the Chilean and Argentine perspectives on the conflicts in Central America contributes to existing histories of both dictatorships and their foreign policies. In comparison to the wealth of work on the international history of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government (1970-73), the literature on the Pinochet dictatorship's foreign policy – a regime that lasted more than five times longer than the UP government – remains underdeveloped.[33] Existing histories of the dictatorship's foreign policy overwhelmingly focus on US-Chilean relations.[34] Some diplomatic histories, such as work by Joaquín Fermandois and

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[29] For example J. Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial, 1900-2004* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005).
[30] Fernando Camacho Padilla, 'Las relaciones interamericanas durante la última década de la guerra fría. La reacción del régimen de Pinochet a la revolución sandinista (1978-1985)', *Secuencia* 0, no. 108 (2020).
[31] Humberto Corado Figueroa, *Ejército de Chile en El Salvador: historia de una centenaria relación de amistad y cooperación* (Santiago, Chile: Academia de Historia Militar de Chile, 2016).
[32] I have published more limited accounts in two articles based on the same source material as this thesis. See Molly Avery, 'Promoting a "Pinochetazo": The Chilean Dictatorship's Foreign Policy in El Salvador during the Carter Years, 1977–81', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 52, no. 4 (2020), 759–84; Molly Avery, 'Connecting Central America to the Southern Cone: The Chilean and Argentine Response to the Nicaraguan Revolution', *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History* 78, no. 4 (2021), 553–79.
[33] Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*; Eugenia Palieraki, 'Revolutions Entangled: Chile, Algeria, and the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s', in *Latin America and the Global Cold War*, ed. Thomas C. Field Jr., Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pèttina (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Alessandro Santoni, 'El Partido Comunista Italiano, La Lección de Chile y La Lógica de Los Bloques', in *Chile y la Guerra Fría Global*, Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme eds. (Santiago: RIL, 2014).
[34] Tanya Harmer, 'Fractious Allies: Chile, the United States, and the Cold War, 1973–76', *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013), 109–43; Morris H. Morley and Chris McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle*

Cristián Medina Valverde, have adopted a broader scope, assessing changes in the dictatorship's foreign policy toward other Latin American countries and topics such as the normalisation of relations with communist China. Yet these studies tend to focus more on the differences between the dictatorship's foreign policy and that of its predecessors than on the way in which the changing domestic basis of the dictatorship shaped its diplomacy.[35] In contrast, my analysis of how both diplomats and members of the government perceived events in Central America and Chile's potential role there reveals how the domestic consolidation of the Pinochet dictatorship shaped its foreign policy. In particular, I show how the process of institutionalisation and the approval of the 1980 constitution shaped Chilean ideas about a specific Chilean political model transferable to other contexts.

Histories of Chilean participation in Operation Condor, on the other hand, clearly elucidate the connections between the domestic, the transnational and the international, examining how the dictatorship used clandestine, military channels, rather than the foreign ministry, to lead a cross-border campaign of terror.[36] Yet these studies tend to end their story in 1976-77, when the aftermath of the state-sponsored assassination on US soil of Chilean exile Orlando Letelier provoked international outrage and marked the winding down of the extra-territorial pursuit of exiles. There is thus little work dealing with Chilean transnational anticommunism from 1977 onwards, precisely the point at which the process of institutionalisation and reduction in repression began at home, and the escalation of Chilean involvement began in Central America. The story told in the chapters that follow takes our understanding of Chilean transnational anticommunist activity into the late 1970s and early 1980s.

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over U.S. Policy toward Chile (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Vanessa Walker, *Principles in Power: Latin America and the Politics of U.S. Human Rights Diplomacy*, United States in the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021); Alan L McPherson, *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice*, 2019.

[35] J. Fermandois, 'De una inserción a otra: política exterior de Chile, 1966-1991', *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* 89 (1991); Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial, 1900-2004*; Cristián Medina Valverde, 'Chile y la integración latinoamericana. Política exterior, acción diplomática y opinión pública. 1960-1976' (Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2002).

[36] John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: New Press, 2004); McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*.

Unlike the Chilean side of this story, Argentine involvement in Central America is well integrated into the wider literature on the dictatorship's foreign policy.[37] There exists broad agreement in the literature regarding the way in which the dictatorship's particular Extreme Right ideology drove its participation in a *guerra sin fronteras* against 'subversion'.[38] Likewise, there is a wealth of literature dealing with US-Argentine relations during the military dictatorship which examining both their collaboration in Central America and the bilateral relationship more broadly.[39] Yet there is much to be gained from the treatment of both Chile and Argentina in one place. This has allowed a valuable and original comparative analysis of the two dictatorships' involvement in Central America, highlighting how differences in domestic politics and ideology fundamentally shaped the form that aid and assistance to Guatemala and El Salvador took. This approach has also revealed the intimate connections between the history of Chile and Argentina's bilateral relationship and the story of their foreign policy in Central America: ongoing tensions over the two countries' southern border, which reached fever pitch in 1978, effectively precluded any collaboration between the two likeminded anticommunist dictatorships in Central America, despite sharing many of the same ideological motivations to intervene. Exploring this friction between national interest and transnational anticommunist solidarity in turn reveals the wider impact of the long-standing border dispute on Chilean and Argentine foreign policy in this period.[40]

In sum, this thesis responds to this first research question concerning the nature of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador by tracing Southern Cone assistance to these Central American countries – from material and military aid to political support - and exploring the friction between different Southern Cone, Central American and US visions for the isthmus. It shows that both Southern Cone dictatorships played an important and

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[37] See, for example, the coverage of Central America in Andrés Cisneros and Carlos Escudé, *Historia de las Relaciones Exteriores Argentinas*, 15 vols (Buenos Aires: GEL.). http://www.argentina-rree.com/home_nueva.htm, accessed 21 February 2019.
[38] See, for example, Eduardo Luis Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino: quince años después, una mirada crítica* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1999).
[39] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*; William Michael Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and U.S. Cold War Policy toward Argentina* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); David Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).
[40] While there is plenty of literature on Chilean and Argentine foreign policy in relation to the border dispute it is almost exclusively framed in terms of the bilateral relationship. See, for example, Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial, 1900-2004*; Ernesto Bohoslavsky, *El complot patagónico: nación, conspiracionismo y violencia en el sur de Argentina y Chile (siglos XIX y XX)* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009).

underappreciated role in the region, offering distinct models and assistance to the Central American Extreme Right both within and beyond government. In telling this story, this thesis makes a major contribution to the international history of both the Southern Cone and Central America.

In responding to this first research question, this thesis poses three further big questions which connect this episode of transnational anticommunist collaboration to our understanding of the history of this period more broadly. Second, then, this thesis asks what an analysis of the Chilean and Argentine response to events in Guatemala and El Salvador can tell us about the Latin American Extreme Right and its conception of the Cold War. It thus explores how a transnational lens can help us to understand the nature of Latin American anticommunism in this period.

Through the incorporation of transnational approaches, this thesis adds to the burgeoning literature on the history of the transnational Right, particularly within Latin America (to which the aforementioned works on the Operation Condor also belong). In general, scholarship adopting transnational approaches to the study of the Right in the twentieth century has emerged more slowly than that addressing the Left, meaning that there remain significant gaps in the literature both within Latin America and beyond. In their edited collection *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (2010), Martin Durham and Margaret Power attribute this phenomenon to three assumptions. First, the false assumption that the right was fundamentally nationalistic in outlook, and thus historically unlikely to forge connections across borders. Second, the fact that initial transnational approaches tended toward the study of progressive movements or developments linked with globalisation, thus by and large excluding the Right as a subject in its own right. And third (if perhaps not limited to the Right), the false assumption that transnationalism is a recent phenomenon (when in fact it can be located throughout the period since the emergence of nation states).[41] In the Latin American context, one final reason can be added: an excessive focus on US anticommunism has tended to blind historians to the complex currents and relationships shaping the Right in Latin America.

In recent decades, however, the notion of the twentieth-century Right as insular and nationalistic has been largely dismissed, and, as Aaron Bell puts it, historians broadly agree that

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[41] M. Durham and M. Power, eds., *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-2.

'like their counterparts on the Left, right-wing movements have espoused innovative visions of modern society and cultivated ties with foreign sympathisers'.[42] There now exists a wealth of research exploring the regional, national and local roots of Latin American anticommunism throughout the twentieth century. This work both highlights the independence of Latin American anticommunist ideology and underscores the need to understand anticommunism not only as a reaction to communism but also as a complex, transnational way of interpreting reality, incorporating every aspect of society and powerful enough to connect actors across the region and beyond. Much of this new work on the transnational Right has come from scholars based in Latin America, including two valuable edited collections analysing the transnational Right in South America: *Circule por la derecha: percepciones, redes y contactos entre las derechas sudamericanas* (edited by João Fábio Bertonha and Ernesto Bohoslavsky) and *Pensar as direitas na América Latina* (edited by Bohoslavsky, Rodrigo Patto Sa Mottá and Stéphane Boisard).[43]

As well as pointing to the dynamic and innovative nature of Latin American Extreme Right, these collections – among other work by scholars such as Marcelo Casals, Luis Herrán, Mónica Naymich Macedonio and Michelle Chase – demonstrate how adopting transnational methods can reveal ties between Latin American anticommunists that existed outside of the formal boundaries of the state and are therefore missed by international histories which solely focus on state-to-state relations.[44] A transnational approach serves the same purpose here. The cultivation of ties with the Central American Extreme Right was a significant element of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America. This group drew adherents from within state institutions – chiefly the armed forces – but also conducted their own violent counterinsurgency campaign that operated largely independently of state authority and at times directly contravened government policy. The clearest expression of this phenomenon came after the transition to

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[42] A. T. Bell, 'A matter of western civilisation: transnational support for the Salvadoran counterrevolution, 1979–1982' *Cold War History* 15, no. 4 (2015): 512.

[43] João Fábio Bertonha and Ernesto Lázaro Bohoslavsky, *Circule por la derecha percepciones, redes y contactos entre las derechas sudamericanas, 1917-1973* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones UNGS, 2016); Ernesto Bohoslavsky, Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, and Stéphane Boisard, eds., *Pensar as direitas na América Latina* (Alameda Editorial, 2019).

[44] Marcelo Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 2019, 1–26; Herrán Ávila, 'White Guerrillas'; Luis Alberto Herrán Ávila, 'Anticommunism, the Extreme Right and the Politics of Enmity in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, 1946-1972' (PhD Dissertation, New York City, New School for Social Research, 2016); Macedonio, 'Historia de una colaboración anticomunista transnacional: los Tecos de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara y el gobierno de Chiang Kai-Shek a principios de los años setenta'; Michelle Chase, 'Confronting the Youngest Revolution: Cuban Anti-Communists and the Global Politics of Youth in the Early 1960s', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 53, no. 4 (2022), 643–66.

'shared' military-civilian rule in El Salvador in October 1979. Indeed the ambiguous relationship between the Central American Extreme Right and the state power in Guatemala and El Salvador makes a transnational approach vital. It is only by understanding how the two Southern Cone dictatorships used *both* bilateral and transnational connections that a full picture of their involvement in Central America can emerge.

These transnational histories of the Right in Latin America also share a common approach to the history of inter-American relations and the Cold War in Latin America more broadly. By pointing to the early twentieth century roots of Latin American anticommunism these works challenge the idea that anticommunism was 'imported' from the United States during the Cold War. The bipolar conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union mapped directly on to existing ideological divides in Latin America, creating an ideological force which was, in the words of Marcelo Casals, neither 'a mere reflection of US foreign policy toward Latin America nor… an exclusively Cold War phenomenon' but 'an historical articulation between local practices and experiences, on the one hand, and reception of and reactions to global events, ideas and networks, on the other'.[45] Indeed, the emergence of US-Soviet rivalry in the post-1945 period transformed existing ideological conflicts in Latin America, instilling them with global reference points. On the Left, this included the alternative to capitalism posed by Soviet communism and later Cuban and Chinese-style communism. On the Right, while the United States was a dominant reference point, Latin American anticommunists drew inspiration from a vast range of sources, as Kirsten Weld's recent work on the influence of the Spanish Civil War on the Latin American Right has shown.[46] In the same manner, Chilean and Argentine anticommunist ideas influenced the Central American Extreme Right; in exploring these diverse and multidirectional flows of influence, this thesis thus contributes to new histories of the Cold War in Latin America.

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[45] Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s', 3.

[46] Kirsten Weld, 'The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 1, no. 98 (2018), 77–115; Kirsten Weld, 'The Other Door: Spain and the Guatemalan Counter-Revolution, 1944–54', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51, no. 2 (2019), 307–31; See also Mila Burns' work on the Brazilian dictatorship's regional ideological influence: Mila Burns, 'Dictatorship Across Borders: The Brazilian Influence on the Overthrow of Salvador Allende', *Revista Estudios de Seguridad y Defensa* 3 (2014), 165–87; Mila Burns, 'El modelo brasileño: la influencia de Roberto Campos y Câmara Canto en la dictadura chilena', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* Debates (2016).

Relatedly, my conceptualisation of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America as part of a larger Latin American transnational anticommunist network provides us with new ways of thinking about place and space in the history of Latin America's Cold War, which has most often been told as a series of 'flashpoints', separated into chronological chapters and by national and sub-regional boundaries. As Doreen Massey has argued, studying networks gives us an alternative conceptual geographies, wherein rather than thinking of places as 'areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings… where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether than be a street, or a region or even a continent'.[47] This thesis shows how the Extreme Rightists in the Latin American Anticommunist International understood themselves and their local and national conflicts in regional and indeed global terms, rendering physical boundaries immaterial. From this perspective, my research underlines the need for greater attentiveness to the connections, both conceptual and material, between the military coups across the Southern Cone in the 1970s and the conflicts in Central America in the 1980s in order to fully appreciate the transnational anticommunist ties that spanned Latin America (and beyond) in this period.

These points regarding the conceptualisation of the Cold War in Latin America in turn relate to the third research question at the core of this thesis: what can focusing on external Latin American involvement in a conflict in the United States' so-called 'backyard' teach us about US power in Latin America? If Latin American anticommunism must be understood as an autonomous ideological force shaped by the way in which the Cold War mapped onto existing ideological divides in Latin America, then it follows that the Latin America Extreme Right's conception of the Cold War itself was distinct from that of the United States. To what extent, then, were Extreme Right Latin Americans capable of contesting US foreign policy in the hemisphere despite being on the 'same side' in the Cold War? Could the Latin American Extreme Right exercise a South-North intellectual influence on their ideological bedfellows on the New Right in the United States?

There exists a robust literature examining bilateral relations between the United States and various Latin American states in this period, much of which has already been mentioned in

[47] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 154.

the discussion of the international history of Central America and the Southern Cone dictatorships above. The novelty of my contribution lies in its analysis of inter-American relations beyond these bilateral relationships. I seek to write *around* the established histories of US-Central American, US-Chilean and US-Argentine relations in this period to explore how these anticommunist dictatorships responded to US policy *beyond* the narrow parameters of their relationship with the United States. This approach allows me to make a new contribution to the history of Jimmy Carter's human rights policy and its impact on inter-American relations. I show how the introduction of the human rights policy soon after Carter's inauguration not only profoundly shaped the bilateral relationships between the United States and different Latin American anticommunist dictatorships, but in fact drove those dictatorships to work closer together, compensating for the loss of US military aid. This adds nuance to our understanding of the relative success/failure of the human rights policy by revealing the limits on US leverage over these anticommunist regimes.

Moreover, this thesis also assesses the impact of Carter's human rights policy beyond the immediate timespan of the Carter administration. By exploring how the institutionalisation of human rights in US foreign policy under Carter in turn limited the ways in which the Reagan administration could frame its support for the counterinsurgencies in Central America, I reveal the longer-term legacy of Carter's short presidency on the rhetorical justifications for US foreign policy into the 1980s and beyond. As discussed below, I also show how this institutional legacy of human rights-related checks on US foreign policymaking ultimately did little to reduce the enormous human cost incurred when US intervention was justified on the grounds of 'human rights' and 'democracy', as in El Salvador from 1981 onwards, and Guatemala later that decade.

By examining the interaction between the Latin American Anticommunist International and the US New Right, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on US foreign policy in Latin America during the first term of the Reagan administration. Where many existing studies of the Reagan administration's foreign policy tend to begin in 1981 – when Reagan took office – my research reveals how many soon-to-be members of the Reagan administration spent the late 1970s as active participants in the transnational anticommunist network coalescing around Central America. I argue that this network gave members of the Latin American Extreme Right the opportunity to build relationships with members of the US New Right upon whom they could exercise an intellectual influence, in turn shaping the form the Reagan 1980 campaign platform took. By analysing how this mobilisation of the Latin American

Extreme Right intersected with and indeed influenced US foreign policymaking in the region I make the case for new histories of inter-American relations which show the multi-directional flow of influence between the United States and Latin America.[48]

Likewise, my analysis of US participation in the transnational anticommunist network that coalesced around Central America in the late 1970s forms a prehistory of what scholars of US foreign relations have described as the 'Reagan Doctrine' of the 1980s. In his contribution to the edited volume *The Shock of the Global*, Mark Atwood Lawrence writes that 'the Reagan administration's sponsorship of the Nicaraguan contras and the Afghan mujahedin - and more generally the promulgation in 1985 of the Reagan Doctrine, pledging support for anti-Communist forces around the world - represented something new in the conduct of the Cold War. The United States now signalled its intention to enlist non-state actors in the global anti-Communist struggle'.[49] In contrast, new research – most importantly that by Kyle Burke – emphasises that these non-state actors which the Reagan administration sought to instrumentalise were already part of a pre-existing transnational network over which the United States had limited control.[50] The Latin American Anticommunist International played a vital part in that network. By placing the development of US foreign policy in the 1980s in the context of the changes of the 1970s, this study of Southern Cone involvement in Central America holds relevance for those interested in the roots of the development of US warfare by proxy which emerged in the late Cold War period and continued into the post-Cold War era. It is only by widening the scope of analysis of US foreign policy to an American perspective (i.e. including Latin American influences) that this can be fully grasped.

How, then, can the story of the Latin American Anticommunist International help us understand the wider upheaval in the international political system in the late 1970s and early 1980s? This is the final research question at the heart of the thesis. More specifically, in what ways did the rise of the international human rights movement, the global economic crises of

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[48] Latin American agency in relations with the United States has been well established in IR, yet less so in history. Tom Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Benjamin Cowan's most recent book is an example of excellent new work revealing south-north flows of intellectual influence in this period: Benjamin A Cowan, *Moral Majorities across the Americas: Brazil, the United States, and the Creation of the Religious Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).
[49] Niall Ferguson et al., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 218.
[50] Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War*.

1979 and 1982 and the first stages of the Third Wave of democratisation shaped the nature of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America? And how did the Latin American Extreme Right influence these events in turn?

Carter's human rights policy was just one aspect of the widespread international human rights scrutiny that Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships faced in this period. A transnational approach – as adopted here – reveals how this scrutiny profoundly shaped the form that ties between Extreme Right actors took. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s Chilean and Argentine military leaders went to great lengths to conceal their involvement in Central America from the public eye, using supposed 'non-state' ties – such as participation in the World Anti-Communist League – to execute foreign policy aims. An exploration of this phenomenon challenges the conventional state/non-state binary, revealing how many non-state actors were in fact thinly veiled agents of the Extreme Right.

Crucially, the chapters that follow also explore how the Latin American Extreme Right were able to engage in the development of the international human rights discourse itself. From as early as 1977, the Latin American Extreme Right sought to co-opt the language of human rights, developing their own anticommunist conception of human rights wherein human rights could not exist under communism, and in defeating the communist threat the dictatorships of Latin America were in fact the primary defenders of human rights. This is important as it provides a vital backstory to what scholars have described variously as the 'almost immediate redefinition of human rights' in the service of 'neoconservative democracy promotion' under Reagan, or the 'Reagan turnaround on human rights'.[51] I contend that this redefinition was not solely a US-based process, but at least in part influenced by the reinvention of the language of human rights by Latin American Extreme Right leaders in concert with members of the US New Right in the late 1970s.

In this respect, this study of the Latin American Anticommunist International also helps reveal the origins of the very narrow definitions of what constitutes 'democracy' and 'human rights' in the world today. While political scientists have offered theoretical explanations for how the rise of the international human rights movement and 'wave' of democratisation in the 1970s

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[51] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 218; Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard, *Reagan, Congress, and Human Rights: Contesting Morality in US Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) chapter 2.

and 1980s led to a shift toward a 'normative commitment to democracy', this scholarship does not provide a concrete understanding of how the Latin American Extreme Right understood and responded to these phenomena.[52] Over the course of the early 1980s, both the Reagan administration and Central American military leaders recognised that embracing the language of 'human rights' and 'democracy' provided a veil of legitimacy behind which violent counterinsurgency and rampant human rights abuses could continue.[53] Indeed, as Jennifer Schirmer and others have shown in relation to Guatemala, military-led democratisation must be understood as another form of counterinsurgency in itself.[54] In short, 'democratisation' on the military's own terms served to preserve many of the structural aspects of authoritarian rule and safeguard them for the future, while new 'democratic' practices simultaneously helped satisfy the requirements for US military and economic assistance.

This thesis builds on this understanding of 'democratisation' as counterinsurgency by providing a regional and transnational perspective. Just as members of the Latin American Extreme Right worked together to compensate for the material losses incurred by the interruption of US military aid in 1977, so they worked with and closely observed one another's experiences of the 'Third Wave of democratisation'. I show how Salvadoran and Guatemalan leaders read into the collapse of the Argentine dictatorship in the wake of the Malvinas/Falklands conflict and applied the lessons to their own situations. Likewise, while in the immediate term 'democratisation' in Central America directly shaped the decline of Chilean involvement in the conflicts there in 1982-84 - as the possibility of a Chilean-style regime became increasingly distant – later in the decade the Chilean transition to democracy followed a similar pattern, producing comparably shallow democratic institutions. I argue that acknowledging both the relationship between 'democratisation' and counterinsurgency and the connections between Central American and Southern Cone experiences of 'democratisation' can help us to better understand why so many of the democracies that emerged from the 'Third Wave' of democratisation in Latin America (in both Central America and the Southern Cone)

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52 Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal S. Pérez Liñan, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) chapter 9.

53 On this transformation within the Reagan administration, see William Michael Schmidli, *Freedom on the Offensive: Human Rights, Democracy Promotion, and U.S. Interventionism in the late Cold War* (Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

54 Jennifer G. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), esp. chap 7; Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 143.

have proved so inadequate in addressing the structural inequalities embedded in authoritarian rule, triggering backlash today.

In its chronology, reaching from the late 1970s into the early 1980s, this thesis thus adds to the burgeoning literature which asserts the importance of the major upheavals of the 1970s for understanding the international developments of the 1980s and the foundations of the post-Cold War world. As Daniel Sargent puts it, 'the rise of human rights, the remaking of national and international economic orders, and the ascent of globalization transformed America's superpower role and contributed to the Cold War ending as it did - with the USSR's implosion and America's presumption of victory'.[55] The story of Southern Cone involvement in Central America tells us much about the role played by the Latin American Extreme Right in this transformation.

Scope and Wider Significance

An obvious question here is why these four countries? At the most basic level, these four regimes shared similar experiences and outlooks. As Greg Grandin put it in the conclusion of his 2008 book *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 'notwithstanding important differences in social structure, the content and manifestation of popular politics, and the ferocity of elite reaction, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and El Salvador fit best the pattern I have described for Guatemala. Each country suffered prolonged periods of counterinsurgent dictatorship aimed to crush an increasingly radicalized mass movement'.[56] However, a study involving all these countries identified by Grandin would be impossibly large in scope. Of these, several specific reasons informed my selection of Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador.

On the Southern Cone side, Argentina was the obvious choice. The Argentine role in Central America is long-established in the secondary literature while the recent declassification and digitisation of sources described above made the topic ripe for re-examination. The decision to examine Chilean involvement was more of an informed guess: as the historiographical overview above explores, Chilean leadership of Operation Condor is well known, while writing on subsequent Chilean transnational anticommunist activity is virtually non-existent. It followed that it seemed likely that events in Central America would have elicited some response from the

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[55] Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 297–98.
[56] Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre Latin America in the Cold War*, 177.

Pinochet dictatorship, and fortunately the documents I read on my first trip to the Chilean Foreign Ministry Archive in early 2018 bore out this prediction. Moreover, the dynamics of Chilean-Argentine bilateral relations in this period made the comparison of the two dictatorships' involvement in Central America all the more fruitful.

On the Central America side, the similarities recognised by Grandin in the trajectories followed by Guatemala and El Salvador in the 1970s and 1980s marks them apart from the other Central American republics. As a result, I focus on these two countries at the expense of the other republics on the isthmus, including the other two – Nicaragua and Honduras – that also played critical roles in the revolutionary turmoil in Central America in this period. Nicaragua is an obvious outlier in that the revolution succeeded, and the Somoza regime ousted by the FSLN was of a civilian, not military, dictatorship. Likewise, while Honduras played an important role as a host country to both refugees and counterrevolutionaries (particularly Nicaraguan) from the conflicts in neighbouring countries, and provided an important base for Argentine regional operations, it did not experience civil war akin to that in Guatemala and El Salvador; as such, while certainly worthy of further research, Honduras does not offer such a fruitful comparison.[57] Indeed, the choice of Guatemala and El Salvador is also most suitable in terms of the transnational approach to the Extreme Right adopted here: as well as these shared experiences, deep familial, economic and political ties existed (and continue to exist) between the elites of the two countries. As we shall see, the story of the development of the Salvadoran Extreme Right told here is inseparable from that of its counterpart in Guatemala.

Finally, it is worth briefly addressing why this story matters now, almost four decades on from its the end point. In his discussion of violence as a defining feature of twentieth-century Latin American history more than a decade ago, Grandin described how 'there has been little attention in Latin American historiography to how sequential crises rooted in specific national conflicts generated waves of radicalization that extended spatially, that is, across the region, and temporally, from the first cycle of post-Second World War coups, through the rise of the New Left and the New Right of the 1960s and 1970s, through to the Central American civil wars of the 1980s'.[58] The story told in this thesis is important because it shows the actual concrete

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[57] On Honduras as a refugee host country, see Fionntán O'Hara, 'Mixed Motives: The Politics of U.S. Interest in Refugees in Honduras during the 1980s', *The Latin Americanist* 65, no. 4 (2021), 481–510.
[58] Grandin and Joseph, *A Century of Revolution Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War*, 29.

connections between the violence of the Southern Cone dictatorships in the 1970s and that of the Central American counterinsurgencies of the 1980s.

This matters because while the violent conflicts themselves are over and the dictatorships are in the past, the struggle for justice for the crimes committed in the name of counterinsurgency in this period remains. And this struggle – like the violence itself – is taking place with an eye to the regional context. A 2010 report on the victims of forced disappearance in Guatemala placed discussion of the crimes committed by the military during the Guatemala Civil War in the context of similar violent repression across Latin America, drawing direct parallels with Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil and others.[59] Likewise, Argentine sociologist Julieta Rostica's extensive research into Argentine involvement in the civil wars in Central America in this period led to her acting as an expert witness in the 2018 trial of five retired senior Guatemalan military officers for crimes against humanity in relation to the illegal detention, torture and rape of Emma Molina Thiessen, and the enforced disappearance of her 14-year-old brother, Marco Antonio Molina Thiessen, in 1981.[60] Rostica's testimony points to the importance of ongoing historical research into the transnational connections which informed the atrocities of this period, and the part it can play in the ongoing struggle for justice decades later.

Yet beyond these legal proceedings, the ways in which the history of this period is told – in both the Southern Cone and Central America – remains both politically fraught and fragmented along national lines. National truth commissions - by their very nature – have tended to evaluate the events of the 1970s and 1980s in their national, rather than regional context, setting the terms for subsequent public and popular debate over historical memory. Transnational histories such as this one, working from a different starting point in terms of scale and space, thus offer a different perspective on these dictatorships and conflicts and their history.

Crucially, historical research can also offer a corrective to the enduring power of dictatorship-era narratives. In the words of Steve Stern, state terror 'inflicts not only violence but also denial and euphemism – an "official story" - the struggle for a new language of truth

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[59] Propuesta de Investigación del Destino Final de las Víctimas de Desaparición Forzada en Guatemala (Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala, Litografía Unión: Guatemala, 2010).
[60] 'Julieta Rostica: la socióloga que comprobó los nexos entre militares argentinos y guatemaltecos', CONICET, https://www.conicet.gov.ar/julieta-rostica-la-sociologa-que-comprobo-los-nexos-entre-militares-argentinos-y-guatemaltecos-durante-la-dictadura/ accessed 4 November 2021.

testifies to the value of holistic analysis of politics and culture'.[61] As the chapters that follow explore, both Southern Cone dictatorships consciously used history to legitimise their regimes, and subsequently to project their visions for anticommunist governance onto Central America. And in the decades since the Third Wave of democratisation swept across Latin America, in both Central America and the Southern Cone, many of the protagonists in the conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s have continued to occupy positions within the public sphere. In this time, the battleground has shifted from a direct struggle for (or against) reform and revolution to what Erik Ching has described (in the Salvadoran context) as 'an intense battle for control over the narrative' [of the war].[62] In this way, the 'official histories' developed by the Extreme Right dictatorships studied here have a legacy that reaches into the present. In particular, across Latin America the Extreme Right has long maintained the narrative that they are the true representatives of the nation (or *patria*), casting the Left as subject to 'foreign influences' or indeed 'foreign subversion'. The story told here challenges this central assertion. As this thesis shows, the Extreme Right was subject to myriad international influences, as much if not more so than its far-Left counterparts, and certainly more so than many of their purportedly 'subversive' victims, many of whose main 'subversive act' was attempting to promote democracy and inclusion or failing to conform to traditional cultural norms. While the actors at the centre of this story were extreme in their views and relatively small in number, the legacies of these dictatorships and the violence of the conflicts in Central America are keenly felt today. Families continue to search for the bodies of the 'disappeared' while structural socioeconomic and racial inequalities remain entrenched; democratic institutions remain shallow and exclusionary and human rights abuses continue.

Chapter Structure

This thesis is organised chronologically. The first chapter provides an overview of the history of the Latin American Extreme Right in the twentieth century, exploring both the regional and local conditions which shaped the development of Extreme Right ideology in each of Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador and instances of transnational anticommunist collaboration in Latin America prior to 1977. Chapter two examines the Latin American Extreme Right's response to Jimmy Carter's inauguration as US president in January 1977 and

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[61] Steve J. Stern, 'Memory: The Curious History of a Cultural Code Word', *Radical History Review* 2016, no. 124 (2016), 218.
[62] Erik Ching, *Stories of Civil War in El Salvador: A Battle over Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of California Press, 2016), 262.

argues that Carter's human rights policy acted as a lightning rod for the Latin American Extreme Right's pre-existing concerns about the direction of US foreign policy in the era of détente. For the Extreme Right, the human rights policy actively undermined the struggle against 'subversion' in the Western Hemisphere. As a result, Carter's inauguration sparked a new and unprecedented phase of transnational anticommunist collaboration which both drew the Southern Cone and Central American anticommunist dictatorships together and facilitated closer ties between the Latin American Extreme Right and the US New Right.

Chapter three examines the Chilean and Argentine response to rising instability in Guatemala and El Salvador in 1978-79 against the backdrop of these changes in the inter-American system. It shows how both Southern Cone dictatorships conceived of events in Central America as intimately linked to the 'subversive threat' which they sought to combat on the domestic front and traces the expansion of the provision of military training to Guatemalan and Salvadoran officers. While the two Southern Cone dictatorships responded in a similar manner, this chapter also highlights how national factors – namely the two countries' ongoing dispute over their southern border – precluded any meaningful Chilean-Argentine collaboration, instead driving the two dictatorships to compete with one another for Guatemalan and Salvadoran support in international forums.

Chapter four drives the narrative forwards and focuses on the aftermath of the Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979. The Sandinista triumph cemented the Latin American Extreme Right's fears about regional and global communist expansion and US inaction in response. Between July 1979 and November 1980 Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador reached new heights, with the nature of this involvement profoundly shaped by national specificities. In the Chilean case, the process of institutionalisation at home shaped perceptions of and responses to events in Central America, whereby the dictatorship presented its model of 'protected democracy' then undergoing codification in the 1980 constitution as a potential solution to the conflicts abroad. For the Argentine dictatorship, Central America represented another battlefield in the *guerra sin fronteras* against subversion that lay at the core of its political programme.

The final two chapters explore how events in both Central America and the Southern Cone in the early 1980s led to the decline of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador. Chapter five centres on how Ronald Reagan's election as US president altered

the dynamics of inter-American relations once more, with critical consequences for Central America. It shows how despite the Latin American Extreme Right's demonstrable influence on the Reagan 1980 campaign platform and the presence of individuals linked to the wider transnational anticommunist network in the Reagan administration itself, much of Reagan's policy toward Central America as it emerged over the course of 1981 proved a disappointment to Extreme Rightists in both Central and South America. This chapter explores the friction between US and Southern Cone visions for Central America and how this limited the potential for US-Southern Cone collaboration in Guatemala and El Salvador in 1981-82.

Chapter six uses the elections in Guatemala and El Salvador in March 1982 to explore how the rise of democracy promotion as a central tenet of US foreign policy effectively rendered the emergence of a Southern Cone-style dictatorship in Central America impossible. Over this same period, developments in the Southern Cone drove a sharp decline in both regimes' capacity to intervene in Central America. In Chile, economic crisis and the outbreak of mass protest in 1982-83 shook the very foundations of the Pinochet dictatorship; defeat in the Falklands-Malvinas conflict in June 1982 marked the beginning of the end of the Argentine dictatorship. While the transnational anticommunist network through which the two Southern Cone dictatorships had operated would live on, by 1984 meaningful Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador had effectively come to an end. While this did not spell the end of the civil wars themselves – they continued until 1996 and 1992 respectively – the re-establishment of US dominance and the advent of 'democratisation' led to a reconfiguration both of international involvement in the conflicts and the likely form that any peace could take.

In 1977, however, the possibilities for the future were endless. Both Southern Cone dictatorships were reaching the peak of their power and the conflicts in Central America were yet to escalate to the dizzying heights of the turn of the decade. At this point, the primary concern gripping the Latin American Extreme Right was the inauguration of the new US president, Jimmy Carter, and the wider international human rights movement that he championed. A new phase in Latin American transnational anticommunism was only just beginning.

Chapter 1: The Latin American Extreme Right in the Twentieth Century

Introduction

In March 1977, anticommunists from across the Americas and beyond gathered in Asunción, Paraguay, for the III Congress of the *Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana* (CAL – Latin American Anticommunist Confederation). After three days of discussion, much of it focused on the implications of US president Jimmy Carter's human rights policy for Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships, delegates pledged to unite in the face of their enemies 'headquartered as much in Washington as in Moscow' in order to 'maintain unity and peace among the hispano-american nations'.[1] While this congress marked the beginning of a new phase in transnational anticommunist activity, many delegates were already very familiar with one another. Some had met as early as the *Congreso contra la Intervención Soviética en América Latina* (Congress against Soviet Intervention in Latin America) in Mexico City in 1954. Others were brought together through earlier WACL (World Anti-Communist League) and CAL meetings. Yet more of these actors shared membership of other organisations, such as the Mont Pelerin Society. The Latin American Anticommunist International that sprang into action to aid the counterinsurgency in Central America in the late 1970s had deep roots in these earlier instances of transnational and international anticommunist collaboration throughout the Cold War and reaching further back into the early twentieth century. This chapter explores these roots.

These anticommunist actors shared the same Latin American Extreme Right ideology. They occupied a common political imaginary and were bound by a conviction that communism represented an existential threat to 'Western Civilisation', a term frequently used but rarely defined by those on the Extreme Right. For the purposes of this thesis, 'Western Civilisation' refers to the Extreme Right's identification of Latin America – through its experiences of Spanish (and Portuguese) empire and the associated European origin of a large proportion of the regional population - as a constituent part of the 'West'. It followed that Latin America, along with Western Europe and North America, could lay claim to the legacy of the civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome and, more importantly, the Western Christian traditions of the Catholic Church. This warped notion of 'Western Civilisation' which the Extreme Right sought to defend from communism thus encompassed both traditional cultural norms – including patriarchal dominance in both the public and private spheres and a rejection of homosexuality –

[1] Declaración Final del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0065-68, CDyA.

as well as a racialised social hierarchy where whiteness was equated to Latin America's 'Western' heritage.[2]

Although the Latin American Extreme Right shared other beliefs – including, by the 1970s, a widespread commitment to neoliberal economics – their commitment to defending 'Western Civilisation' from communism was the glue which held them together despite the physical distance between them. As Luis Herrán has argued, this central element uniting Latin American anticommunism in the twentieth century can be best understood in terms of 'the politics of enmity'. That is, the idea of a common enemy, communism, acting as an agent of 'social, political and moral disruption' and variously posing a threat to 'world peace, to national aims, to sovereignty and security, to democracy broadly conceived, and/or to the cultural matrix, institutions, and Western Christian traditions of Latin America.'[3]

At least some aspects of this conception of the communist threat were shared by many closer to the political centre. Yet the Extreme Right outlook was distinct in the belief that the suspension of democratic rule and the use of violence were legitimate and often necessary tools to defeat this enemy. Defined in these capacious terms, the 'enemy' could take on various forms in different local, national and regional contexts. This ambiguity is precisely what allowed Extreme Right anticommunists to draw connections between events and phenomena thousands of miles apart. Yet at the same time, the actual form that Extreme Right political projects took on the ground in Latin America varied enormously, deeply influenced by local conditions. This chapter provides the historical context necessary to understand the nature of the Extreme Right in Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador at our starting point in 1977, and to grasp the extent of these countries' involvement in different transnational anticommunist organisations up to this point.

At the outset, it is important to establish the ideological basis of the anticommunist dictatorships in Chile (1973-1990) and Argentina (1976-83), setting the scene to understand how, why and in what form Chilean and Argentine Extreme Right anticommunists and the military dictatorships whom they represented became involved in Central America the late 1970s and early 1980s. This chapter will then examine the historical background of the guerrilla movements

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[2] For a discussion of Latin America and the 'West', see the introduction to Jose C. Moya ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[3] Herrán Ávila, 'Anticommunism, the Extreme Right and the Politics of Enmity in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, 1946-1972', 17.

in Guatemala and El Salvador in the late 1970s and will provide a brief overview of the intellectual roots of the Central American Extreme Right. Despite important differences between the Southern Cone and Central America and indeed at a national level, the third part of this chapter will explore how the existence of an overarching Latin American Extreme Right ideology led Extreme Rightists from all four countries to play a part in a range of transnational anticommunist networks in the second half of the twentieth century. By 1977, a range of connections already existed between Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador, and between those countries, the United States, and larger, global anticommunist organisations.

Anticommunist military dictatorships in the Southern Cone: Chile and Argentina

By 1977, military regimes dominated the Southern Cone. Dictatorships established in Paraguay (1954) and Brazil (1964) were joined by those in Uruguay and Chile in 1973, and Argentina in 1976. Together, these regimes formed a strong anticommunist bloc and shared many ideological traits, perhaps most notably their commitment to defeating the perceived communist threat by any means and in any place. This commitment formed the core of Operation Condor, the transnational collaboration between Southern Cone security forces allowing each to pursue 'subversives' across the region and far beyond in the mid-1970s.[4] While Operation Condor is a prime example of the ways in which the shared anticommunist worldview held by these dictatorships acted as a catalyst for transnational and international collaboration, the treatment of these regimes as a single homogenous bloc risks erasing the very real, and significant, differences that existed between them.

A similar point can be made in relation to the question of US influence over these Southern Cone anticommunist regimes. There is no denying that the Southern Cone dictatorships' anticommunist agendas certainly aligned with the interests of the imperial power in the hemisphere (at least before 1977) and the Southern Cone militaries had received substantial training from the United States, particularly in the wake of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Nor can the role of the United States in fomenting the military coups in the Southern Cone in the 1960s and 1970s be ignored. However, Latin American anticommunism long predated the Cold War and possessed distinct ideological traits to that in the United States. US training built on concepts – of National Security Doctrine and the subversive communist enemy – that had already existed in some form or another since the early twentieth century. Moreover, ultimate

[4] On Condor, see McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*; Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*.

responsibility for the coups lies with those who carried them out, often with the assistance of other Southern Cone powers, such as in the Chilean case.[5] Once in power, these anticommunist dictatorships drew on their own specific brand of Extreme Right anticommunist thought, shaped by the global, regional and national context. Thus, although Southern Cone Extreme Right anticommunists were subject to a range of similar influences that directly informed their understanding of the Cold War and the nature of the communist threat, the actual form that these regimes took was dependent on local circumstances and specific interpretations of national contexts and histories. With this in mind, it is necessary to delineate the ideological contours of each regime separately.

Chile: a political project designed to last

The military coup on 11 September 1973 ended 42 years of democratic rule in Chile, deposing Salvador Allende's socialist Popular Unity (*Unidad Popular)* government elected three years earlier. As the world watched *La Moneda*, the Chilean presidential palace, in flames following bombing by the Chilean Air Force's Hawker Hunter jets, the newly declared military junta justified its actions in explicitly anticommunist terms. The armed forces were united in their mission to 'fight for the liberation of the *Patria*' so as to avoid the country 'continuing under the Marxist yoke'.[6] On the evening of 11 September, junta member and Commander in Chief of the Chilean Air Force, General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán declared that the coup had been launched 'to extirpate the Marxist cancer in Chile'.[7] In the days and weeks after the coup, the junta transformed Chile's national stadium into a concentration camp holding upwards of 7,000 prisoners and unleashed violent military repression against those with any perceived loyalty to the Allende government across the length of the country. The dictatorship imprisoned former ministers and congressional leaders and the infamous 'Caravan of Death' murdered at least a further 75 prisoners in military custody in the north of the country. To date, the Chilean

[5] On Brazil and Chile, see Tanya Harmer, 'Brazil's Cold War in the Southern Cone, 1970–1975', *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (2012), 659–81; On other influences on Southern Cone National Security Doctrine, see Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 80–81.

[6] 'Primer comunicado de la Junta Militar', 11 September 1973 (later published in *El Mercurio*, 13 September 1973, 3), http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-92134.html, accessed 17 May 2021.

[7] Gustavo Leigh, obituary, *The Guardian*, 2 October 1999, https://www.theguardian.com/news/1999/oct/02/guardianobituaries1, accessed 17 May 2021.

government recognises over 40,000 victims of human rights abuses under the Pinochet dictatorship including 3,065 murdered or disappeared.[8]

The junta moved fast to frame their actions in terms of a violent struggle against the communist 'enemy', employing a central trope of the Extreme Right thought. As Verónica Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate has argued, the fledgling dictatorship sought to portray Chile 'as a fortress besieged by communism and at war with it'.[9] Statements in the wake of the coup emphasised the violent threat posed by ongoing (democratic) socialist rule, fabricating a 'constant increase in paramilitary groups trained by the parties of the *Unidad Popular*'.[10] A month later, the junta published the 'White Book of the Change of Government' (*Libro Blanco del Cambio de Gobierno*), a text full of false claims backed by spurious evidence which sought to establish the presence of 'foreign extremists' in Allende's Chile. The *Libro Blanco* claimed that Allende himself had drafted a plan – 'Plan Z' – for the assassination of his political opponents, including senior members of the armed forces.[11] This notion of Chile 'at war' was upheld by all those who made up the military regime, including civilian supporters. It remained a central feature of the dictatorship's efforts to justify ongoing military rule and widespread human rights abuses until the very end.[12]

While the junta drew on these common Extreme Right rhetorical devices to define its purpose, the structure of, and influences on the regime were specific to the Chilean context. In his dual position as Commander in Chief of the Chilean army (the largest element of the Chilean armed forces) and President of the Republic (from December 1974), Pinochet wielded enormous – but not total – power over the dictatorship. In institutional terms, the governing junta remained the highest authority throughout the seventeen years of military rule, and Pinochet relied on the backing of other junta members. For example, it was only with the support of the

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[8] BBC News, 'Chile recognises 9,800 more victims of Pinochet's rule', 18 August 2011, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-14584095, accessed 22 November 2021.
[9] Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, '"¡Estamos en guerra, Señores!". El Régimen Militar de Pinochet y El "Pueblo", 1973-1980', 172.
[10] 'Primer comunicado de la Junta Militar', 11 September 1973 (later published in *El Mercurio*, 13 September 1973, 3), http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-92134.html, accessed 17 May 2021.
[11] 'Plan Z', *El Mercurio*, 7 February 1999, http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-96802.html, accessed 17 May 2021; Daniel Gunnar Kressel, 'Technicians of the Spirit: Post-Fascist Technocratic Authoritarianism in Spain, Argentina, and Chile, 1945-1988' (PhD Dissertation, New York, Columbia University, 2019), 264.
[12] Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, '"¡Estamos en guerra, Señores!". El Régimen Militar de Pinochet y El "Pueblo", 1973-1980', 172.

respective chiefs of the Chilean navy and the *Carabineros* (armed police), Admiral José Toribio Merino and General César Mendoza Durán, that Pinochet was able to deprive his greatest critic within the regime, General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán, of his position as Commander in Chief of the Chilean Air Force and with it his membership of the junta in 1978.[13]

Yet beyond the junta, Pinochet also used institutional means to strengthen his position, particularly in relation to the ongoing political repression that began on 11 September. Most notably, Pinochet founded the DINA (*Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional*, the secret police) in November 1973. Operating under the direction of known army hard-liner and rabid anticommunist General Manuel Contreras, from June 1974 the DINA moved outside of the formal remit of the Chilean armed forces and, through Contreras, answered directly to Pinochet, not the junta, forming an important element of his personal power. Between 1973 and its dissolution in 1977 the DINA committed some of the worst human rights abuses of the dictatorship – including spearheading Chilean leadership of Operation Condor and organising the assassination of Orlando Letelier in Washington D.C. in September 1976, with the latter event leading directly to its dissolution. In this respect, the DINA is perhaps most symbolic of the nature of the dictatorship in those early years during which the regime committed its most extensive and egregious human rights abuses. Crucially, however, even at this stage, Pinochet's strength relied on a combination of this institutional and personal power with his ability to command the loyalty of a variety of right-wing groups who in turn mobilised a popular support base for the regime.[14]

At its outset, the military junta received substantial civilian support. Members of the Chilean middle- and upper-classes formed the core constituency of the popular opposition to the Allende government, manifested most clearly in the *cacerolazos* (pot-banging protests) over food shortages from 1971.[15] Right-wing women played an important role in these protests and the opposition more broadly, as Margaret Power's work has shown.[16] In terms of Chile's political parties, the junta received support from and actively collaborated with the conservative *Partido Nacional* (PN, National Party), which had formed in 1966 from three existing right-wing political

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13 Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime*, 77.
14 On the cultivation of popular support, see Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, '"¡Estamos en guerra, Señores!". El Régimen Militar de Pinochet y El "Pueblo", 1973-1980'.
15 Marcelo Casals, 'The Insurrection of the Middle Class: Social Mobilization and Counterrevolution during the Popular Unity Government, Chile, 1970–1973', *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 3 (2021), 944–69.
16 Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle against Allende, 1964-1973* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

parties that had supported the presidency of Jorge Alessandri (1958-64). The PN had come within 50,000 votes of Allende in the 1970 elections and retained much popular support, particularly in the capital.

The Popular Unity government's relationship with its predecessor in power, the Chilean Christian Democrat Party (DC) had deteriorated severely since mid-1971, and in 1972, with the 1973 congressional elections in mind, the DC joined with the PN to run a joint opposition ticket. In the aftermath of the coup, some elements of the DC enthusiastically welcomed the coup, while others cautiously accepted the new military regime and blamed Allende for bringing it upon himself. Through these actions, the DC lent early legitimacy to the military's actions (although left-wing elements within the party simultaneously condemned the coup).[17] As we shall see, later, as the junta's ambitions for longevity became apparent, the DC transformed into an important element of the Chilean opposition movement.[18]

The dictatorship also received support from a range of right-wing groups. While these groups' relative influence would vary over the dictatorship's seventeen-year lifespan, all would remain loyal to Pinochet, even after the transition to democracy in 1990.[19] At the furthest Right stood *Patria y Libertad* (Fatherland and Freedom) and other nationalist groups, identified by Carlos Huneeus as the 'hard-liners' or *duros*. Closer to the centre were several 'soft-liner' (or *blando*) groups that sought to influence the regime's direction. These included the infamous economic team, the 'Chicago Boys', the *gremialistas* united under Jaime Guzmán, and politicians from the aforementioned *Partido Nacional* alongside other businessmen and professionals who had formed part of the Alessandri government (1958-64) and Alessandri's campaign for the 1970 presidential elections.[20] While the lines between these two groups were sometimes blurred – *Patria y Libertad* possessed links with the PN, for example - the primary difference between the *duros* and *blandos* revolved around the political form that the regime should take. The former favoured indefinite military dictatorship while the latter proposed various forms of 'protected' or 'authoritarian' democracy. By the late 1970s it was the latter that eventually won out, in turn

[17] Carlos Huneeus, 'La oposición en el autoritarismo. El caso del Partido Demócrata Cristiano durante el régimen del general Pinochet en Chile', *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* 61, no. 227 (2016), 257.
[18] Olga Ulianova and Alessandro Santoni, 'The Chilean Christian Democratic Party, the U.S. Government, and European Politics during Pinochet's Military Regime (1973–1988)', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021), 163–95.
[19] Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime*, 89.
[20] Huneeus, 89.

profoundly shaping the way in which the dictatorship conceptualised its role in Central America. Yet while these various groups played important roles in shaping the dictatorship's agenda and representing its interests overseas – including in transnational anticommunist networks – the centre of power within the regime lay with the armed forces, and specifically Pinochet.

Despite the differences and occasional conflicts between the civilian groups that supported the dictatorship, they also shared a set of common ideological traits and an unwavering commitment to the dictatorship throughout its lifespan and even beyond 1990. It is these shared traits that make it possible to make a general assessment of the regime as an anticommunist dictatorship of the Extreme Right. First and foremost, the violent repression and human rights abuses perpetrated by the dictatorship, in the full knowledge of its supporters and indeed the international community - attests to their shared belief in violence as a legitimate – and necessary – political tool.[21] This belief went hand in hand with the dictatorship's fundamentally antidemocratic outlook, with its civilian supporters adhering to, and indeed directly informing, the junta's overarching narrative that liberal democracy – such as that which had existed in Chile since the 1925 constitution – was not fit to withstand the threat posed by international communism, as evidenced by Salvador Allende's election in 1970.[22]

Instead, the dictatorship sought to paint itself as the true heir of the *caudillos* of Chile's early republican era. In 1974 the Chilean Ministry of Education published a pamphlet of biographies of the four members of the junta with an introduction remarking on the 'extraordinary resemblance' between the present moment and that of 140 years earlier, in the time of Diego Portales when that 'visionary man' who held 'no affection for political activities' was forced by the circumstances – 'misrule… anarchy and economic chaos' – to intervene in order to restore 'authority'. Like Portales, the junta cast themselves as the reluctant saviours of Chile, prepared to carry out a 'National Restoration' in God's name.[23] The junta cemented this

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[21] Several members of these civilian groups denied knowledge of the dictatorship's human rights abuses, but this seems improbable.

[22] All the civilian groups mentioned above had at some point called for a suspension of liberal democracy and its replacement by a different system at some point in the three years before the 11 September 1973 coup. See José Manuel Castro, 'Revolución y Contrarrevolución en América Latina. El proyecto político de la dictadura de Pinochet' (The Rise and Fall of Chile's 'Authoritarian Democracy' (1970-2020), Free University Berlin, 2021), 3–5.

[23] Pamphlet, Biografía de los miembros de la Junta de Gobierno General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, Almirante José Toribio Merino C., General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán, General César Mendoza Durán (Santiago: Ed. Nac. Gabriela Mistral, 1974), http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-85791.html, accessed 19 May 2021.

allusion to Portales in its choice of headquarters following the 11 September coup. With the presidential palace in ruins, the UNCTAD building in central Santiago (constructed for the 1972 UN Conference on Trade and Development) became the dictatorship's centre of operations. It was renamed Edificio Diego Portales in December that year.[24]

It is important to note the religious dimensions of the Pinochet dictatorship implicit in the junta's invocation of Portales. As Luis Roniger has argued, by the 1970s the armed forces across the Southern Cone shared a *salvacionista* stance. They understood themselves as tasked with enacting God's will through the so-called defence of 'Western Civilisation' and the 'true values of the nation' against the extremely broadly defined threat of communist subversion.[25] This outlook mapped directly onto divisions in the Catholic Church in this period. The Latin American Extreme Right rejected many of the changes in the Catholic Church arising from Vatican II (1962-65) and identified the subsequent emergence of Liberation Theology (following the Medellín Conference of 1968) as proof of 'subversion' within the Church itself. This identification of Liberation Theology with 'communist subversion' deeply coloured Chilean perceptions of events in Central America later in the 1970s.

This conservative Catholicism lay at the heart of the dictatorship and likewise deeply coloured its sense of its own historic mission. Kirsten Weld has shown how, in cultivating the idea of Chile 'at war', Pinochet invoked a very specific historical reading of what, at first glance, appears to be a very different, distant conflict: the Spanish Civil War. Yet, from Pinochet's perspective, and as he told Henry Kissinger in 1976, the struggle in which the Chilean dictatorship was engaged was but 'a further stage of the same conflict which erupted into the Spanish Civil War'.[26] Indeed, Weld shows how many key figures within the dictatorship, and most notably Pinochet and Jaime Guzmán, shared an admiration for Francoism, and in their own political project 'sought to transcend and succeed him', conscious as they were, upon witnessing the aftermath of the general's death in 1975, that he had failed to build a political project capable of outlasting him.[27]

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[24] Today this building houses the Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral.
[25] L. Roniger, 'Represión y Prácticas Genocidas: El Sustrato Ideológico y Discursivo de la Violencia Generalizada' in A. H. Bloch and M. d. R. Rodríguez Díaz, *La Guerra Fría y las Américas* (Colima: Universidad de Colima-Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2013), 197.
[26] Pinochet quoted in Weld, 'The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile', 78.
[27] Weld, 81.

This desire to build a political project to last profoundly influenced the form that the dictatorship took after 1977. In its first four years the regime had relentlessly pursued opposition forces at home and abroad. While this was successful in securing the regime's domestic base, it also produced a network of Chilean exiles who played a critical role in ensuring that the dictatorship's human rights abuses remained in the global spotlight once the initial global shock provoked by the images of *La Moneda* in flames in September 1973 began to fade. As a result, by 1977 the Pinochet dictatorship was intensely isolated in international terms and, particularly in the wake of the Letelier assassination of September 1976, its actions were subject to enormous international scrutiny, including by the US government. It was in this context that the dictatorship announced its plans to enter a new phase, of 'institutionalisation', in 1977. The political model conceived through this process, rather than the economic model of radical neoliberal reforms established by the Chicago Boys, directly shaped the Pinochet dictatorship's involvement in Central America.

Argentina: 'the task of cleaning the country'

On 24 March 1976 the Argentine armed forces staged a coup against Isabel Perón's ailing government. That day, they announced the beginning of the so-called 'Process of National Reorganisation' (*El Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* – known by the shorthand, *El Proceso*), justified in terms of 'restoring the essential values' of the state. The newly established junta emphasised the 'morality' of their actions and the need to 'eradicate subversion and promote economic development' so as to secure the bases for the eventual restoration of a 'republican democracy'.[28] In direct contrast to events in Chile almost three years earlier, the Argentine coup of 1976 was initially bloodless and replaced a regime that had long departed from any semblance of democratic order and stability. Isabel Perón had succeeded her late husband, Juan Perón, after his death in July 1974, only nine months after the beginning of his third term as president of Argentina. Indeed, Argentina had only transitioned back to democratic rule in 1973 following the lifting of the military's ban on Peronism in the wake of seven years of military rule dominated by Juan Carlos Onganía's 'Argentine Revolution' (1966-70).[29]

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[28] 'Acta fijando el proposito y los objetivos básicos para el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional', 24 March 1976, in *Documentos Basicos y Bases Políticas de las Fuerzas Armadas en el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (Buenos Aires, 1980), http://www.unlp.edu.ar/uploads/docs/dictadura___documentos_basicos_y_bases_politicas.pdf, accessed 26 March 2019.

[29] The initial lifting of the ban on Peronism only legalised Perón's *Partido Justicialista* while retaining an individual ban on the candidacy of Juan Perón himself. Héctor Cámpora won the first elections of 1973, before overturning the ban and resigning to make way for Perón's return to the presidency.

The Peróns' return to Argentina in 1973 laid bare the conflict between the right- and left-wing Peronist tendencies with escalating violence over the next three years. On the Left, the key armed group was the Montoneros, and on the Right, the Triple-A (*Alianza Anticomunista Argentina*, Argentine Anticommunist Alliance). While the military dictatorship would later seek to portray these sides as equal forces in the so-called 'Dirty War' they waged against the Left and associated 'communist subversion', in fact, by 1976, the Argentine armed Left had already been largely extinguished at the hands of the Triple-A and the Argentine security forces. Both groups worked under the direction of the Perón government and, particularly in the case of the latter, actively participated in Operation Condor.

The Argentine military dictatorship was Janus-faced. On one hand, the regime presented a far more palatable public image than its counterpart in neighbouring Chile: the relatively peaceful nature of the armed forces' seizure of power and initial widespread support that the armed forces enjoyed from the Argentine population meant that the new government avoided the immediate widespread international condemnation that had followed the September 1973 coup in Chile. The new governing junta's pledge to restore order and eventually return Argentina to democratic rule provoked a favourable contrast with the political turmoil that had reigned since 1973. Moreover, the new dictatorship received steadfast support from the Argentine economic elite, who collaborated closely with the dictatorship to present a moderate image abroad.[30] Yet this was but one side of what Antony Pereira has described as a 'dualised' regime, 'divided between a public and a clandestine wing'.[31] Where the military regimes in Chile and Brazil used existing statist and authoritarian institutions, laws and organisations to carry out political repression, in Argentina the massive human rights abuses committed by the dictatorship – including but not limited to the disappearance of up to 30,000 people – were carried out entirely outside any legal or institutional framework; the regime was 'revolutionary in its disregard for and violation of pre-existing legality'.[32] It was through its clandestine wing that the Argentine military dictatorship put its core Extreme Right ideology into practice. As Federico

[30] Horacio Verbitsky and Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, *Cuentas pendientes: Los cómplices económicos de la dictadura* (Siglo XXI Editores, 2013).
[31] Pereira, *Political (in)Justice: Authoritarianism and the Rule of Law in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina*, 135.
[32] Pereira, 119.

Finchelstein puts it, 'outside of its concentration camps it [the dictatorship] presented the facade of a typical authoritarian state. Within them, however, it was fascist.'[33]

The Argentine military dictatorship shared many of the key ideological traits of the Latin American Extreme Right: conservative Catholicism; the perception of communism and subversion as a threat not only to the nation but to 'Western Civilisation' and a willingness to use violence to defend these 'values'; and a particularly wide definition of 'subversion' that went far beyond economics or politics. Homosexuality, for example, was conceived as 'part of an imaginary Marxist plan against Argentina' and any challenge to traditional gender roles deemed proof of the presence of an 'enemy within' attacking the 'fabric of the national body'.[34] Yet the ideology of the dictatorship was further defined by a particular strain of Argentine *nacionalista* Catholic fascist ideology anchored to the fascist idea of an 'enemy within' in Argentina, and which conceived of the country as essentially Catholic and defined by a specific (white) racial type.[35] Rather than merely a part of 'Western Civilisation', since the interwar period Argentine fascists had conceived of Argentina as its purest form on Earth: not only the heir to the Spanish empire but more Hispanic than Spain itself (and certainly more so than other Latin American nations).[36]

It is important to note that this conception of Argentina as an essentially white and therefore racially superior nation was and is not limited to Extreme Right thought but has been present across the political spectrum. While specific factors have certainly shaped Argentina's demographics – most notably the genocidal campaigns against the country's indigenous population and the extraordinary scale of European migration to Argentina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – recent work has shown how this persistent narrative of Argentine racial exceptionalism has been to a great extent self-fulfilling, as flexible definitions of both

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[33] Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 122.
[34] *Documentos Basicos y Bases Políticas de las Fuerzas Armadas en el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (Buenos Aires, 1980), http://www.unlp.edu.ar/uploads/docs/dictadura___documentos_basicos_y_bases_politicas.pdf, accessed 26 March 2019; Finchelstein, 115; Valeria Manzano, 'Sex, Gender and the Making of the "Enemy Within" in Cold War Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 1 (2015), 2.
[35] Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 123, 154–55.
[36] Finchelstein, 23.

'white' and 'Black' have led to the effective erasure of any other Argentine racial identity, particularly in the case of Afro-Argentines.[37]

Importantly, these ideas about the unique racial characteristics of the Argentine nation had long shaped Argentine relations with the rest of the region, regardless of the political orientation of the government of the day. For instance, Ernesto Semán has shown how despite Argentine workers being at the receiving end of racialised political attacks at the hands of critics of the first Perón governments (1946-1955) that same government's programme of international workers' attachés was underpinned by the very same racial prejudices and sense of Argentine exceptionalism. Peronist activists 'came to consider the rest of Latin America as economically underdeveloped, socially backward, and/or racially inferior in relation to Argentina', evident in one workers attaché's report that 'the reasons for the apathy of the Peruvian people… are their indigenous heritage…'.[38] Implicit in Perón's programme was that workers in other, inferior Latin American nations suffered 'an individual and collective incapacity to implement reforms' and needed Argentine assistance to do so.[39] This perspective would in turn shape the Argentine dictatorship's engagement with Central America.

For the Extreme Right, the centrality of these ideas about what did and did not constitute part of the Argentine nation also determined which groups were most victimised by the dictatorship. *Nacionalista* ideology automatically defined all non-Catholics as non-Argentine 'enemies within', which in large part explains the dictatorship's strong antisemitic tendency that led to the disproportionate targeting of Argentine Jews as 'subversives'. Moreover, this conservative Catholicism left little room for the liberal Catholic theology that had been empowered by Vatican II, and, as Gustavo Morello has stressed, Argentine state terror likewise targeted liberal Catholics who were deemed subversives rather than 'real' believers.[40] In practice, then, the Argentine dictatorship embodied decades of Argentine Extreme Right thought: in 1923, Argentine fascist poet Leopoldo Lugones called for Argentines to 'confront with virility the task of cleaning the country' and wage 'national war' against Argentina's 'foreign leftists';

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[37] See Erika Denise Edwards, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law, and the Making of a White Argentine Republic* (University of Alabama Press, 2020); Paulina Alberto and Eduardo Elena, *Rethinking Race in Modern Argentina* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[38] Ernesto Semán, *Ambassadors of the Working Class : Argentina's International Labor Activists and Cold War Democracy in the Americas* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2017), 178.
[39] Semán, 177.
[40] Gustavo Morello, *The Catholic Church and Argentina's Dirty War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.

over fifty years later General Jorge Rafael Videla, the first president of the military dictatorship declared his desire to purge Argentina from its alleged 'impurities', waging a 'dirty war' against 'subversion' to do so.[41] In this respect, and in contrast to the neighbouring Pinochet regime, the Argentine dictatorship's political project was more destructive than constructive, concerned mainly with the elimination of 'subversion' and the 'restoration' of Argentine 'values' rather than the elaboration of a novel intellectual and political model.[42] This would profoundly shape its involvement in Central America.

In terms of more immediate roots, Federico Finchelstein has shown how the military dictatorship established in March 1976 drew directly on the Extreme Right paramilitary groups that had come to the fore under the Perón governments (1973-76), institutionalising them within the regime's new structures of repression. Videla later claimed that Juan Perón had been the real leader of the most prominent of these Extreme Right forces, the Triple-A, with its paramilitary activity planned through José López Rega, Perón's private secretary in exile and minister for social welfare after the return to power in 1973. After Perón's death, López Rega retained a powerful role in Isabel Perón's government, establishing links between the Triple-A and the Argentine security forces, among them prominent military hardliners Admiral Emilio Massera and General Carlos Suárez Mason. According to Finchelstein, these links were 'often symbiotic' and 'were not dissolved' after López Rega's ouster in 1976.[43] After 1976, former members of Extreme Right groups played a central role in the most violent repression meted out by the dictatorship, staffing prominent clandestine torture and detention centres such as ESMA (*La Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada*, Navy Mechanics School), which would later also provide manpower for the dictatorship's involvement in Central America.

Importantly, while this aspect of the dictatorship's activities was 'clandestine' in terms of the image the regime sought to project, it was by no means hidden from many of the armed forces' civilian supporters. The direct complicity of Argentina's economic elite in the dictatorship's repression has been belatedly recognised in ongoing transitional justice

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[41] Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 20; Gunnar Kressel, 'Technicians of the Spirit: Post-Fascist Technocratic Authoritarianism in Spain, Argentina, and Chile, 1945-1988', 316.
[42] On the restoration of Argentine traditional values, see Patricia Juárez-Dappe, 'Family Canon: The Politics of Family during the Last Civic-Military Dictatorship in Argentina, 1976–83', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 2021, 1–23.
[43] Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 114–15.

proceedings in Argentina and likewise acknowledged by historians. For instance, in 2012, a judicial ruling found the owners and directors of *Ingenio Ledesma* complicit in the disappearance of numerous workers during the military regime, indicating how, as Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky have argued, economic actors did not simply take advantage of the so-called 'Dirty War' to implement neoliberal economic reforms, but also directly participated in the violence of the dictatorship's 'clandestine wing' that made the implementation of reforms possible without opposition.[44]

Many Argentine economists shared key elements of the dictatorship's core ideology. One such example is Ricardo Zinn, an economist and intellectual who had worked in various advisory roles under the 'Argentine Revolution' (1966-70) and the subsequent administrations. During the *Proceso*, Zinn worked as an advisor within the Ministry of the Economy and founded multiple right-wing neoliberal think tanks, among them the *Centro de Estudios Macroeconómicos de Argentina* (CEMA). As explored in the chapters that follow, Zinn also played an important role representing Argentina in transnational forums and building relations with the US New Right. Yet despite this participation in the more 'public' side of the regime, Zinn explicitly conceived of his work within the wider necessity of 'eradicating subversion' in Argentina.[45] As Mariana Heredia has argued, these economists were not just aware of the dictatorship's violent repression and human rights abuses but actively sought to justify this activity, emphasising that 'Argentina was one of the settings where the Third World War was being fought, so it was necessary to defeat anti-Western Marxism militarily and culturally'.[46] It was the armed forces, however, who led this struggle and directed the counterinsurgency at home. When the dictatorship turned to tackling subversion abroad, in Central America, it would redeploy the same Extreme Right paramilitary groups that it had incorporated into the regime in 1976.

Chile and Argentina: ideological bedfellows?

Given the ideological similarities between the two Southern Cone dictatorships and in particular their shared conception of the global struggle against 'subversion' on which both staked their legitimacy, it would be reasonable to expect the two regimes to cooperate against their common enemy. And indeed the two militaries did, most infamously, through their

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44 Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky, *Cuentas pendientes*, 17.

45 Sergio Morresi, 'El liberalismo conservador y la ideologia del Proceso de Reorganizacion Nacional', *Sociohistórica,* 27 (2010), 118.

46 Mariana Heredia, 'Ideas económicos y poder durante la dictadura', chapter in Verbitsky and Bohoslavsky, *Cuentas pendientes*, 60.

participation in Operation Condor, the shared intelligence operation formalised in late 1975 through which the security services of the Southern Cone dictatorship organised the repression and assassination of their left-wing opponents, operating across borders in one another's jurisdictions.[47] By 1977, however, in large part influenced by the international fallout from the assassination of Orlando Letelier in Washington DC in September 1976, cooperation through Operation Condor had wound down.

Operation Condor perhaps represents something of an exception to the rule that, for the most part, the two dictatorships' shared ideological stance proved incapable of overcoming centuries of competition and mistrust between the two countries. Pablo Lacoste has shown the historic importance of 'the image of the other' in Chile-Argentina relations, whereby from the colonial period through to the 1980s (and to a lesser extent in the decades since), in each country the immediate neighbour has been presented as 'an expansionist country' hungry for the territory of those surrounding it.[48] From school textbooks to popular culture and politics, in each country the 'other' was presented as a potential threat, and this idea was well utilised by nationalist politicians in both Chile and Argentina.

The prevalence of these images of the neighbour as an enemy 'other' played an important role in fostering competition, rather than collaboration, in bilateral relations; this remained the case between the two dictatorships of the 1970s. Indeed, if anything the suspicion of the neighbouring 'other' was all the stronger on the Extreme Right. Ernesto Bohoslavsky has shown how the long-running conflict over the two countries' southern border in Patagonia became a particular touchpoint for Extreme Right politics: for Argentine *nacionalistas*, the South was a representative sample of the '*antipatria*', exposed to 'the action of the enemies of the nation: Jews, British, Communists and Chileans'.[49] For right-wing forces, a focus on this 'threat' posed by the neighbouring country served to justify antidemocratic politics and military rule.[50] In 1978, the latent conflict over Patagonia erupted once more, ensuring that the historic

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[47] See Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* chapter 7.

[48] Pablo Lacoste, *La imagen del otro en las relaciones de la Argentina y Chile (1534-2000)* (Buenos Aires/Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica/Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2003), 14.

[49] Bohoslavsky, *El complot patagónico: nación, conspiracionismo y violencia en el sur de Argentina y Chile (siglos XIX y XX)*, 256.

[50] Gabriela Gomes, 'Las revistas de la extrema derecha chilena: entre el antiallendismo y el antiperonismo' in Bertonha and Bohoslavsky, *Circule por la derecha percepciones, redes y contactos entre las derechas sudamericanas, 1917-1973*, 286.

competition and distrust between Chile and Argentina would in turn shape the extent of their collaboration – or lack thereof – in Central America.

Central America

While Extreme Right Central Americans shared many of the core ideological tenets of the anticommunism that defined the Southern Cone regimes, the two sub-regions are, and historically have been, in many ways both literally and figuratively worlds apart. Most importantly, by virtue of geographical proximity, Central America was of much greater geopolitical importance to the United States than the Southern Cone. This in turn made the region the site of more vigorous and frequent US intervention, a phenomenon that began long before the twentieth century yet increased exponentially during the Cold War. Where the top officers of all Latin American armies were brought together at the Conference of American Armies taking place annually from 1961 (and sponsored and run by the United States for the first six years), the United States created an additional organisation specifically for Central America to link the national armies with one another and the United States. In 1963 the six Central American nations signed the treaty establishing CONDECA (*Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana*, Central American Defence Council), providing a permanent structure through which to coordinate US involvement via the US Southern Command located in the Panama Canal Zone.[51]

Going forwards, the Central American nations correspondingly received far more US military aid and training in proportion to the relatively small size of their armed forces: for example, in 1964-68 where US military advisers existed in a ratio of 1:2034 and 1:1250 relative to the national armed forces in Argentina and Chile, in Guatemala and Nicaragua these numbers were 1:300 and 1:323.[52] This pattern would persist in the following decades, resulting in a greater US ideological influence on the Central American militaries while, more importantly, rendering the United States' anticommunist allies in power in those countries far more dependent upon US aid and support. As this thesis will explore, even where US influence was at its lowest ebb, the question of US power therefore unsurprisingly continued to frame Latin Americans' perceptions of events in the isthmus throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

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[51] Michael McClintock, *State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador*, vol. I, The American Connection (London: Zed, 1985), 10.
[52] Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America*, 133.

Pertinent socioeconomic differences also existed between Central America and the Southern Cone that fundamentally shaped the course of events in the 1970s and 1980s. Where the latter had long contained the most industrialised, urbanised and therefore 'developed' economies of Latin America, Central America was the opposite. In general terms, by the 1970s Central American societies remained overwhelmingly rural and the region's economy dominated by agro-export businesses. The small Central American elite who dominated land ownership and the more recently cultivated industrial sectors of the economy continued to wield almost complete political power, often in cooperation with the military (with the notable exception of Costa Rica's historically stable democracy and the extreme personalisation of power and wealth under the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua). These factors, combined with the complete absence of any recourse to reform, helped create the perfect conditions for the rise of the guerrilla movements in the late 1970s.

Moreover, owing to the region's much larger indigenous populations, race played a very different role in relation to ideas about the nation in Central America. This difference directly informed both Southern Cone dictatorships' involvement in the region. If clearest in the Argentine case, whiteness played a similar role in relation to ideas about Chilean nationhood: as Telles and Flores put it, in both countries 'elites have imagined their nations as white in contrast to other nations in the region' and continue to do so today.[53] While made explicit only on rare occasions, this notion of racial superiority to the rest of Latin America – which was and is particularly pertinent among those on the Right - directly influenced Argentine and Chilean perceptions of, and involvement in, events in Central America, particularly in Guatemala, where indigenous people make up the highest proportion of any Latin American nation's population.[54] Importantly, the paternalistic attitude adopted by the Southern Cone dictatorships towards the supposedly racially inferior and less developed countries of Central America was not a source of conflict in their relations with their Extreme Right Central American counterparts; rather, these elements of white supremacist thought were a common ideological bond between Southern Cone and Central American Extreme Right elites.

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[53] Edward Telles and René Flores, 'Not Just Color: Whiteness, Nation, and Status in Latin America', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 93, no. 3 (2013), 442.

[54] A 2015 World Bank report used census data to rank Guatemala and Bolivia in joint first place with an estimated 41% of the population identifying as indigenous. *Indigenous Latin America in the twenty-first century: the first decade* (Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, 2015) http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/145891467991974540/Indigenous-Latin-America-in-the-twenty-first-century-the-first-decade, accessed 21 November 2021.

In contrast to the bitter rivalry that lay at the core of Chilean-Argentine relations, this Central American elite had a strong transnational basis: wealthy families often possessed close familial ties with those in other countries. Likewise, Extreme Right nationalism often drew on ideas of pan-Central American republicanism, harkening back to the short-lived union of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica under the Federal Republic of Central America in the immediate post-independence period (1823-41). Rather than informing ideas about the essence of the nation as a whole – as in Argentina – for the Central American Extreme Right, the whiteness of the ruling elite underpinned their claim to Hispanic ancestry, an ancestry shared across national borders. This was particularly important in Guatemala, where those in power relied upon racial categories to distinguish themselves from the country's large indigenous population in terms of their duty to 'modernise' the latter.[55] Indeed Julie Gibbings has convincingly argued that this method of excluding Guatemala's indigenous peoples through an insistence that they must first meet a very specific definition of modernity, what she terms the 'politics of postponement', has been a central element in defining Guatemala's twentieth century history.[56] These transnational, often familial, bonds between the Central American elite played a crucial role in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the threat of revolutionary turmoil drove those same elites to organise new political vehicles for their Extreme Right politics.

Guatemala: military rule under multiple guises

The nature of the military dictatorship that ruled Guatemala in the 1970s can only be understood in the context of the US intervention against elected President Jacobo Árbenz in 1954. After the 'ten years of spring' under Árbenz (1951-54) and his predecessor, Juan José Arévalo (1945-51), the new regime, headed by the fiercely anticommunist Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, led the violent persecution of left-wing forces while almost completely reversing Árbenz's agrarian reform, the first – and so far only – attempt to reform Guatemala's vastly unequal distribution of land and by extension wealth. Having secured the Guatemalan elite's socioeconomic dominance once more, the Castillo Armas regime established a new constitution (1956) and with it a barely disguised army dominance of politics, beginning with the fraudulent election of General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes in 1958. Two years later, in November 1960, 120 left-leaning junior army officers attempted a coup in the name of 'social justice, a just

[55] By contrast official population records in El Salvador record an indigenous population of just 0.2%. These statistics are for the present, drawn from three sets of data (UNICEF, ECLAC and the World Bank) published in 'Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: Statistical Information', Congressional Research Service, July 2020, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R46225.pdf, accessed 21 May 2021, 4.
[56] Gibbings, *Our Time Is Now*.

distribution of national wealth' and against '*los gringos imperialistas*', in part motivated by Ydígoras Fuentes' decision to allow the CIA to train troops for the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba on Guatemalan soil.[57] Despite the coup's failure, some of the participating officers eluded capture and founded a guerrilla movement, MR-13 (*Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de noviembre*) which after 1962 integrated with the FAR (*Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes*), the armed wing of the Guatemalan Communist Party (*Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo,* PGT).[58]

In 1963, when Ydígoras Fuentes appeared poised to allow exiled former president Juan José Arévalo to return to Guatemala and run for president (in an election he almost certainly would have won), the United States intervened once again. The Kennedy administration lent support to Ydígoras Fuentes' defence minister, Enrique Peralta Azurdia, who staged a military coup, declaring Guatemala's constitutional framework unfit to face the communist threat.[59] After this point, in the words of Jennifer Schirmer, the army moved 'into a decisive political position *in the name of the armed forces,* resulting in a state of siege, suspension of all rights (including habeas corpus), as well as assassinations, kidnappings and the "calvary of terror"; the army moved from being a determinant presence within the civilian state structure to assuming control of the State itself.'[60]

The new regime – punctuated by changes in the presidency which passed directly from president to defence minister from 1970 onwards – made the formation of reformist political parties at worst impossible and at best a very dangerous enterprise; by the mid-1970s even moderate opposition forces were the target of harsh and violent repression. This in turn drove the swelling of guerrilla ranks. As Deborah Levenson has described the status quo from the early 1960s: 'from that time forward, two social forces – a terrorist state on the one hand and revolutionary movements that grew out of the failed 1961 uprising on the other – dominated Guatemalan politics, culture, society, and the country's everyday life until 1984-85, by which time the terrorist state had drowned in blood four hundred villages and four popular revolutionary groups'.[61] The final, bloodiest act in this conflict began in 1976-77: in February 1976 an

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[57] Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 15.
[58] Schirmer, 16.
[59] Max Paul Friedman and Roberto García Ferreira, 'Making Peaceful Revolution Impossible: Kennedy, Arévalo, the 1963 Coup in Guatemala, and the Alliance against Progress in Latin America's Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 24, no. 1 (2022), 155–87.
[60] Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 17.
[61] Deborah Levenson, 'The Life That Makes Us Die/The Death That Makes Us Live: Facing Terrorism in Guatemala City', *Radical History Review* 2003, no. 85 (2003), 97.

enormous earthquake struck Guatemala in the middle of the night, killing over 20,000 people and leaving upwards of 1.2 million homeless (around a fifth of the entire population). The government's failure to respond adequately despite international aid flooding into the country spurred an outburst of popular opposition, which was met with violent repression that soon spun out of control. This was the situation in Guatemala in 1977.

Although it is important to acknowledge the culpability of the United States for the violence and suffering that engulfed Guatemala from 1954 and continues to shape the country today, the military regime that came to power in 1954 was far from simply a stooge of the power to the north. Rather, as Kirsten Weld has argued, 'Guatemalan anti-communism was weaponised by the United States but not imported from it'.[62] The anticommunist forces empowered by the US intervention were part of a larger anticommunist tradition predating the Cold War, and, as this thesis will show, the Extreme Right political movement that the 1954 intervention spawned eventually broke completely from the United States, when it deemed US policy under Carter to be actively harming the struggle against subversion in Central America.

After the 1954 coup, the forces led by Colonel Castillo Armas – the 'Army of National Liberation' – transformed into a political party, the MLN (*Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*, National Liberation Movement). As well as obvious constituencies of support within the army, the MLN drew heavily on the support of Catholic anticommunist students, organised under the banner of the Committee of Anticommunist University Students (CEUA, *Comité de Estudiantes Universitarios Anticomunistas*) at Guatemala's Universidad de San Carlos, the only high education institution in the country until 1961. Prior to 1954, members of CEUA had undertaken various actions against the Árbenz government, often funded by the CIA, and many had ended up jailed or exiled as a result. Those in exile had reunited with Castillo Armas's forces in neighbouring Honduras, where they continued their activities printing anti-Árbenz propaganda, eventually joining the invading forces.[63]

By the 1970s, two of these students had become central figures on the Guatemalan Extreme Right through their dominance of the MLN: Lionel Sisniega Otero and Mario Sandoval Alarcón, with the latter serving as vice president of Guatemala 1974-78. While certainly

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[62] Weld, 'The Other Door', 310.

[63] Heather A. Vrana, *This City Belongs to You : A History of Student Activism in Guatemala, 1944-1996* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 66–69.

influenced by the United States and the formative counterinsurgency training many MLN militants received from the CIA, the Guatemalan Extreme Right also drew on national anticommunist traditions and – like their Chilean and Argentine counterparts - the legacy of the Spanish Civil War.[64] In line with fascist traditions, the MLN explicitly celebrated violence, proudly defining the organisation as 'the party of organized violence', with its leader, Sandoval Alarcón, widely known as the 'godfather of the death squads'.[65] As we will see, although the MLN's formal relationship to Guatemala's military regime changed over time, the party was a constant presence and central node in the transnational anticommunist network that coalesced around Central America in the late 1970s.

El Salvador: the legacy of 1932

The nature of the anticommunist military regime that ruled El Salvador in the 1970s can only be understood in the context of events almost half a century early: *La Matanza* (the massacre) of 1932. The Great Depression decimated Salvadoran coffee exports, the cornerstone of the economy, bringing with it enormous economic and social hardship concentrated among workers on the country's massive coffee plantations and leaving the state coffers empty. It was in this context, in December 1931, that the Salvadoran military overthrew the government of Arturo Araujo, thought to be El Salvador's first freely elected president and threw out local election results favouring the Salvadoran Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Salvadoreño*, PCS). Two months later, in January 1932, peasants and rural workers in the central and western regions of the country (the core of the coffee lands) launched a massive insurrection, driven by this violent abrogation of democratic rights and the accompanied rapid increase in rates of exploitation and dispossession.[66] The Salvadoran military responded with immediate and violent repression, massacring at least 10,000 insurgents. This response fundamentally shaped the Salvadoran political system for decades to come. As Gould and Lauria-Santiago write, 'the massacres of 1932 had devastating long-term political and social consequences for the entire country. Until the peace accords of 1992, Miguel Mármol's comment in the mid-1960s that "El Salvador is… the creation of that barbarism" accurately reflected the political legacy of 1932: an enormous concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the agrarian élite, who evinced a

64 Weld, 'The Other Door'.
65 Levenson, 'The Life That Makes Us Die/The Death That Makes Us Live: Facing Terrorism in Guatemala City', 96.
66 Gould and Lauria-Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920–1932*, xxiii.

mixture of scorn and fear of the rural poor, and depended upon a brutally repressive regime to remain in power.'[67]

In the decades after 1932, the Salvadoran Right – dominated by this agrarian elite as well as the Salvadoran military and increasingly powerful voices representing the interests of Salvadoran capital and the growing industrial sector – continued to be the central political force in El Salvador. Maintaining the existing socioeconomic system thus remained a central priority for the Salvadoran government. In this respect, the crucial political distinction among the political forces was not one of Right vs Left (for the Left remained excluded from the political process) but between two groups that Martín-Baró terms the 'Moderate Right' and the 'Extreme Right'. These groups were defined by their posture towards reforms: where at moments of increased popular pressure and opposition to the regime the former considered moderate reforms, the latter did not 'accept in theory, much less in practice' any changes to El Salvador's socioeconomic system, perceiving any attempt at reform as the 'advance of the revolution'.[68] Crucially, in the first four decades after *La Matanza* the absence of any major threat to the status quo (and thus attempt at any serious reforms) meant this intra-Right fissure remained largely in the shadows. That is not to say that mid-century Salvadoran politics were static, yet while the form of government changed from personal dictatorship through party rule, the overarching socioeconomic system remained the same.

By the 1960s, the cracks had nevertheless begun to show. Since 1961, the PCN (*Partido de Conciliación Nacional,* National Conciliation Party) had held power, introducing moderate state involvement in the economy through subsidies for import-substitution industrialisation funded by US President John Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. In the same period the PCN introduced limited democratic reforms, including semi-competitive elections and the growth of civic organising in the labour, education and church sectors of civil society.[69] Despite these advances, at the end of the decade the Salvadoran economy began to suffer: the brief border conflict with Honduras in 1969 led to the dissolution of the Central American Common Market, seriously harming Salvadoran exports, as well as the expulsion of 130,000 Salvadorans from Honduras,

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[67] Gould and Lauria-Santiago, 240.
[68] Martin-Baró, 'El llamado de la extrema derecha', 454.
[69] Aaron T. Bell, 'A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982', *Cold War History* 15, no. 4 (2015), 514.

contributing to increase pressures on land in the countryside.[70] The global energy crisis of 1973 compounded the ensuing economic crisis.

Even before 1973, popular opposition had been growing, fed by the civil society activism of the 1960s. In 1970 the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS) helped found the country's first guerrilla group, the FPL (*Fuerzas Populares de Liberación de Farabundo Martí*, taking its name from Farabundo Martí, a Marxist-Leninist leader in the 1932 insurrection). Against this backdrop, in 1972 the PCN resorted to fraud and repression to prevent a left-wing victory in the presidential and legislative election. These actions served only to radicalise the opposition, and by the mid-1970s 'nascent left-wing guerrilla groups were developing ties with the leaders of newly organised popular fronts that called for improved workers' rights, and end to state repression, and ultimately regime change'.[71] In response, Salvadoran President Colonel Arturo Molina announced a land reform programme, presenting the limited reforms as a necessary step to quell popular opposition and avoid more radical changes. This was the context for the fracturing of the Salvadoran Right, giving rise to new, Extreme Right organisations to which many of the core Salvadoran actors in this thesis belonged.

The 1976 land reform programme triggered an unprecedented political mobilisation by the Extreme Right against the government (where previously they had acted *through* the PCN). Initially led by ANEP, (*Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada,* the existing Salvadoran private business lobby), the opposition was then joined by the newly-founded FARO (the *Frente Agropecuario de la Región Oriente,* representing landowners) and the FFS (*Frente Feminino Salvadoreño*, a right-wing women's group).[72] Members of these groups were overwhelmingly drawn from El Salvador's economic elite, and many possessed close links to, or indeed were members of, the military's ruling party, the PCN, as well as other state agencies, among them ORDEN (*Organización Democráta Nacionalista,* National Democratic Organisation*),* a rural counterinsurgency network founded in the 1960s whose remit had, by the late 1970s, expanded

[70] Ariel C Armony and Thomas W Walker, eds., *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2000), 29.
[71] Bell, 'A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982', 515.
[72] Martin-Baró, 'El llamado de la extrema derecha', 455; Bell, 'A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982'.

to intelligence and national security.[73] United, these Extreme Right groups succeeded in defeating the land reform, spelling the end of any prospect of substantial reform in the face of the exponential growth and radicalisation of the Salvadoran opposition movement. Going forwards, the only path available to the Salvadoran government was that sanctioned by the Extreme Right: the narrowing of political liberties combined with indiscriminate violent repression of any perceived opposition tendency. This was the context for the escalation of political violence in the country from 1977, where the story told in this thesis begins.

Latin American Transnational Anticommunism in the Twentieth Century

Despite the national peculiarities outlined above, the development of the Latin American Extreme Right had been a transnational process from the start. Daniel Lvovich has shown how in the first two decades of the twentieth century the Extreme Right conceived of the 'subversive' and 'communist' threat posed by labour agitation in this period in regional and global terms, with elites outside of Argentina drawing connections between *La Semana Trágica* – the brutal repression of a mass workers' mobilisation in January 1919 -, the Russian Revolution and events elsewhere in the Southern Cone, particularly in Chile.[74] With the onset of the Cold War after 1945, Latin American anticommunists increasingly sought to build direct transnational links with likeminded groups in other countries. This ranged from sub-regional level collaborations such as those between the right-wing governments of the Caribbean Basin in the 1940s and 1950s to organisations that sought to unite anticommunist forces across Latin America, such as the *Congresos contra la Intervención Soviética en América Latina* (Congresses against Soviet Intervention in Latin America) in the 1950s.[75]

It is the latter organisation that laid the groundwork for some of the connections between Central America and the Southern Cone explored in this thesis. The third Congress in Lima in 1957 provided a venue for the Guatemalan delegation – representing the post-coup

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[73] For more on these groups and the development of the Salvadoran Extreme Right in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Bell, 'A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982'.

[74] Lvovich, 'La Semana Trágica en clave transnacional. Influencias, repercusiones y circulaciones entre la Argentina, Brasil, Chile y Uruguay (1918-1919)', in Bertonha and Bohoslavsky, *Circule por la derecha percepciones, redes y contactos entre las derechas sudamericanas, 1917-1973*.

[75] Aaron Coy Moulton, 'Building Their Own Cold War in Their Own Backyard: The Transnational, International Conflicts in the Greater Caribbean Basin, 1944-1954', *Cold War History* 15, no. 2 (2015), 135–54; Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s'.

Castillo Armas government – to sing the praises of Guatemala's new anticommunist regime while also establishing a commission to investigate the Soviet threat posed by the ruling *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, MNR) in Bolivia.[76] This commission included representatives from Peru, Colombia, Cuba, as well as a Guatemalan, MLN member Carlos Simmons, and a Chilean, Sergio Fernández Larraín, a leader of the Chilean Conservative Party, a precursor to the National Party.[77] Not only did these congresses connect individuals from across Latin America, such as Fernández Larraín and Carlos Simmons, they were also attended by anticommunists from far beyond the region, chief among them members of the Asian People's Anticommunist League (APACL), founded in 1954 by Chinese Nationalists (Taiwan) and the government of South Korea, led by Syngman Rhee.[78] With support from the CIA and of growing geopolitical importance to the United States given the ongoing conflict in Vietnam, by the mid-1960s APACL included the governments of South Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia.[79]

In 1967 the Taiwanese leader of APACL, Dr Ku Cheng Kang, acted on a call he had made over a decade earlier to create a World Anti-Communist League, thus cementing the incipient bonds between these different regional networks. Although officially funded by the member governments of APACL, in all likelihood it was the US government, through the CIA, that financed the first meeting of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) that year and the foundation of a youth forum, the World Youth Anti-Communist League (WYACL) soon after.[80] Despite its global ambition, WACL remained dominated by the APACL governments for its first few years. It was only in the early 1970s that it began to live up to its name, in large part driven by the sea change in superpower relations provoked by détente. Since its foundation, the

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[76] Informe al III Congreso Contra la Intervención Soviética en la América Latina: que tendrá verificativo en la ciudad de Lima, Perú, durante los días 10, 11, 12, 13 y 14 de abril de 1957, Delegación de Guatemala, held in the CIRMA library, Guatemala.
[77] Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s', 21.
[78] Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s'; Luc van Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin, and Giles Scott-Smith, *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War : Agents, Activities, and Networks* (Basingstoke, Hampshire : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 117.
[79] On the place of APACL within the regional East Asian context, see Hao Chen, 'Resisting Bandung? Taiwan's Struggle for "Representational Legitimacy" in the Rise of the Asian Peoples' Anti-Communist League, 1954-57', *The International History Review* 43, no. 2 (2021), 244–63.
[80] Kyle Burke, 'A Global Brotherhood of Paramilitaries: American Conservatives, Anticommunist Internationalism, and Covert Warfare in the Cold War' (PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 2015), 119; Macedonio, 'Historia de una colaboración anticomunista transnacional: los Tecos de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara y el gobierno de Chiang Kai-Shek a principios de los años setenta' *Contemporánea: historia y problemas del siglo XX* 1, no. 1 (2010): 154.

Taiwanese government had used its leadership of first APACL and later WACL as a powerful legitimisation tool in its ongoing conflict with the People's Republic of China (PRC) over which government represented the real China. When, in the context of détente, the Nixon administration began the process of establishing relations with the PRC, WACL became a tool wielded explicitly against US foreign policy, both in relation to the China issue specifically, and détente more broadly. There was no space for détente in the radical, combative anticommunism advanced by the WACL's East Asian leadership and shared by the many of the Extreme Right Latin Americans with whom they had mixed at the Congresos of the 1950s.

It is in this context – of the uneasy response of US allies in the Global South to détente – that the CAL was founded. The CAL was born of a collaboration between Taiwan's Chiang Kai-Shek and the Extreme-Right Mexican group FEMACO (*Federación Mexicana Anticomunista de Occidente*, known as Los Tecos), who together brought the VI WACL Congress to Mexico City in August 1972, marking its first iteration outside of Asia. At that conference, the CAL was formally integrated as the Latin American chapter of WACL, with the stated purpose of 'preventing Latin American states falling under communist control' by fighting communism 'in all places in Latin America until its final defeat' and supporting US policy only when it constituted 'truly friendly' measures to defeat communism.[81] Taking place just months after Taiwan's expulsion from the UN in favour of the People's Republic of China in late 1971, the business of the Congress, attended by delegates from Latin America, the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia, was dominated by expressions of solidarity with Chiang Kai-Shek and condemnation of the warming of relations between the US, Japan and Western Europe and Communist China.[82] WACL had become a global forum in which actors from across the Global South – as well as individuals and groups from the far Right across Europe and the United States – could promote an alternative vision of the Cold War wherein détente was contributing to the ominous advance of communism worldwide.

The CAL grew rapidly in the years following its foundation. A secret congress took place in Asunción, Paraguay in May 1973, followed by a large, public congress in Rio de Janeiro in 1974, attracting more than 200 delegates from almost every Latin American country. Here, Pinochet's recent coup in Chile was widely celebrated as a small victory against the perceived

[81] Carta de Principios, Leyes Fundamentales de la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Mexico City, 29 August 1972, R108F1543-65, CDyA.
[82] Macedonio, 'Historia de una colaboración anticomunista transnacional: los Tecos de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara y el gobierno de Chiang Kai-Shek a principios de los años setenta' 150.

rising tide of communism in the face of US inaction.[83] At the same time, Latin Americans took up an increasingly visible role in WACL and its youth arm, WYACL (World Youth Anti-Communist League). Indeed, Kyle Burke has argued that one of the crucial meetings leading up to the establishment of Operation Condor took place behind closed doors at the 1974 WACL congress in Washington, while the youth wing's executive committee were hosted in Guatemala City in February 1975.[84] That Paraguay went on to host the XI WACL conference in 1979 indicates the shifting centre of the organisation's gravity in the 1970s, and the rapid intensification of links between the Latin American Extreme Right and other anticommunist groups in the Global South in this period.

Extreme Rightists from Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador were all involved in the CAL from very early on, laying the foundations for the later transnational collaboration detailed in this thesis. These anticommunists were remarkably homogenous in socioeconomic terms: participants were mostly white men, drawn from the ranks of politicians, businessmen, academics and the senior ranks of the armed forces. While the existence of anticommunist women's movement at a national level is well established – as alluded to above in the context of both Chile and El Salvador – this activism appears to have been limited to the national level, as women rarely featured among WACL and CAL delegations. In one exception to this trend, when Silvia Pinto, a PN deputy and journalist and member of the Chilean women's anticommunist group *Poder Feminino* attended the III CAL Congress in Asunción in March 1977, she was accompanied by her husband, Daniel Galleguillos, also a right-wing journalist.[85] It is possible that the exclusion of women from these transnational spaces simply reflected the patriarchal norms that underpinned Extreme Right thought, whereby women's participation in the public sphere was substantially circumscribed. On the other hand, transnational anticommunist women's activism may have taken place in other gendered spaces independent of WACL and CAL, similar

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[83] Programa General del II Congreso de la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, 23-27 January 1974, Rio de Janeiro, R108F1566-7, CDyA; Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War*, 67.
[84] Ibid., 20. Comunicado Final del Comité Ejecutivo de la Liga Mundial Juvenil Anticomunista (WYACL), 23 February 1975, R198F2556-8, CDyA.
[85] Reseña Biográfica Silvia Emiliana Pinto Torres, Reseñas biográficas parlamentarias, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas_parlamentarias/wiki/Silvia_Emiliana_Pinto_Torres, accessed 13 December 2018; Delegaciones extranjeras - III Congreso CAL, March 1977, R094F0029-30, CDyA; Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle against Allende, 1964-1973*, 185.

to those which Margaret Power has explored in relation to Brazilian and Chilean women's activism in the 1960s and early 1970s.[86]

Nonetheless, aside from her gender, Pinto's presence at the III CAL Congress fits with the wider pattern of Chilean participation in these transnational anticommunist spaces. Just as Chilean anticommunist parliamentary leaders like Sergio Fernández Larraín had participated in the *Congresos* of the 1950s, during the Allende government the National Party organised Chilean participation in WACL and CAL. Party president Sergio Onofre Jarpa attended the second CAL congress in May 1973, accompanied by two PN congressmen and vice presidents, Gustavo Alessandri Valdés and Fernando Maturana.[87] After the September 1973 coup, National Party politicians continued to dominate Chilean representation. Now, however, rather than working in opposition to the Chilean government, they represented it directly: Jarpa, now Chilean ambassador to the United Nations, led the Chilean delegation to the January 1974 CAL congress in Rio de Janeiro.[88] This time, he was accompanied by General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán, Commander in Chief of the Chilean Air Force and member of the ruling junta, indicating the high level involvement of the junta in Chilean participation. After 1974, nominal leadership of the Chilean delegation fell to former PN congressman, Alessandri Valdés, with the rest of the Chilean delegations largely composed of academics and journalists with strong links to the dictatorship.

While Jarpa, Alessandri and the other PN deputies involved in WACL and CAL did not hold formal roles in either organisation (in contrast to the other countries with which this thesis is concerned, as we will see below), the dictatorship itself was nonetheless held in high esteem by all conference delegates. In contrast to the widespread international isolation that the Pinochet dictatorship suffered due to its flagrant human rights abuses, WACL and CAL functioned as forums for the expression of solidarity with Chile in the regime's struggle against international

[86] Margaret Power, 'Who but a Woman? The Transnational Diffusion of Anti- Communism among Conservative Women in Brazil, Chile and the United States during the Cold War', *Cold War History* 47, no. 1 (2015), 93–119.
[87] Delegados que participarán en el segundo congreso secreto de la CAL, 24-27 May 1973, R053F1389-90, CDyA.
[88] Jarpa's stint at Chilean ambassador to the UN was short (1974) he later served as ambassador to Colombia and Argentina, and became Interior Minister in 1983. For an outline, see his biography on the website of the Library of the Chilean National Congress: Reseña Biográfica Sergio Onofre Jarpa Reyes, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas_parlamentarias/wiki/Sergio_Onofre_Jarpa_Reyes, accessed October 2019; Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War*, 257 (note 96).

communism and perceived mistreatment at the hands of others on the world stage. For these fellow Extreme Right anticommunists, the Pinochet dictatorship assumed almost talismanic status for having successfully defeated communism at home. Indeed, in September 1974, the Brazilian WACL/CAL chapter, SEPES, held a week of solidarity with the Pinochet dictatorship while the following year WACL requested that all member units participate in solidarity activities on the coup's second anniversary.[89]

If Chilean participants in WACL/CAL can be broadly characterised as civilian intellectuals, the leading Argentines were much more closely connected to that country's aforementioned Extreme-Right parastatal forces that rose to prominence following Perón's return to power in 1973 and were later integrated into the structures of the military dictatorship. Acting without the knowledge even of civilian branches of the Argentine state – most critically, the foreign ministry and its embassies – the clandestine nature of the links between these Argentine fascists and the military dictatorship poses methodological problems as the extant archival material is scarce and the use of fake names widespread. Nonetheless, it is possible to establish that the central coordinator of Argentine involvement in WACL and CAL in the 1970s was Germán Adolfo Justo.

Although no Argentine was present at the founding of the CAL in 1972, a CAL document from 1974 names Justo as Secretary for Propaganda and Dissemination for the Southern Zone (South America) on the CAL Coordinating Council. Justo had been a militant in the fascist ALN (*Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista*) during the 1940s and had been the principal connection to the Mexican *Tecos* leading to Argentine involvement in the CAL.[90] As we shall see in the next chapter, Justo went on to lead the Argentine delegation to the III CAL Congress in Asunción, Paraguay, in 1977. This continuity in leadership after the March 1976 further illustrates the aforementioned way in which the Argentine dictatorship absorbed many of the Extreme Right groups of the third Perón government into the apparatus of 'clandestine' wing of the state. Going forwards, Justo and his associates on the Extreme Right drawn from the Triple-A and other groups would continue to serve as the connection between hardliners in the

[89] Informe sobre el desarrollo de la 'semana de solidaridad a Chile', SEPES (Sociedade de Estudos Políticos Econômicos e Sociais), September 1974, R108F1879-81; Circular 008/75, a todos los miembros de la Liga Anticomunista Mundial, 2º Aniversario de la Revolución Chilena, São Paulo, September 1975, R198F2617, CDyA.
[90] Cersósimo, '"El Proceso fue liberal": Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)', 295.

Argentine military command and Extreme Rightists across Latin America, with crucial consequences for the organisation of subsequent Argentine support for the counterinsurgencies in Central America.

On the Central American side, Mario Sandoval Alarcón was a major figure in both WACL and CAL. As founder and leader of the MLN, he had been involved with CAL since its foundation at the 6th WACL conference in Mexico City in August 1972, leading the Guatemalan delegation to both WACL and CAL conferences while also President of the Guatemalan National Congress during the presidency of Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio (1970-1974).[91] Despite then becoming vice president of Guatemala (1974-1978) he went on to attend every CAL and WACL conference thereafter, bar the 3rd CAL conference in March 1977, at which stage he was likely already in Taipei in preparation for the WACL conference the following month (he did, however, send a message of support to be read aloud).[92] Loyal MLN cadres accompanied Sandoval Alarcón in these pursuits. In July 1974 Roberto Cordón Schwank, MLN deputy and some-time President of CACIF (*Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras*, the principal Guatemalan private business lobby group), was listed as 'Secretary for the Defence of Agricultural Property' for the 'Northern Zone' (Central America and Mexico) on the CAL coordinating council; throughout the 1970s Sandoval Alarcón and Cordón were accompanied to WACL and CAL conferences by a host of other MLN deputies, among them Carlos Midence (Sandoval Alarcón's nephew and party loyalist) and Lionel Sisniega Otero, a stalwart of the Guatemalan Extreme Right who, like Alarcón, had been instrumental in the foundation of the MLN in the aftermath of the US-sponsored coup against Jacobo Árbenz in 1954.[93]

In the absence of an organised Extreme Right party in El Salvador in the 1970s, the Salvadorans involved in WACL and CAL were drawn from the same groups representing the

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[91] Macedonio, 'Historia de una colaboración anticomunista transnacional: los Tecos de la Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara y el gobierno de Chiang Kai-Shek a principios de los años setenta', 50.; Delegados que participarán en el segundo congreso secreto de la CAL, 24-27 May 1973, R053F1389-90, CDyA.
[92] 'Critican a Jimmy Carter en el Congreso Anticomunista Latinoamericano', 12 April 1977, Boletin No. 60, Agencia Noticiosa Paraguaya, R184F0258-64, CDyA.
[93] CAL Circular No. 3/1974, 16 August 1974, R094F1108-12, CDyA; Ulrike Joras, *Companies in Peace Processes: A Guatemalan Case Study* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007), 161.; Delegaciones extranjeras - III Congreso CAL, March 1977, R094F0029-30, CDyA; Participants of 10th WACL and 23rd APACL Conferences, April 1977, Folder 1 – WACL Conference File, 1977, Box 60, KDP, HILA; Delegaciones extranjeras - XII WACL Congreso, April 1979 R108F1072-77, CDyA.

Salvadoran economic elite that united to defeat the 1976 land reform.[94] Here, the most important figure was Adolfo Cuellar, founding member of the CAL and Secretary for Propaganda and Dissemination for the Northern Zone on the CAL Coordinating Council in 1974 (Argentine CAL leader Germán Adolfo Justo's opposite number). Cuellar was a founding member of ORDEN, and, in 1973, a PCN deputy. He led the Salvadoran CAL chapter until his assassination by guerrilla forces in 1980.[95] Cuellar was accompanied to the secret CAL congress of 1973 by José Francisco Guerrero, his fellow deputy and a founder of the PCN who went on to be personal lawyer to death squad leader and later presidential candidate Roberto D'Aubuisson.[96] Going forwards, these Extreme Right groups continued to dominate Guatemalan and Salvadoran participation in WACL and CAL, forming a vital direct link to the Southern Cone dictatorships.

Between 1973 and 1977, these ties through WACL and CAL helped nurture existing connections between the Pinochet dictatorship and Central America, and especially Guatemala. Soon after the September 1973 coup Sandoval Alarcón used his position as President of the Guatemalan Chamber of Deputies to grant rapid recognition to the military regime, marking the beginning of an unusually close relationship with the Pinochet dictatorship. In September 1975, Sandoval Alarcón visited Santiago to celebrate the second anniversary of the Chilean coup, and the following March the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala celebrated the fact that while in general 'the President and Vice President do not attend any reception hosted by the diplomatic corp, the Vice President attends the receptions hosted by the Chilean Embassy each time he is invited', the Chilean Embassy was 'the only embassy he visits'.[97] In September that year, the

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[94] Although a political party in its own right, in the 1970s the PCN was the military's chosen vehicle for electoral fraud and contained a broad range of opinions from across the Salvadoran right.
[95] CAL Circular No. 3/1974, 16 August 1974, R094F1108-12, CDyA; CAL Circular No. 1/80, 16 January 1980, R052F0704-05, CDyA.
[96] Delegados que participarán en el segundo congreso secreto de la CAL, 24-27 May 1973, R053F1389-90, CDyA; Craig Pyes and Laurie Becklund, 'Inside Dope in El Salvador', 15 April 1985, Folder 'Inside Dope in El Salvador by Craig Pyes and Laurie Becklund', Box 59, Oliver North Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, CA.
[97] EmbaGuatemala, 12 March 1976, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1976/AMRE. References headed 'EmbaGuatemala' and 'EmbaSanSalvador' indicate oficios sent from Chilean embassies to the Foreign Ministry unless otherwise specified. These documents are to be found in the Archivo General Histórico del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago, Chile (hereafter AMRE), Fondo Países, organised by document type, the name of the country in which the embassy is situated (here, Guatemala and El Salvador), year, and level of classification, indicated as SEC (secreto), RES (reservado) or ORD (ordinario).

Chilean military decorated Sandoval Alarcón with the Great Cross, Order of Merit, in recognition of this friendship.[98]

Besides Sandoval Alarcón, members of the Guatemalan Extreme Right enthusiastically welcomed representatives of the Chilean dictatorship to Guatemala to discuss events in Chile. One organisation in this respect was the *Amigos del País* (literally translating as the somewhat innocuous sounding 'friends of the country'). The Chilean ambassador to Guatemala, however, was quite clear on the group's true nature: the name was a 'euphemism that hides the organisation in which the most openly anticommunist businessmen are politically active'.[99] An important figure in *Amigos del País* in the late 1970s, for example, was Edmundo Nanne Zirión, a Guatemalan businessman and former President of the Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce.[100] Nanne had set about forging connections with the Pinochet dictatorship soon after the September 1973 coup, arranging a visit for Pedro Ibáñez, a member of the Chilean State Council and prominent supporter of the dictatorship, to Guatemala in January 1974 to explain 'the truth of what occurred in Chile to the people of Guatemala and its ruling parties'.[101] During the visit Ibáñez addressed business circles, universities and the armed forces, no doubt likely coming into contact with Manuel Ayau at the Universidad Francisco Marroquín, an Extreme Right intellectual who, like Ibáñez, was a member of the Mont Pelerin Society. On his own initiative and for similar motivations, Ayau organised similar unofficial visits to Guatemala by members of the Chilean government to Guatemala throughout the 1970s.[102]

In contrast, while Chileans and Salvadorans encountered one another in WACL and CAL, the most important existing relationship between the two countries before 1977 was that of their militaries. The first Chilean military mission had arrived in El Salvador in 1905, and among its members was none other than Carlos Ibañez del Campo, who would go on to become dictator, and then elected President, of Chile in the mid-century.[103] This marked the beginning of

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98 EmbaGuatemala, 13 October 1976, Oficios ORD./Guatemala/1976/AMRE.
99 EmbaGuatemala, 20 February 1976, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1976/AMRE.
100 Ibid.
101 EmbaGuatemala, 5 October 1976, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1976/AMRE.
102 On Ibáñez's activities in Guatemala, see ibid; on Manuel Ayau's activities inviting Chileans to Guatemala: one such example was the October 1978 visit of two officials from Chile's central bank (Banco Central de Chile) to Universidad Francisco Marroquín to give lectures on the Pinochet dictatorship's trade policy. EmbaGuatemala, 7 November 1978, Oficios SEC.RES./AMRE.
103 Ibañez was first elected in a fraudulent election in 1927, and served in a dictatorial capacity until July 1931. He was democratically elected President once again in Chile's 1952 elections, serving a six-year term until November 1958. General Manuel Torres de la Cruz, the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador,

a close relationship between the armed forces in the decades that followed. Between 1950 and 1957, overlapping significantly with the second Ibañez administration (1952-1958), five Chilean military missions played a critical role in the foundation and organisation of El Salvador's *Escuela de Guerra*.[104] The institutionalisation of a programme of military scholarships for Salvadorans in Chilean military institutes over the following years maintained the Chilean military in high esteem among members of its Salvadoran counterpart and this relationship remains prized today.[105] Where these military connections played a role in Chilean-Salvadoran relations over the course of the Salvadoran Civil War, no equivalent precedent existed in Chilean relations with Guatemala.[106] Nor did the Argentine government hold any established relationship with the Central American republics: the region is entirely absent from histories of Argentine foreign policy prior to the 1970s.[107] It was only later, in the years after the 1976 coup, that the military dictatorship would co-opt the Argentine Extreme Right's transnational connections and put them to use.

Just as WACL and CAL allowed Latin Americans to connect with other Global South anticommunists and express their disagreement with détente, these and other transnational forums also provided an opportunity for members of the US New Right who shared this opposition to détente to forge connections with likeminded allies across the world. The first United States WACL chapter, the American Council for World Freedom (ACWF), formed in 1970, drew together a plethora of New Right groups: the Committee of One Million, the American Security Council (ASC, whose head, John Fisher, was elected as first leader of the ACWF) and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, among others. After joining in 1971, ACWF involvement in WACL peaked with the hosting of the 1974 annual conference in Washington DC, and the following year the ACWF orchestrated the attendance of high profile anticommunist figures such as Senator Jesse Helms at the 1975 WACL conference, contributing to the growing array of connections between the US anticommunists and their Latin American

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elaborated on this history at the annual Meeting of Chilean Ambassadors in the Americas, 1978, EmbaSanSalvador, 13 February 1978, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.

[104] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 March 1977, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.

[105] Corado Figueroa, *Ejército de Chile en El Salvador: historia de una centenaria relación de amistad y cooperación*.

[106] Despite the absence of established military exchanges between Chile and Guatemala, it is worth noting that the advent of the former's military dictatorship in September 1973 was understood as a turning point in relations between the two countries: 'traditionally cordial' earlier in the twentieth century, those during 'the years of military government' were considered significantly improved. EmbaGuatemala, 4 September 1978, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.

[107] See for example, Cisneros and Escudé, *Historia de las Relaciones Exteriores Argentinas*.

counterparts.[108] The ACWF organised an 'Inter-American Conference on Freedom and Security' in September 1975, bringing together individuals from across the Americas and throwing a gala dinner whose attendees resembled a who's who of the most unforgivingly hawkish members of the US Congress, from Senators Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond to Congressman Larry P. McDonald.[109] They were joined by anticommunists from across the hemisphere in a sign of inter-American anticommunist collaboration to come.

Among the attendees that year was Gonzalo Ibáñez, a Chilean law professor and son of the aforementioned Pedro Ibáñez, who was firmly embedded in the circle of right-wing intellectuals close to the Pinochet dictatorship.[110] Both father and son were closely involved in the Pinochet dictatorship's US lobbying operation, the American-Chilean Council (ACC) and the latter's presence likely came through his relationship with Marvin Liebman, the lobbyist who ran the US side of ACC operations and was also a prominent member of the ACWF.[111] Other attendees included Chilean National Party politician Mario Arnello, Salvadoran journalist Ricardo Fuentes Castellanos, and Dr Ku Cheng Kang, honorary chairman of WACL. While the ACWF would soon fall apart amidst accusations of fascism, these meetings laid the foundation for a new phase of inter-American anticommunist collaboration.[112] In 1976, former ACWF members founded the Council for Inter-American Security (CIS). Drawing on many of the individuals involved in the ACWF and their 1975 conference, CIS went on to play a critical role in bringing anticommunists from throughout the hemisphere together, providing them with a base in Washington DC from which they could seek to change the course of US foreign policy.

These congresses of the mid-1970s laid the groundwork for a new phase in transnational anticommunist collaboration working independently of, and sometimes directly against, US

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108 Burke, "A Global Brotherhood of Paramilitaries: American Conservatives, Anticommunist Internationalism, and Covert Warfare in the Cold War," 227.
109 Inter-American Conference on Freedom and Security, sponsored by the American Council for World Freedom, 25-28 September, 1975' Folder Inter-American Conference, Box 112, Marvin Liebman Papers (herein MLP), Hoover Institution Library and Archives (hereafter HILA), Stanford, CA, USA.
110 Inter-American Symposium brochure, August 1977, Folder 9 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium, 1977, 1979, Box 2, Council for Inter-American Security (hereafter CIS), HILA.
111 Members of the Consejo Chileno Norteamericano, October 1977, Folder ACC – Members, Box 114, MLP, HILA. Marvin Liebman's activities on behalf of the Pinochet dictatorship are documented in his personal papers held at the Hoover Institution. See files in boxes 114-118, MLP, HILA.
112 On the rise and precipitous fall of the ACWF within WACL, see Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War*, 55–62; Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 83–91.

government policy but often including participation of, or receiving attention from, non-governmental US groups. As the Australian WACL chapter put it, the '1975 Anti-Communist League Congress paved the way for a major counter-offensive against the red advance.'[113] In the Western Hemisphere, it was in Central America that this 'red advance' soon became most apparent, and the transnational response to this threat – drawing in the Southern Cone dictatorships thousands of miles to the south – marked a new episode in the longer history of Latin American transnational anticommunist collaboration stretching from the early twentieth century through Operation Condor.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the vital historical context for the unprecedented involvement of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships in Guatemala and El Salvador from 1977. In the preceding decades, Extreme Right anticommunists from all four of these countries had already participated to some degree in existing transnational anticommunist spaces. In the Chilean case, since 1973 the dictatorship had laboured to improve relations with these natural anticommunist allies in Central America. At the same time, through participation in WACL and CAL as well as US-based forums during the 1970s, the Latin American Extreme Right had begun working with anticommunists from across the globe to develop a critique of détente and propose an alternative, collaborative approach to tackling the perceived threat posed by international communism.

In May 1976, delegates to the 9th annual conference of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) held in Seoul, South Korea, identified Latin America as an area of high risk. Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua alongside Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile were facing the common threat of 'Marxist-Leninist imperialism' emanating from Cuba.[114] In response, the conference resolved to 'promote an effective alliance for political, economic, and military defence cooperation between the countries with anticommunist governments in Latin America and other regions of the world.'[115] Over the next seven years, this alliance materialised, and it was born in direct opposition to the foreign policy pursued by President Jimmy Carter, elected in November 1976. The chapters that follow trace the role played by the Chilean and

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[113] Fernando López, *The Feathers of Condor: Transnational State Terrorism, Exiles and Civilian Anticommunism in South America* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 321.
[114] Informe, 9a. Conferencia General de la Liga Mundial Anticomunista, Seoul, 1-4 May 1976, por Antonio Campos Alum, Ministerio del Interior, R108F1964-66, CDyA.
[115] Ibid.

Argentine dictatorships in this transnational anticommunist network as it coalesced around Central America. Going forwards, the specific national characteristics of each regime profoundly shaped the nature of Chilean and Argentine involvement in the isthmus.

Chapter 2: 1977 as a starting point

Introduction

On 20 January 1977, Jimmy Carter was inaugurated as President of the United States, promising in his inaugural address that during his presidency US foreign policy would no longer be indifferent to 'the fate of freedom elsewhere'.[1] Soon after, the Carter administration made US military aid conditional on a basic standard of respect for individual human rights in the hope that this measure would lead to a reduction in state-perpetrated human rights abuses by US allies, chief among them Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships. By the end of March, no fewer than five of these dictatorships had responded by pre-emptively cutting off US military aid. Within weeks of Jimmy Carter's inauguration, the dynamics of inter-American relations had fundamentally changed. Following the introduction of the human rights policy, the Latin American Extreme Right believed the United States to be working directly against their interests, and by extension undermining the struggle against communism in the Western hemisphere. This chapter argues that Carter's inauguration as president of the United States created the conditions for a new and unprecedented phase of Latin American international and transnational anticommunist collaboration.

Initially, this collaboration focused on Carter himself, as those on the Latin American Extreme Right worked with sympathetic Rightists in the United States to develop a sophisticated critique of the human rights policy. Chileans, Argentines, Guatemalans and Salvadorans all participated in this effort, while outside of these transnational forums the governments of these countries drew closer together in shared opposition to US foreign policy. These efforts laid the necessary foundations, through the deepening of transnational and international connections, for subsequent Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America as the 'subversive threat' there grew from 1978.

An initial analysis of the Latin America Extreme Right's response to Carter shows how the introduction of the human rights policy marked a new era in inter-American relations wherein the Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships and the occupant of the White House

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[1] Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter, 20 January 1977, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/inaugadd.phtml, accessed 25 February 2022.

held vastly differing views of how best to wage the Cold War. Having established this context, we can explore the way in which the Latin American Extreme Right sought to undermine US policy through a redefinition of 'human rights' in anticommunist terms.

The third part of the chapter then zeroes in on the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina and what the new international landscape meant for them, and for their foreign policy toward Guatemala and El Salvador in particular. Even before the left-wing insurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador reached new peaks in late 1978, both countries had already grown in geopolitical significance for the Southern Cone dictatorships. They held strategic importance both as allies against Carter's policy and in the wider struggle against subversion, as well as a site of competition between Chile and Argentina for support in their ongoing border dispute in the Beagle Channel. The chapter ends by emphasising how the institutionalisation of human rights scrutiny in US foreign policy encouraged Latin America's anticommunist regimes to turn to covert, transnational ties to transmit support to one another, showing how supposedly 'non-state' transnational organisations like the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and its Latin American chapter, the CAL, were in fact state tools for Chilean and Argentine foreign policy in the late 1970s.

A New Era in Inter-American Relations

In seeking to distance the United States from Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships, Carter's human rights policy profoundly altered the dynamics of inter-American relations and fractured the hemispheric alliance between the United States and the Latin American Right that predated the Cold War itself. From January 1977, Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships believed US policy - specifically Carter's human rights policy - to be actively undermining the struggle against international communism both in the western hemisphere and worldwide.

While the concept of 'human rights' in US foreign policy did not appear out of the blue during the 1976 election campaign, Carter's inauguration marked a turning point. It was under Carter that human rights considerations were given a high profile and institutional status.[2]

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[2] Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 73; for the development of human rights in the 1970s also see the first chapter of Moyn, *The Last Utopia: human rights in history* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

Largely subordinated to the priorities of containment in the decades following the approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, in the 1960s and early 1970s members of Congress from both parties began to push for greater human rights considerations in US foreign policy. Yet far from a unified front, two competing conceptions of human rights emerged. One, under the banner of the 'Jackson Democrats' (although including Republicans) focused on human rights violations in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and other communist countries.[3] This concern fitted squarely with US anticommunism, and would remain influential as the 'Helsinki process', triggered by the signing of the Helsinki Final Act (1975), made human rights central to efforts to undermine the political and ideological systems of the Soviet bloc.

Carter's policy in Latin America institutionalised the other side of the coin. From as early as the Brazilian military coup in 1964, liberal Democrats in Congress advanced human rights rhetoric in opposition to US support for dictatorships in Latin America and elsewhere. Emboldened in the context of increased congressional oversight of foreign policy in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, it was this group, led by the likes of Senator Frank Church and Congressmen Donald Fraser and Ed Koch, who interrogated the nature of US alliances with anticommunist dictatorships and successfully used congressional amendments to impose restrictions on military assistance to Chile and Uruguay in the mid-1970s.[4] Carter's policy drew on the foundations laid by these efforts. By placing conditions on military aid from 1977, the human rights policy threw the weight of the White House behind the 1973 amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act which stipulated that no security assistance be provided to countries that engaged in 'a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights'.[5] At the same time, the White House and State Department placed pressure on the Latin American dictatorships to accept the presence of human rights observers and provide evidence of improving human rights conditions within their countries. This marked the first time a US administration, as opposed to members of Congress, had placed human rights above more traditional Cold War anticommunist concerns.

In response, over the course of March 1977, the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Paraguay pre-emptively rejected all conditional military aid from the

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[3] Sikkink, *Mixed signals: U.S. human rights policy and Latin America*, 52.
[4] Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America*, 73; Sarah B. Snyder, '"Ending Our Support for the Dictators": Ed Koch, Uruguay, and Human Rights', *Cold War History* 21, no. 1 (2021), 19–36.
[5] Ibid., 69.

United States, citing objections to US interventionism (Democrat-sponsored congressional amendments had already cut off assistance to Chile and Uruguay before Carter's election in November 1976).[6] In addition, the Salvadoran government ordered the immediate return of all members of the armed forces undergoing training in the United States and Panama.[7] While this rejection of direct military aid did not represent a total termination of US military assistance in that it did not affect the import of arms and other materials through private business, it nevertheless constituted a significant cut in assistance, and represented an even greater symbolic rupture between the US and Latin American anticommunist regimes.[8] Around the same time, the United States also terminated military aid to Nicaragua on human rights grounds.

In response, Latin America's anticommunist regimes were forced to look elsewhere for military supplies. In July 1977 the Chilean embassy in San Salvador reported that despite President Romero's public insistence that El Salvador had 'no need to buy military equipment', their own intelligence showed that just one month earlier Colonel José Antonio Corleto, Director of the Salvadoran Military Academy, and one other senior Salvadoran officer had undertaken a secret mission to the UK, France, Israel and Brazil, with the aim of acquiring aircraft and armoured vehicles.[9] In Guatemala a similar pattern emerged: despite public statements that the Guatemalan government 'was not affected by the American market', Chilean embassy officials reported efforts to purchase arms from Belgium, Israel, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France and Germany 'in view of the limitations imposed by the United States'.[10] At the same time, Chile, Brazil and Argentina were looking elsewhere for military hardware that they could no longer procure from the United States.[11] This gap in military supply triggered by the human

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[6] EmbaGuatemala, 7 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 22 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE. P. Kornbluh, *The Pinochet file: a declassified dossier on atrocity and accountability* (New York: New Press, 2003), 231; K. Sikkink, *Mixed signals: U.S. human rights policy and Latin America*, 73.
[7] EmbaSanSalvador, 11 April 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[8] In her 1982 analysis, Roberta Cohen highlights the extent to which private business transactions between the US and the Southern Cone were unaffected by Carter's human rights policy. See R. Cohen, 'Human Rights Diplomacy: The Carter Administration and the Southern Cone' *Human Rights Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1982); Greg Grandin also refers to the continued flow of military aid from the United States to Guatemala after 1977, see Grandin, *The last colonial massacre Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). However, US sources show that from October 1978 there was, in effect, a 'total arms embargo' with Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala and Chile', Memorandum from Robert Pastor of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Brzezinski, 8 May 1978, *FRUS,* vol. XXIV, Document 29.
[9] EmbaSanSalvador, 8 August 1977, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[10] EmbaGuatemala, 31 October 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[11] CIA Paper, 'Human Rights in the Southern Cone of Latin America', June 1977, *FRUS*, vol. XXIV, Document 16.

rights policy was felt across Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships and forced them to look to one another - and beyond the Americas – in search of compensation.

The III CAL Congress, held in Asunción, Paraguay, at the end of March 1977, provided a forum for the Latin American Extreme Right to vent their frustrations with the new US president's foreign policy. Delegates attended from all over Latin America and the Caribbean and included close associates of the Guatemalan Vice-President, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, leader of the infamous Extreme-Right *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Movement, MLN) as well as prominent members of Miami-based Cuban exile group Alpha-66. Alfredo Stroessner (the long-time Paraguayan dictator and host), General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán (Commander of the Chilean Air Force and junta member), Croatian fascist Félix Psenicnik Staresinic and US congressman Robert Dornan (R-CA) all counted among the special guests and speakers.[12] The presence of senior government figures such as Leigh and Stroessner indicates the importance of the CAL as a forum for the Latin American Extreme Right at state as well as non-state levels. Documents relating to the III Congress thus provide a direct insight into the way in which the Carter presidency was received among both the dictatorships and non-state groups.

Discussion of the human rights policy dominated the Congress. The policy was broadly perceived as the next and final step in the US dereliction of duty as the leader of the free world.[13] Delegates strongly felt that they, and the regimes they represented, had been the sole obstacle preventing Latin America's fall to communism during the détente period, and the human rights policy was thus understood as a direct attack on those regimes. This context was made explicit in CAL General Secretary Rafael Rodríguez's speech at the opening ceremony. Rodríguez, a senior member of *Los Tecos* (FEMACO) and a journalist and academic at the Teco base, the *Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara* (Autonomous University of Guadalajara, UAG), declared that 'since we founded the CAL in August 1972, communism has extended its dominion in Asia, in Africa and in Europe, but has receded in Latin America, which is proof of this strength of our defences and

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[12] Delegaciones extranjeras - III Congreso CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0029-30, CDyA; Discurso del General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán, Comandante de la Fuerza Aerea y miembro de la Junta de Gobierno de Chile, en la apertura del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0021-23, CDyA; Palabras del honorable congresista Robert K. Dornan ante la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, 28 March 1977, R094F0036-39, CDyA.
[13] Criticism of Carter accounted for two-thirds of conference motions, Indice de documentación, III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0040, CDyA.

our reserves'.[14] As the Cuban delegation, the Miami-based exile group Alpha-66, elaborated in their own submission to the Congress, the Carter administration was seen as 'using so-called human rights' to interfere in the domestic affairs of those countries whose governments had 'made impossible the triumph of the marxist-atheist materialist system'.[15] From this perspective, conditional military aid was a form of 'economic, political and ideological blackmail' and its suspension labelled 'the most efficient method to deliver a country into the hands of international communism'.[16]

For conference delegates, the region's anticommunist dictatorships and the violent repression they implemented were the only commensurate response to the threat posed by international communism; these 'heroic examples', now under threat from Carter's policy, constituted models for others to replicate.[17] General Gustavo Leigh made this point most forcefully in his speech to the congress, describing Chile as an example for all the world of a country that had 'managed to escape unscathed from the clutches of Soviet imperialism and the darkness of communism' as a 'testimony to the action of a people that, together with their armed forces, has been capable of rescuing, from abuse, disorder and chaos, the essential elements of national being.'[18]

In this respect, Carter's inauguration laid bare the fundamental differences in how the Latin American Extreme Right and US foreign policymakers respectively conceived of the Cold War. For these Latin American Extreme Rightists, the Cold War was not defined by the bipolar competition between the two superpowers, but as a conflict between international communism and the 'Free World' or 'Western Civilisation'.[19] While they certainly understood the Soviet Union to be the headquarters of international communism and Cuba its chief agent in Latin America, this ideological struggle was not conceived in terms of inter-state competition. Rather,

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[14] Discurso del Prof. Rafael Rodríguez en la ceremonia de apertura del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0018-20, CDyA.
[15] 'Hipocresía y Falsedades de Carter y Asociados Derechos Humanos', Delegación Cubana, III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R119F0825-8, CDyA.
[16] Acuerda a propuesta de la delegación mexicana, presentado por la Comisión Plenaria, CAL III Congreso, 28-30 March 1977, R094F0025, CDYA; EmbaGuatemala, 18 July 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[17] Declaración Final del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0065-68, CDyA.
[18] Discurso del General Gustavo Leigh Guzman, Comandante de la Fuerza Aerea y miembro de la Junta de Gobierno de Chile, en la apertura del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0021-23, CDyA.
[19] For the Salvadoran Extreme Right's use of this language, see Aaron T. Bell, 'A Matter of Western Civilisation: Transnational Support for the Salvadoran Counterrevolution, 1979–1982', *Cold War History*, 15: 4 (2015), 525.

the ‘communist’ or ‘subversive’ threat was a transnational phenomenon, construed in political, religious and cultural terms. While the Soviet Union and Cuba were the principal state sponsors of international communism, ‘subversives’ were also present within the ranks of progressive Catholics, trade unionists, student organisers and gay and human rights activists worldwide. If the United States under Carter was not going to step up and assume that country’s traditional leadership in the struggle, then the Latin American Extreme Right would work against both Washington and Moscow to continue their fight.

A new phase in transnational anticommunist collaboration: towards a new definition of human rights

The Carter administration marked a new and unprecedented phase of transnational anticommunist collaboration. Carter became, in the words of Anderson and Anderson, one of the ‘major adhesives’ holding the diverse groups within the World Anti-Communist League together in the late 1970s: 'league attacks on Jimmy Carter were relentless; his name became something of an epithet. At the 1978 League conference in Washington, he was attacked for everything from sanctioning the Sandinistas' fight against the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza to causing unrest in South Korea; at the 1977 Belgrade conference, he was attacked for failing to take up the cause of the captive nations’.[20] Shared outrage at the direction of US foreign policy brought anticommunists from around the world together; in Latin America, this provided the vital conditions for a new and unprecedented stage of transnational anticommunist collaboration which came to the fore in Central America.

Facing what they believed to be an actively hostile US foreign policy, Latin America’s anticommunist dictatorships and other Extreme Right groups pulled together to combat the perceived ‘subversive’ threat. Resolutions approved by the III CAL Congress reveal the diverse range of visions for transnational anticommunist collaboration in the years ahead. These ranged from calls for region-wide purges of communist influence over the education system to the authorisation of the creation of a Latin America-wide CAL radio station and news agency and even a ‘financial entity’ to assist the endeavours of ‘anticommunist businessmen’.[21] Unsurprisingly, given the strong influence of conservative Catholicism within the organisation,

[20] Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 110.
[21] Ponencia de la delegación de Guatemala, III CAL Congress, March 1977, R119F9787, CDyA; Indice, Acuerdos por Comisión, III CAL Congress, March 1977, R0094F0040-43, CDyA.

the Congress had an entire commission dedicated to 'the struggle against communist infiltration' of the Catholic Church. Delegates called for a continent-wide campaign to denounce the 'false priests' within the clergy and the creation of a fund to support 'authentic' priests and their work.[22] Yet it was the human rights policy itself that was the target of the initial phase of this transnational collaboration, as the Latin American Extreme Right sought to mount a defence of their models for anticommunist counterinsurgency and redefine the very language of human rights in the process.

Even before 1977 the Latin American Extreme Right had depicted the notion of human rights as essentially a political tool of the Left, deployed against good anticommunists in order to further the goals of international communism. As a 1973 Brazilian 'Dictionary of Terrorist Terms' put it, 'human rights' was a term 'adopted in the campaign realised by elements of the subversive Left, exclusively in favour of their imprisoned colleagues, with the aim of attracting popular sympathy'.[23] Employing very similar language, in July 1977 recently inaugurated Salvadoran President General Carlos Humberto Romero declared human rights activism to be 'the work of people interested in a single objective: to discredit us for their own purposes'. Meanwhile, Argentina's foreign policy directive from August that year went further, describing the international human rights movement as 'orchestrated by groups of terrorists that acted within our country and now operate abroad.'[24]

Representatives of the anticommunist dictatorships also levelled claims regarding the seemingly uneven application of Carter's human rights policy worldwide. During a visit to Chile by US State Department officials in November 1977, General Gustavo Leigh questioned why the United States showed no comparable concern about human rights in oil-producing countries,

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[22] Ponencias nnros. 3 y 4, Capítulo Paraguayo, V Comisión, III CAL Congress, March 1977, R119F0720-21, CDyA. These calls were part of a larger transnational campaign against liberation theology often identified as the 'Banzer Plan', named after Bolivian President General Hugo Banzer and a central theme at WACL and CAL meetings 1975-80. See, for example, Ernesto Bohoslavsky, 'The Fourth Conference of the Latin American Anti-Communist Confederation (Buenos Aires, 1980)', *Latin American Historical Almanac* 23 (2019), 173.

[23] Dicionário de Termos Terroristas, December 1973, DOPS/SP, my thanks to Paul Katz for sharing this document with me.

[24] Directiva No. 1 de Difusion al Exterior, 15 August 1977, no. 69, Colleción Forti, Archivo Histórico del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Cultura, Buenos Aires, Argentina (hereafter MREC). Colección Fortí (hereafter CF) refers to the collection of documents declassified in 2009 accessible online at http://desclasificacion.cancilleria.gov.ar. They are identified hereafter with country of origin (if none stated, document originated in Foreign Ministry), document number and 'CF, MREC'. All others documents labelled 'MREC' are held in the physical archive and include folder and collection detail in the note; EmbaSanSalvador, 8 August 1977, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.

insisting that were Chilean copper a strategic product for the industry of developed countries, nobody in Washington would worry about the human rights of Chileans either.[25] This attitude performed two important functions. First and most obviously, it allowed the dictatorships to flatly deny the reality of the severe human rights abuses – from kidnap to torture and disappearances – that they were perpetrating against their own citizens on a daily basis. Yet simultaneously, by casting 'human rights' as a subjective term, the Latin American Extreme Right created a rhetorical space in which they could attempt to redefine and redeploy the language of human rights for their own ends.

The result was a distinct redefinition of the language of human rights, born of the Extreme Right's conception of the Cold War and their place within it. Rather than the perpetrators of human rights *abuse*, those within Latin America's anticommunist regimes went to great lengths to place respect for human rights at the centre of their justifications for the state-perpetrated violence itself. This redefinition had one basic premise: under communism, human rights do not exist. Therefore, action taken to defeat communism – in this case, for example, the Chilean military's actions on 11 September 1973 – could be justified as the defence of fundamental human rights. This assertion was made time and time again by individuals high in the Latin American anticommunist dictatorships. At the III CAL Congress, Leigh declared pithily that 'we are anticommunists because we love freedom and we protect man and his rights', while chief of Paraguayan intelligence, Dr Juan Manuel Frutos, described the 'obligation to preserve the natural rights of man, whose denial is the very basis of Marxist philosophy'.[26] Human rights were equated to individual freedom and defined in opposition to communism and the associated threat it posed to national security.

The anticommunist dictatorships advanced this redefinition of human rights at almost every opportunity, from bilateral meetings with US government officials to private correspondence between the regimes.[27] In doing so they displayed a remarkable degree of

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[25] EmbaGuatemala, 22 November 1977, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[26] Discurso del General Gustavo Leigh Guzman, Comandante de la Fuerza Aerea y miembro de la Junta de Gobierno de Chile, en la apertura del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0021-23, CDyA; Discurso pronunciado por el Dr Juan Manuel Frutos, en el acto inaugural del III Congreso de la CAL, 28 March 1977, R094F0046-8, CDyA.
[27] Memorandum of Conversation between President Jorge Rafael Videla and Vice President Walter F. Mondale, Rome, Italy, 4 September 1978, Argentina Declassification Project (herein ADP), Part 2, accessible online via https://icontherecord.tumblr.com/post/148650765298/argentina-declassification-project, accessed 23 January 2022.

conceptual consistency. In a private message of consolation to Salvadoran President Arturo Molina in May 1977, Pinochet described the kidnap and subsequent assassination of Salvadoran Foreign Minister Mauricio Borgonovo by Salvadoran guerrilla group the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación de Farabundo Martí* (Popular Liberation Force 'Farabundo Martí', FPL) as a 'flagrant violation of human rights', illustrating the extent to which this anticommunist definition of 'human rights' was employed in both public and private statements.[28]

This coordinated rebuttal of the human rights policy also played out in international forums. At a diplomatic level, from 1977 onwards Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships formed a cohesive bloc in opposition to the US human rights policy in international organisations. Leadership of this response came from the Southern Cone. In October 1977 Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski recognised that Argentina and Chile were increasingly involved in 'an effort to try to curb or prohibit the activities of non-governmental organizations – particularly human rights groups – at the United Nations.'[29] Likewise, the Brazilian dictatorship used its regional influence to head up the coordinated defence of the dictatorships' records against communism in the name of human rights and freedom.[30] Although the dictatorships were ultimately far out-weighed at the UN, the sheer number of anticommunist dictatorships in Latin America in 1977 nevertheless allowed them to present a united front.

The General Assembly of the Organisation of American States in Grenada in June 1977 was, in the words of one CIA Intelligence Report, a 'battleground for the US human rights policy'.[31] With its much more restricted geographical boundaries, the OAS offered much better prospects of victory for the anticommunist dictatorships. Here the Southern Cone formed a 'solid intransigent bloc' in opposition to the US position, a stance coordinated in a pre-General Assembly meeting of foreign ministers organised by the Brazilian dictatorship.[32] Joined by the

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[28] Telex, General Augusto Pinochet to Coronel Arturo Molina, 11 May 1977, Oficios SEC., RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[29] Memorandum from Brzezinski to President Carter, 'Follow-Up Letters to Your Bilaterals with Latin American Leaders', 28 October 1977, ADP, part 2.
[30] Oficio, Consulado de Argentina, Salto, Uruguay to Señor Ministro, 'Eleva información referente a dichos del Canciller brasileño en la Asamblea General de la ONU en relación a la política de derechos humanos norteamericana', 27 September 1977, CF, MREC.
[31] Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, 'The OAS General Assembly and the Human Rights Issue', 28 June 1977, *FRUS* vol. XXIV, Document 20.
[32] Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, 'Human Rights in the Southern Cone of Latin America', June 1977, *FRUS*, vol. XXIV, Document 16; Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, 'The OAS General Assembly and the Human Rights Issue', 28 June 1977,

Central American dictatorships, this bloc once more advanced the argument for the necessity of favourable conditions in order for human rights to flourish, arguing that 'the principle of authority' was 'indispensable for the maintenance of free institutions', by extension justifying the 'war' on communism as an essential precondition for freedom and respect of human rights.[33] The bloc fell only two votes short of defeating the US-sponsored human rights initiative, demonstrating to the US the ability of Latin American governments, and Brazil and Argentina in particular, to 'hamper [US policy]… in important ways'.[34] While this near-win in the OAS was the result of sheer force of numbers rather than attributable to the dictatorships winning round any other government with their arguments, it nevertheless constituted an important forum within which the Latin American Extreme Right could assert their united objections to US policy.

Importantly, this effort to combat US foreign policy through a redefinition of the very language that underpinned it was not solely a Latin American enterprise. It sowed the seed for a wider hemispheric collaboration between American anticommunists from both the North and South. Just as North Americans had participated in earlier iterations of WACL and CAL conferences, they were also present at the III CAL Congress in 1977, which included speeches by special guests from the United States, Roger Pearson (chair of the North American WACL chapter) and Congressman Robert Dornan. Echoing the rhetoric advanced by Latin Americans that sought to redefine human rights in anticommunist terms, Dornan vowed: 'I say NO to communism and YES to human rights for my five children, thanks to you, fighters for liberty, to you, men and women of courage for inspiring this new congressman of the United States and for showing me how to achieve victory over this most diabolical assassin in all of history. I follow your footsteps'.[35]

Roger Pearson picked up this notion – shared both by the Latin American dictatorships and his compatriot – that Latin America was the last bastion of anticommunist resistance and

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FRUS vol. XXIV, Document 20; Telegram From the Department of State to All American Republic Diplomatic Posts, 'Guidance on Southern Cone Bloc Initiatives', 8 June 1977, *FRUS*, vol. XXIV, Document 17.

[33] EmbaSanSalvador, 8 August 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.

[34] Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State, Tarnoff, to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Brzezinski, 'Follow-up to President Carter's Pan American Day Speech and Mrs Carter's Trip', 19 July 1977, *FRUS*, vol. XXIV, Document 21.

[35] Palabras del honorable congresista Robert K Dornan ante la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, 28 March 1977, R094F0036-39, CDyA. For the Argentine dictatorship's propaganda efforts in the US media, see ibid.

should be seen as an example for the rest of the world to follow. Placing Latin America in the global context, Pearson declared that 'when we observe the collaboration that exists between socialists and communists in France, Italy and other countries of Western Europe; when we see the communist penetration in Africa and in the Indian Ocean, and when we contemplate the current situation in Southeast Asia, we are particularly aware of the value of the firm determination of the people of Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil and Argentina to stop communism in Latin America'.[36]

These views were also advanced in the United States: Marvin Liebman, chair of the American-Chilean Council, declared that 'Chile is one of the few nations - if not the only one - which has achieved a successful counter-revolution against a Marxist and Soviet-oriented regime. Hopefully, we may see other equally successful efforts around the world'; meanwhile in July 1977, Larry McDonald, far-Right Republican congressman and an ally of the CAL's in Washington, read concerns about the communist threat in Latin America into the congressional record, decrying the failure of the current administration in supporting the good anticommunists to the South.[37] This echoing of the Latin American Extreme Right's critique of Carter on the US New Right is an early indication of the ways in which the period of the Carter administration created the unique conditions for the Latin American Extreme Right to exert a concrete South-North intellectual influence on the US New Right.

Other organisations facilitated this exchange of ideas, bringing anticommunists from across the hemisphere into close contact. In the United States, the Council for Inter-American Security (CIS), founded in 1976 and closely linked to the US WACL chapter the ACWF (American Council for World Freedom), provided a home for the Latin American Extreme Right at the heart of Washington D.C.[38] The August 1977 CIS symposium built on the 1975 ACWF Inter-American Conference, drawing together anticommunists from across the Americas and building on existing right-wing networks. The brochure for the invite-only week-long event

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[36] Discurso del Dr Roger Pearson, III CAL Congreso, R094F0052-54, CDyA.
[37] Terrorism and Subversion in Latin America, Hon Larry McDonald of Georgia, in the House of Representatives, 13 July 1977, Congressional Record – Extensions of Remarks, E4435, copy held in Folder – El Salvador, Box 81, Luis Kutner Papers, HILA; McDonald, like Jesse Helms, hosted CAL leaders in Washington in the mid-1970s soon after the chapter's foundation. WACL Circular 011/75, September 1975, R198F2616, CDyA.
[38] The same individuals appear in documents relating to the ACWF, CIS and the American-Chilean Council (ACC), among them Lynn Francis Bouchey, Marvin Liebman, Stefan Possony and Lev Dobriansky. These same men resigned from the ACWF around the same time due to the latter's associations with fascist organisations, such as those dominating the European chapter of WACL.

in August 1977 made its purpose as a site of transnational anticommunist collaboration clear. Participants focused on the twin themes of 'Soviet Strategy and the Americas' and 'Political Ideas and Institutions: Perspectives on Freedom & Authority' with the stated objective of providing participants with a '*useful* understanding of the strategic military and economic, social and political forces at work across the Americas' while 'establishing *useful* personal ties and associations' (emphasis in the original).[39]

Like the WACL and CAL conferences, CIS symposia were an overwhelming white, male affair, dominated by right-wing journalists and academics from across the hemisphere. Considerable crossover existed between these organisations: many CIS attendees were directly or indirectly connected to WACL and CAL, while others were well acquainted with one another through participation in other right-wing groups, such as the Mont Pelerin Society. Indeed, attendees at the 1977 CIS conference included Guatemalan Manuel Ayau, a loyal disciple of Friedrich Hayek and active member of the Mont Pelerin Society (the society's president 1978-1980). Politically close to Mario Sandoval Alarcón and the MLN, Ayau was also founder and rector of the Extreme-Right Guatemalan university *Universidad Francisco Marroquín*.[40] He was accompanied to the symposium by Carlos Simmons, a stalwart of the MLN who had worked directly with Chilean anticommunist politician and transnational activist Sergio Fernández Larraín in the *Congresos contra la Intervención Soviética* in the 1950s.[41]

Ricardo Fuentes Castellanos, a virulently anticommunist journalist, represented El Salvador, as he had at the 1975 conference. Fuentes Castellanos' participation likely came via Ayau. Over the previous decades the two had published one another's work in their respective right-wing think tanks in Guatemala and El Salvador. Like Ayau, Fuentes Castellanos was an enthusiastic admirer of Friedrich Hayek and worked closely with the most prominent Salvadoran member of the Mont Pelerin Society, the editor of *El Diario de Hoy*, Enrique Altamarino.[42] In 1977, Fuentes Castellanos was accompanied to the CIS symposium by Orlando de Sola, a private

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[39] Inter-American Symposium brochure, August 1977, Folder 9 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium, 1977, 1979, Box 2, CIS, HILA.

[40] Luis Solano, *Guatemala: petróleo y minería en las entrañas del poder* (Inforpress Centroamericana, 2005), 45; Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 233–34.

[41] Inter-American Symposium Schedule, August 7-12, 1977, Folder 12 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium Correspondence, 1979, Box 12, CIS, HILA; Casals, 'Against a Continental Threat: Transnational Anti-Communist Networks of the Chilean Right Wing in the 1950s', 21.

[42] Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 234–35.

businessman and unapologetic Extreme Rightist, at that stage serving as First Vice President the *Cámara de Comercio e Industria de El Salvador* (the Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CCE).[43] Both de Sola and Altamarino later played an important role in the foundation of Salvadoran Extreme Right party ARENA (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*, Nationalist Republican Alliance).[44]

Gonzalo Ibáñez, a right-wing intellectual and the sole Latin American listed as 'faculty' for the symposium, represented the Pinochet dictatorship (he also attended the 1975 conference), and was accompanied to the symposium by Jorge Ivan Hübner Gallo, whose presence there represented a direct link to the Spanish far Right.[45] A Francoist intellectual who had studied in Madrid under the auspices of the ICH (Instituto de Cultura Hispanica), Hübner Gallo had been a personal friend of Franco's and a principal spokesperson for the Pinochet dictatorship, acting under a pseudonym, in the aftermath of the 1973 coup.[46] US participants also included right-wing academic Roger Fontaine and Daniel Graham, former director of the US Defense Intelligence Agency. Earlier that year, Graham had attended the WACL pre-conference executive board meeting, illustrating the porous borders between these different anticommunist organisations.[47]

Both Fontaine and Graham, as well as several others involved in CIS, would go on to play a crucial role in articulating Reagan's criticism of Carter's human rights policy in the 1980 presidential election (as explored in chapter five of this thesis). Their presence together with prominent Latin American Extreme Rightists at CIS in 1977 is an early indication of the transnational roots of this critique. At these anticommunist summits in 1977 there was only an inkling of the importance Central America would hold for the anticommunist struggle in the years to come, with a resolution from the Nicaraguan delegation to CAL III condemning the

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43 EmbaSanSalvador, 13 July 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./1978/El Salvador, AMRE; Lindsey Gruson, 'San Salvador Journal; He's a Rightist (No Doubt About It)' *New York Times*, 11 August 1989.
44 Claudio M. de Rosa Ferreira, *30 años trabajando por El Salvador: 1981-2011, historia política de ARENA* (San Salvador: Ed. Cinco, 2011), 20.
45 Inter-American Symposium Schedule, August 7-12, 1977, Folder 12 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium Correspondence, 1979, Box 12, CIS, HILA.
46 Gunnar Kressel, 'Technicians of the Spirit: Post-Fascist Technocratic Authoritarianism in Spain, Argentina, and Chile, 1945-1988', 67, 263; On the connections between Chile and Spain more generally, see Weld, 'The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet's Chile'.
47 Programme, 10th Pre-Conference WACL Executive Board Meeting, Houston, Texas, 8-11 January 1977, Folder 6 – WACL Conference File 1977, Box 59, KDP, HILA.

Honduran government for allowing FSLN insurgents to operate from Honduran soil.[48] Nonetheless, the hemispheric ties strengthened at CIS laid the foundation for future Latin American transnational anticommunist collaboration in Central America.

Chile, Argentina and Central America

For the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, the shifts in the inter-American system after Carter's inauguration made the anticommunist dictatorships in Guatemala and El Salvador two of their few natural allies in the Americas. By placing all Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships under the level of scrutiny that had been applied to the Pinochet dictatorship since 1973, Carter's human rights policy inadvertently brought the Southern Cone and Central American dictatorships – in Nicaragua and Honduras as well as Guatemala and El Salvador - closer together. By mid-1978, when the insurgencies in Central America became more of a serious cause for concern, relations between Chile, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador were already much stronger than they had been only a couple of years earlier.

For both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, alleviating international isolation was a central foreign policy priority in 1977. Besides losing US diplomatic support, both regimes faced censure in international forums regarding their atrocious records in terms of human rights abuses committed at home. Argentine foreign policy directive no. 1, from August 1977, designated combatting the 'international smear campaign' against Argentina as the first priority on both a regional and global level. Likewise, a summary of Chilean foreign policy objectives signed by Pinochet himself in January 1977 underscored the importance of 'increasing relations with all the world, and especially those of the American continent'.[49] Two principal factors made Guatemala and El Salvador the perfect candidates for the execution of these foreign policy aims: the anticommunist outlook of their governments, and their geographic and cultural proximity as fellow Latin American countries.

As early as 19 November 1976 – after Carter's election yet ahead of his inauguration – the Latin America department within the foreign ministry of the eight-month-old Argentine dictatorship produced a detailed report that acknowledged this natural affinity between the

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[48] Ponencia de la delegación nicaraguense al III Congreso de la CAL, March 1977, R119F0794-96, CDyA.
[49] Directiva No. 1 de Difusión al Exterior, 15 August 1977, No. 69, CF, MREC; Presidente de la República, Política Internacional de Chile 1977, 4 January 1977, Vol. 480, Presidencia, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.

Southern Cone and Central America.[50] Its authors proposed the strengthening of relations with the Central American nations as an initial step in establishing 'the new presence of the Republic in the world and particularly on the continent'. Not only did these five countries share Argentina's language and religion, but also its impatience with responding to underdevelopment, international terrorism and the problems of economic, financial and technological dependence.[51] The potential that Guatemala and El Salvador held for strong future relations only increased after Carter's inauguration. In conversation with the Guatemalan president, the Argentine ambassador cited Guatemala's position as one of 'the eight' countries banned from making strategic purchases from the United States as grounds for 'mutual help and cooperation' between likeminded countries.[52] Chilean diplomats in Guatemala emphasised how a 'similarity in thinking' concerning hemispheric affairs that constituted the vital foundation for closer relations with that country. The Chilean embassy in El Salvador described a similar alignment of views with the Salvadoran government: it too was the subject of a smear campaign 'similar to that which affects our nation, if of a lesser proportion'.[53]

In practical terms, the relative proximity of Central America (in comparison to anticommunist regimes beyond the Americas) also made the region a potential market for Chilean and Argentine exports. In March 1977 a twenty-person Argentine trade mission arrived in El Salvador with the explicit aim of increasing commercial exchange and in August the Argentine dictatorship offered a $30 million credit to the Guatemalan government for the purchase of Argentine goods.[54] In April 1978 representatives of the Salvadoran Chamber of Commerce and Industry visited both Chile and Argentina, while in 1978 the Chilean embassy in Guatemala sounded out the expansion of Chilean commercial interests, ranging from the export of saltpetre (chemical fertiliser) and concrete through to plugging a shortfall in the domestic bean market.[55] Nonetheless, these economic opportunities represented a small proportion of overall

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[50] Memorandum, Proyecto Viaje señor Canciller a América Central, 19 November 1976, AH/0004/2, Dirección América Latina (herein DAL), MREC.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Oficio, Guatemala, 30 July 1978, no. 326, CF, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 3 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[53] EmbaGuatemala, 7 November 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 8 August 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/AMRE.
[54] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE; Oficio, Guatemala, 3 July 1978, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.
[55] EmbaSanSalvador, 26 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 17 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 8 May 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; Telegrama ordinario recibido, San Salvador, No. 72, 10 March 1978, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.

Chilean and Argentine trade. Other geopolitical factors played a more important role in driving the deepening of Southern Cone-Central American relations from 1977.

In 1977 a growing community of Argentine exiles already existed in Central America and Mexico. These ranged from those based at the *Casa Argentina de Solidaridad* (CAS, Argentina Solidarity House) in Mexico, to militants fighting alongside the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.[56] As early as August 1976, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala characterised these groups as 'more diligent and industrious than their Chilean counterparts' in their self-promotion and opposition to the military junta – thus causing more of a headache for the Argentine dictatorship than, for example, prominent Chilean exiles in Mexico.[57] Even at this great distance, the Argentine dictatorship conceived of these exiles as a direct threat to the regime, making the region of greater geopolitical significance. Going forwards, the presence of exiles would heighten the dictatorship's sense that events in Central America were not merely analogous to the 'subversion' they sought to eradicate at home, but part and parcel of the same struggle.

In contrast, in 1977, following four years of military rule and harsh political repression, including the relentless pursuit of exiles abroad, the Chilean dictatorship entered a new phase in its lifespan: that of institutionalisation. Pinochet's speech at Chacarillas that July laid out the regime's path towards a new form of 'authoritarian' and 'protected' democracy.[58] This process of institutionalisation witnessed the dissolution of Chile's infamous secret police, the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (National Intelligence Directorate, DINA) and civilians' entry into influential government posts, and would culminate in the 1980 constitution.[59] Chacarillas marked

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[56] Natalia Lascano, 'Un acercamiento al estudio de los exiliados argentinos en Nicaragua (1979-1983) en perspectiva comparativa', *V Jornadas de Jóvenes Investigadores, Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires*, 2009; Pablo Yankelevich, *Ráfagas de un exilio: argentinos en México, 1974-1983* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2010).

[57] At this time Chile did not maintain diplomatic relations with Mexico and therefore the embassy in Guatemala managed all business related to the northern neighbour. EmbaGuatemala, 24 August 1976, Oficios, ORD., Telex/Guatemala/1976/AMRE. Prominent Chilean exiles in Mexico included Clodomiro Almeyda, former foreign minister of the Allende government, and Allende's widow, Hortensia Bussi de Allende, however their presence did not appear to elicit the same concern as the Argentine exile community did for the Argentine dictatorship – perhaps due to the much smaller contingent of Chilean militants. Claudia Fedora Rojas Mira, '¿Militantes exiliandos o exilio militante?: La "casa Chile" en México, 1973-1993', in *Redes Políticas y Militancias : la historia política está de vuelta*, ed. Olga Ulianova (Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2009).

[58] 'Discurso de Augusto Pinochet en cerro Chacarillas con ocasión del día de la juventud el 9 de julio de 1977', https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Discurso_de_Chacarillas, accessed 11 August 2020.

[59] The 1980 constitution remains in place in Chile today and became a central target of the protests that erupted in October 2019. For a discussion of the process of *institucionalización*, see Carlos Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007), Ch. 5.

the triumph of the two civilian groups within the dictatorship – the *gremialistas* and the Chicago Boys – who went on to play a crucial role in the institutionalisation that followed.[60] This process formed the vital context for Chilean engagement in Central America, and already in 1977 Guatemala and El Salvador were deemed suitable for the replication of the Chilean example. As the Chilean ambassador in El Salvador wrote in March 1977, in that country, the Chilean regime was 'considered within social, professional and governmental spheres as an important contribution to the problems that affect Latin America, concretely: communism'.[61]

Chilean and Argentine relations with Central America in 1977-78 were also deeply coloured by an issue much closer to home: the two countries' long-running dispute over the status of a group of islands in the Beagle Channel that formed part of their southern border in Patagonia. Under an agreement negotiated by Presidents Salvador Allende and Alejandro Lanusse, in 1971 the Chilean and Argentine governments agreed to submit the dispute to binding arbitration under the auspices of the UK government. In May 1977, the British court ruled in favour of Chile, and in January 1978 the Argentine dictatorship repudiated the decision. Over the next twelve months the two countries came to the brink of war, with an Argentine invasion of the islands in December 1978 only aborted following an intervention from the Pope, which set the course for the eventual signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1984. Throughout 1978, however, this peaceful outcome remained a remote possibility for both sides, and the conflict over the southern border was transposed onto Southern Cone diplomacy toward Central America. Keen to win support for their side in international forums, both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships focused on their anticommunist allies in Central America as potential sources of support.

The Beagle dispute formed the vital context for the initial tightening of Southern Cone-Central American relations in 1977-78. For precisely the same reasons that the Central American dictatorships were excellent candidates to help alleviate Southern Cone international isolation, so they were valuable sources of international support in the Chilean-Argentine dispute over the Beagle Channel. Throughout this period of heightened tension, the Chilean and Argentine embassies in both Guatemala and El Salvador kept close tabs on the activities of their rival neighbour. Argentine diplomats monitored the movement of the Chilean ambassadors (yet not

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[60] Matias Alvarado Leyton, 'El acto de Chacarillas de 1977. A 40 años de un ritual decisivo para la dictadura cívico-militar chilena', *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*, 2018.
[61] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.

any other foreign diplomats), dutifully reporting each time that the Chilean ambassador left the country or held a high-level meeting.[62] News of the Chilean ambassador's delivery of an invitation, signed by Pinochet, for President Romero to visit Chile in May 1978 was rapidly relayed to Buenos Aires and construed in the context of the two countries' rivalry.[63] Elsewhere, upon discovering that the Commander in Chief of the Salvadoran armed forces, General D. José Luis Ramon Rosales, had been invited to Chile in September 1978, the Argentine foreign ministry requested that he be invited to make a stop in Buenos Aires on the same trip in light of the 'special circumstances' in which Argentine relations with Chile were evolving.[64]

Argentine observers conceived of visits by high-profile Chileans to Guatemala in 1978 in these very same terms. For example, when the Chilean Vice Minister of Foreign Relations, General Enrique Valdés Puga visited Guatemala in January 1978, at the centre of his itinerary was a seminar in the Guatemalan foreign ministry concerning Chilean foreign policy, focusing on the Beagle dispute, among other topics such as the state of relations with Peru and Bolivia, and Chile's future policy in the United Nations.[65] Correspondingly, the Chilean embassies carefully observed Argentine diplomatic activity in the region. In April 1978, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala placed its own plans to decorate various Guatemalan officials – from the Guatemalan President to the Foreign Minister and Director of Protocol – within the context of existing actions taken by Argentina in the same realm.[66] Embassies for both countries also engaged in a low-level propaganda war, ranging from the distribution of Chilean and Argentine newspapers among the governing elite (*El Mercurio* and *Clarín* respectively) to feeding material on the conflict to the local media.

This feat was accomplished most effectively by the Chilean embassy in El Salvador, which produced a monthly bulletin throughout the period, the text of which was faithfully reproduced in the pro-Chile *Diario de Centroamérica*, run by Federico Zelaya Bockler, a right-wing journalist who subsequently received an all-expenses-paid trip to Chile in November 1978.[67]

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[62] See, for example, the secret despatch describing the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador's short trip to Santiago to attend the meeting of Chilean ambassadors. Oficio secreto, 22 February 1978, no. 51, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.
[63] Oficio secreto, 6 May 1978, no. 127, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.
[64] Memorandum, 29 August 1978, No. 174, AH/0004/2, DAL, MREC.
[65] EmbaGuatemala, 30 January 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[66] EmbaGuatemala, 17 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[67] EmbaGuatemala, 1 August 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 4 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.

Despite the Argentine embassy's efforts to counteract these efforts through the distribution of their own publications on the Beagle dispute, *La Cuestión del Beagle* and *Argentina y El Atlántico Austral*, in October the Argentine embassy in El Salvador admitted defeat. The depth of Chilean influence in the Salvadoran military, the 'virtual political power' in the country, supplemented by the dominance of Chilean materials in the local press, made Salvadoran support for Argentina in international arbitration very unlikely, a fact correspondingly celebrated by the Chilean embassy two months later.[68] In Guatemala, the results were more balanced.[69] These visits and the incessant monitoring of them are important. They show conclusively that Central America mattered, not just to a few diplomats but as a central strategic part of foreign policy. They also reveal the integrated nature of the Americas and the significance of Latin America in its entirety for Southern Cone diplomacy.

This regional rivalry framed a wide array of other efforts to improve both Chilean and Argentine relations with Guatemala and El Salvador in 1977-78. At this stage, the Chilean dictatorship adopted a more proactive stance. Recognising that the Guatemalan government shared a similar pressing border concern in its dispute with the UK government over Belizean independence, the Pinochet dictatorship granted Guatemala its unstinting support on the issue in international forums. The Guatemalan government reciprocated, giving Chile, in the words of a May 1978 embassy report, 'unyielding support in the difficult moments it has gone through, asking only for Chilean solidarity regarding Belize.[70] In addition, as early as September 1977 the Chilean embassy in Guatemala discussed potential military scholarships for the Guatemalan armed forces 'within the framework of our neighbourly relations' emphasising the importance of Guatemalan friendship in this context'.[71]

In El Salvador, the Pinochet dictatorship benefitted from the existing programmes of military training described in the previous chapter. In light of the 'professional and military influence' Chile already enjoyed in the country and the 'great number of professionals that have graduated from our universities', the Chilean embassy recommended an increase in this

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[68] ESALV, 21 November 1978, No. 464/78, AH/0002, DAL, MREC; Embajada de la República Argentina en Guatemala a S.E. el señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Ing. don Rafael Castillo Valdez, 25 October 1978, AH/0002, DAL, MREC; Cable secreto, San Salvador, 12 October 1978, No. 256, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 26 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.

[69] EmbaGuatemala, 30 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

[70] EmbaGuatemala, 5 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.

[71] EmbaGuatemala, 26 September 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.

scholarship provision.[72] In the years to come, scholarships would continue to be an important aspect of bilateral relations, but the onus would shift. As the perceived 'subversive threat' posed by events in Central America became more apparent, scholarships increasingly focused on combatting that threat, rather than simply a means to curry favour to serve Chilean diplomatic goals.

The Argentine dictatorship, on the other hand, had no comparable record of existing military assistance to Guatemala and El Salvador, and when the Argentine armed forces did begin to expand scholarship provision to these countries in earnest – from 1978 – they did so in direct response to the perceived guerrilla threat, as explored in the next chapter. Despite this, on at least one occasion in June 1977 the Argentine dictatorship did provide concrete military assistance to Guatemala by acting as a conduit for munitions of Israeli origin.[73] There are no documents relating to the planning of this transport in Argentine foreign ministry documents, and in fact the incident only came to light because mechanical difficulties forced the plane, registered to *Transporte Aéreo Rigoplatense* (TAR), a private firm owned by high-ranking Argentine air force officers, to make an unplanned landing in Barbados. There, it was searched by Barbadian police following a tip from British authorities.[74] Destined for Guatemala, the plane contained 26 tonnes of munitions.[75] After two years stuck in administrative limbo, the goods were released and allowed to reach their final destination in June 1979.[76] This Argentine-Israeli collaboration to meet Guatemala's military supply needs is one of the earliest examples of a concrete action in response to the CAL's calls for transnational anticommunist collaboration to compensate for the loss of US support.

It is significant that these plans to assist in the transfer of Israeli munitions were made without the involvement of the Argentine foreign ministry. Rather than a one-off, this is in fact indicative of the way in which the leaders of both Southern Cone dictatorships deliberately bypassed traditional diplomacy – conducted through the foreign ministry – and used transnational ties - such as those cultivated through WACL, CAL and CIS – to build covert, direct lines to their Central American counterparts capable of avoiding international scrutiny. In

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[72] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 March 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[73] EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[74] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the anti-communist crusade in Central America, 1977-1984*, 91.
[75] EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[76] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, No. 173, 29 March 1979 and telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, no. 259, 4 June 1979, AH/0600 vol. 89, Dirección Comunicaciones (herein DC), MREC.

fact, these transnational ties came to the fore precisely because of the changes in international system wrought by Carter's human rights policy, which transformed the international environment in which both dictatorships operated, making open collaboration with fellow anticommunist regimes – such as those in Guatemala and El Salvador – politically impossible.

With a large part of each foreign ministry's energy devoted to improving international image and rebuffing accusations of human rights abuse, any blatant display of solidarity with or support for the Central American dictatorships risked directly undermining these efforts. The refusal of both regimes to host a public visit from Anastasio Somoza in 1978 – perhaps the sole head of state more publicly toxic than Pinochet himself – illustrates this point. In a memorandum assessing the political viability of the visit, the Head of the Latin America Department in the Argentine foreign ministry placed the visit directly within the context of international human rights scrutiny. 'At that moment' Argentina was 'enduring international pressure based on supposed human rights violations' and a visit from Somoza 'could appear not only as tacit support for the prevailing conditions in Nicaragua, but as an identification of Argentine interests' in that country.[77] Conscious that supposed leftist manipulation of the international media had already spawned press reports regarding Argentine involvement in Nicaragua (reports which were, in fact, factually correct), a public visit would only serve 'to confirm this hypothesis, making it practically irrefutable'.[78] The Chileans had received an identical offer, and refused for the same reason; the visit 'had to be rejected'.[79]

The foreign ministries' response to the proposed Somoza visit is indicative of the two-track nature of both dictatorships' international relations wherein the public face of the regimes differed substantially from the reality of their international activities. As Alan McPherson recently asserted, 'diplomatic visits do not equal international relations because they are, by nature, highly performative'.[80] While the exchanges recounted above are highly significant, they are far from representative of the totality of Southern Cone-Central American connections in this period. Indeed within both Southern Cone dictatorships, and particularly in the Argentine case, the military leadership went to substantial lengths to work outside of the parameters of the

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[77] Memorandum secreto, Departamento América Latina, 10 July 1978, AH/0004/2, DAL, MREC.
[78] Ibid.; On Argentine involvement in Nicaragua, see Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*.
[79] Memorandum secreto, Departamento América Latina, 10 July 1978, AH/0004/2, DAL, MREC.
[80] Alan McPherson, Review, in H-Diplo Roundtable XXII-33 on Zolov, The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties, 29 March 2021, https://hdiplo.org/to/RT22-33, accessed 25 November 2021.

foreign ministries in their engagement with Central America, drawing heavily on what McSherry has defined as hidden 'parastatal' structures.[81] At precisely the same time that the Argentine foreign ministry rejected Somoza's visit, the Argentine military were providing direct aid to the ailing Nicaraguan government, following a secret agreement made by the two countries' armed forces at the Conference of American Armies in Managua, Nicaragua, in November 1977.[82]

General Carlos Guillermo Suárez Mason, a member of the hardliner faction within the Argentine armed forces' leadership directed this covert support. As commander of the Army First Corps (Buenos Aires), Suárez Mason had overseen some of the harshest repression in the Argentine capital after March 1976. In this same position, he commanded Intelligence Battalion 601, a semi-autonomous counterintelligence unit that had played a central role in violent repression at home and, through its '*Grupo de Tareas Exterior*' (GTE, Overseas Task Force), would be a crucial vehicle for its export to Central America.[83] In Nicaragua, Suárez Mason dispatched commandos to identify Argentine guerrillas fighting in Sandinista ranks and arranged arms sales that left the Nicaraguan Defence Ministry $7.7 million in debt to Argentine firm EDESA by the time of the Revolution in July 1979.[84]

This initial Argentine foray into Central America also drew on Argentine involvement in WACL and CAL. German Adolfo Justo, the Extreme-Right Peronist who had led Argentine involvement in WACL and CAL during the last Perón governments, continued to represent Argentina in CAL after the 1976 coup. By the III CAL Congress, Justo and the Extreme Right *nacionalista* groups in which he was embedded had already begun to be incorporated into the repressive apparatus of the new Argentine dictatorship. Among the Argentine delegation in Asunción in 1977 were Carlos Pedro Spadone, a businessman linked with Juan Perón in the final stages of his exile in Madrid and a close collaborator during his final presidential term, Ricardo César Fabris, Isabel Perón's press director, and Ricardo Bach Cano, at this point director of the

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[81] McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 27–28.
[82] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 77–78.
[83] Others in the hardline faction (*duros*) included Díaz Bessone and Luciano Benjamin Menéndez. They advocated a strong military government and a resolute decision to annihilate all vestiges of political opposition to the regime, at home and abroad. This contrasted to the Videla-Viola faction which sought a more conciliatory approach to relations with the Carter administration and favoured a gradual process of political liberalisation under military tutelage. Armony, 20, 44.
[84] Armony, 77–78.

newspaper *Prensa Libre*.[85] Also in attendance in March 1977 was Raúl Zardini, a fascist intellectual and part of the group appointed by Isabel Perón and led by Alberto Ottalagano to 'reform' the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) in the name of the Triple-A's *nacionalista* crusade.[86]

The presence of these individuals linked Argentine CAL representation to previous and ongoing transnational anticommunist activity: one of Zardini's former UBA colleagues, Alfredo Zarattini, formed part of the Argentine team dispatched to Nicaragua, and acted as a civil advisor to the Somoza dictatorship in 1978-79.[87] Likewise, the chief of security for Zardini's boss at UBA, Alberto Ottalagano, was none other than Juan Martín Ciga Correa, a former Tacuara member who had collaborated with the DINA in providing information on Chilean students in Buenos Aires after 1973.[88] That Ciga Correa would go on to play an active military role in Central America, as we shall see, indicates the direct continuities between Argentine participation in Operation Condor and their subsequent involvement in Central America. Over the next two years, the Argentine military – through Suárez Mason – would expand its direct control over Argentine participation in WACL and CAL, and these connections would prove critical as Argentine involvement in Central America expanded beyond Nicaragua into Guatemala and El Salvador in response to the perceived 'subversive threat' in those countries from 1978.

While the Pinochet dictatorship did not leverage its connections through WACL and CAL in the same way in 1977-78, it is worth noting once more that Chilean participation in these forums was also closely connected to the highest levels of the dictatorship, evident from the presence of Gustavo Leigh Guzmán at the III CAL Congress (he also visited the WACL 'Freedom Center' in South Korea in October that year).[89] Likewise, while head of the Chilean WACL/CAL chapter Gustavo Alessandri Valdés held no formal role in the dictatorship, he was among the 77 young civilian supporters of the dictatorship at the Act of Chacarillas in July 1977,

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[85] For attendees at the 3rd CAL meeting, see Delegaciones extranjeras - III Congreso CAL, March 1977, R094F0029-30, CDyA; These biographical details are drawn from Cersósimo, '"El Proceso fue liberal": Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)', 296.
[86] On Isabel Perón as the de facto leader of the Triple-A and that groups activities during her presidency, see Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 118–19.
[87] Cersósimo, '"El Proceso fue liberal": Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)', 295; Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 87.
[88] Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina*, 118–19.
[89] Report of the WACL Secretary General to the 11th Conference, May 1, 1977 – March 31, 1978, Folder 2 – WACL Conference File, 1978, Box 60, KDP, HILA.

and Pinochet himself received direct updates on WACL and CAL activities.[90] As both Chilean and Argentine involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador increased in line with the rising 'subversive threat' from 1978, these transnational connections, supposedly 'non-state' in nature, would become vital tools for the Southern Cone dictatorships to support their Central American allies safe from international scrutiny.

Conclusion

The shifts in the international system provoked by the inauguration of Jimmy Carter as US president and introduction of the human rights policy profoundly affected the Latin American Extreme Right's conception of the state of the Cold War struggle in the region. For the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, the institutionalisation of human rights scrutiny under Carter heightened existing concerns regarding international isolation, driving them to seek closer bonds with likeminded anticommunist regimes in the hemisphere, notably those in Guatemala and El Salvador. The resurfacing of their border dispute simultaneously forced these Southern Cone dictatorships into competition with one another, where Central American support for their side was the prize.

Yet beyond these diplomatic developments, Carter's inauguration also prompted a new phase in transnational anticommunist collaboration: the Latin American Extreme Right drew together against the new common enemy to the north (the Carter White House). The transnational forums in which this collaboration took place also offered the Extreme Right Latin Americans within them the opportunity to build closer relations hidden from international human rights scrutiny, leading to a deepening of Southern Cone-Central American connections outside of traditional diplomatic channels. As a result of these developments, by mid- to late-1978, as the left-wing insurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador gathered pace, the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships had already begun to build stronger connections with their anticommunist allies in Guatemala and El Salvador.

Examining the transnational response to Carter also reveals the wider significance of this juncture in the late 1970s for how we study the United States in the world, and how we

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[90] Alvarado Leyton, 'El acto de Chacarillas de 1977. A 40 años de un ritual decisivo para la dictadura cívico-militar chilena'. Oficio, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores al Jefe del Estado Mayor Presidencial, Homenaje a S.E. en X Conferencia de Liga Anticomunista Mundial, 7 June 1977, 480, Presidencia, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.

understand the rise of neoconservatism in the 1980s. Put simply, the United States cannot be discussed as a unitary actor. When the Carter White House drove a wedge between itself and the Latin American Extreme Right, right-wing US actors drew closer to them. The diplomatic estrangement of the Latin American anticommunist dictatorships from the Carter White House thus coincided (and drove) a period of intellectual exchange between anticommunists in the North and South of the Americas. These ties bolstered Latin American Extreme Right hopes that Carter represented a temporary aberration and that the traditional alliance between the United States and the Latin America's dictatorships regimes would be restored come the next set of presidential elections in 1980. In this respect, these transnational inter-American relationships directly undermined the efficacy of Carter's foreign policy (encouraging the Latin American Extreme Right to wait it out) while also providing a space for these American anticommunists to work together to imagine the policy platform that the next US president might adopt. It is only by combining transnational and international approaches that we can grasp these nuances of inter-American relations.

Chapter 3: Central America becomes a Cold War battleground, 1978-79

Introduction

On the 5 July 1979, as Anastasio Somoza Debayle entered what would be his final two weeks of clinging to power in Nicaragua, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, former vice president of Guatemala (1974-1978), leader of the Extreme-Right MLN (*Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*) and de facto chief of the Guatemalan death squads, travelled to the Southern Cone. That Thursday, 5 July, Sandoval Alarcón arrived in Buenos Aires. Four days later, on Monday 9 July, he travelled from Buenos Aires to Santiago, where he requested a meeting with Pinochet to discuss 'the situation in Nicaragua and the Marxist influence and designs in the area'.[1] Sandoval Alarcón also carried a letter from Somoza himself, destined for Admiral Merino, member of the ruling junta and his host during an official visit to Chile as Vice President two years earlier. Dated 3 July, the short letter requested that Merino grant Sandoval Alarcón, his good friend, an audience, so that the two could discuss 'matters of mutual interest'.[2] While it was already too late for Somoza by the time Sandoval Alarcón reached Santiago on 9 July, this final, last gasp trip reveals much about the transnational connections that existed between Central America and the Southern Cone on the eve of the Nicaraguan Revolution. This chapter explores the developments in Southern Cone-Central American relations between 1978 and July 1979 in order to explain why Somoza appealed to the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina, thousands of miles south, when his regime was on the brink of collapse, and why the messenger was none other than the former vice president of Guatemala, travelling in a private capacity.

As explored in the previous chapter, over the course of 1977-78 members of the Latin American Extreme Right had already drawn closer together in opposition to Jimmy Carter's human rights policy. For the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, their concurrent dispute over their southern border in the Beagle Channel added an extra incentive to cultivate closer relations with the Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments as they sought to win support in international forums. Over the course of 1978 and early 1979 events in Guatemala and El Salvador led to a remaking of the significance of Central America for Chilean and Argentine foreign policy as the

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[1] Telegrama secreto, EmbaGuatemala, 5 July 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES. Telegramas, Aerogramas/Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

[2] Carta de A. Somoza (Nicaragua) al Almirante Merino, 3 July 1979, CL-CIDOC-12-G.1-15289/1979, Centro de Investigación y Documentación, Universidad Finis Terrae, Santiago (hereafter, CIDOC).

two countries shifted from natural allies in the struggle against international communism to its potential next victims.

Over this period, the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships came to understand the escalating violence in Central America as part and parcel of the same ideological struggle upon which they staked their legitimacy at home, illustrating the ability of the Latin American Extreme Right's anticommunist worldview to connect actors thousands of miles apart. In response to the deteriorating situation in Central America, both the Argentine and Chilean dictatorships began providing direct counterinsurgency support, with the former more focused on Guatemala and the latter El Salvador. In both cases, this expansion of anticommunist solidarity remained shaped by the international conditions created by Jimmy Carter's human rights policy, namely by incentivising the use of transnational, covert and purportedly 'non-state' connections capable of shielding this anticommunist internationalism from international scrutiny. By July 1979, both the Southern Cone dictatorships had established themselves as competing models offering potential solutions to the 'subversive threat' in Central America. Going forwards, both the more holistic Chilean model of anticommunist governance, at this stage undergoing institutionalisation, and Argentina's *guerra sin fronteras* would exert an ideological influence over the development of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran Extreme Rights.

Increasing instability in Guatemala and El Salvador

Over the course of 1978 and through the first half of 1979, both Guatemala and El Salvador grew increasingly politically unstable. These events, perceived through the prism of the Southern Cone dictatorships' Extreme Right worldview, transformed Central America into an area of serious geopolitical concern. In Guatemala, the elections of March 1978 replicated the openly fraudulent conditions of those four years earlier (1974) and both undermined the government's legitimacy and stoked the popular opposition movement. Ahead of the elections, the ruling coalition denied registration to the two most popular opposition parties, Alberto Fuentes Mohr's *Partido Social Demócrata* (Social Democratic Party, PSD) and Manuel Colom Argueta's *Frente Unido de la Revolución* (United Front of the Revolution, FUR), excluding them from the electoral race.[3] This move, somewhat predictably, drove both parties into more radical opposition to the regime, feeding a palpable increase in protests and strikes in the capital and beyond. Within the wider opposition movement beyond the capital and party politics, the *Comité*

[3] Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 484.

de Unidad Campesina (Peasant Unity Committee, CUC) emerged as a central force. Formally founded on May Day 1978, the CUC united indigenous Maya and poor *ladinos* under primarily indigenous leadership and agitated against the heightened repression and exploitation of rural *campesinos* that occurred in the wake of the devastating 1976 earthquake. The emergence of the CUC had been facilitated by the spread of grassroots Catholic organisations – Christian base communities – which, influenced by liberation theology, encouraged Guatemala's poor rural majority to fight for better conditions in the face of ongoing government corruption and repression.[4]

The ruling *Partido Institucional Democrático* (Institutional Democratic Party, PID)'s interference in the 1978 elections also extended to fraud against the MLN, and by extension Mario Sandoval Alarcón, who had served as vice president to outgoing president PID President General Kjell Laugerud García.[5] In this attempt to sideline the MLN and in turn strengthen the PID-military coalition's control, the PID in fact placed the MLN's extensive Extreme Right paramilitary apparatus outside of the formal boundaries of the state. As a result, while the Guatemalan government and the MLN shared the objective of defeating Guatemala's guerrilla forces, it was on the counterinsurgency, not the Lucas García administration, that the MLN staked its allegiance from 1978.

The mobilisation of Guatemala's largely indigenous *campesinos* under the CUC struck terror in the heart of the *ladino* elite. Faced with this unprecedented challenge to the status quo, the Guatemalan military responded to this spiralling popular opposition with disproportionately violent repression. The Panzós Massacre of May 1978 marked a turning point. On 29 May, in response to increased military harassment over the previous days, hundreds of *campesinos* - men, women and children - from the surrounding Polochic Valley converged in Panzós, in the department of Alta Verapaz, to protest the repression meted out by landlords, civil and military authorities, and to demand access to land. Following a tense standoff after protestors were refused an audience with the mayor, soldiers stationed in the town fired on protesters, killing at least 53, with some estimates claiming over 100 dead.[6]

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[4] Armony and Walker, *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America*, 9.
[5] Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 484.
[6] For a detailed description of the Panzós Massacre, see Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, chapter 5.

News of the massacre spread fast, sparking outrage across the country and in the international media, and two days later 1,000 indigenous members of the CUC filled a religious convent in downtown Guatemala City to attend a mass in honour of the victims.[7] On 8 June, a week after the massacre and on the one-year anniversary of the assassination of university professor Mario López Larrave, 80,000 protestors marched in Guatemala City, demanding justice for Panzós.[8] The massacre was a watershed moment, as, in the words of Greg Grandin, 'for the first time since 1954, protesters publicly accused the state of assassination and genocide'; it served to galvanize the national Left, 'providing a focal point for unification'.[9]

Panzós also set the course for the Guatemalan government's response to the newly emboldened and united opposition movement: indiscriminate violence. The escalating repression in the year after the massacre gutted the moderate, peaceful opposition. In January 1979, unknown assassins killed Alberto Fuentes Mohr of the PSD and in May that year Manuel Colom Argueta met the same fate. Capitalising on the MLN's departure from the government the year before, Guatemalan President Lucas García insisted that his administration had nothing to do with the killings, instead blaming Extreme Right (MLN) death squads supposedly operating beyond his control. US intelligence, however, shows the direct connections that the Guatemalan death squads (and thus MLN) continued to nurture with the Guatemalan military, and at least in the case of Colom Argueta's murder, Army Chief of Staff Major General David Cancinos Barrios ordered the assassination. The following month, presumed to be in retaliation, the armed Left assassinated Cancinos Barrios.[10]

While the assassination of Fuentes Mohr and Colom Argueta certainly removed the electoral threat posed by their reformist platforms, it also eliminated all that remained of the moderate Left. While some peaceful opposition continued – such as an October 1978 strike over a raise in bus fares in Guatemala City – opposition leaders were increasingly targeted by rapidly multiplying Extreme Right paramilitaries, often with very close links to, or made up of, members of the Guatemalan army. The violent repression meted out first against *campesino* protesters in Panzós and then against leading reformist politicians in the capital effectively drove the

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[7] Grandin, 160.
[8] Grandin, 156.
[9] Grandin, 156.
[10] Telegram from the embassy in Guatemala to the Department of State, 3 October 1979, No. 35, FRUS 1977-80 vol. 15, accessed online https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v15/d35 accessed 24 June 2021.

opposition movement toward the armed Left, a dynamic that eventually led the CUC and the *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP) – the largest guerrilla force – to effectively merge. This radical polarisation of Guatemala politics over the course of 1978 and 1979 set the stage for the Civil War's violent peak in the years to come.

In El Salvador, fraudulent elections also played an important part in the escalation of political instability, which began earlier than in Guatemala and had grown considerably more severe by mid-1979. In February 1977, El Salvador's ruling *Partido de Conciliación Nacional* (National Conciliation Party, PCN) secured its fourth consecutive electoral victory through a combination of fraudulent 'phantom votes', voter intimidation and locating all 400 of San Salvador's voting booths on the outskirts of the city, far beyond working-class voters' reach.[11] The victor, General Carlos Humberto Romero, was a lead sympathiser of the Extreme-Right agrarian lobby that had successfully defeated his predecessor's land reform the previous year, signalling the victory of these reactionary, anti-reform Extreme Right forces in capturing control of El Salvador's governing apparatus.[12] In response to the blatant fraud, the opposition candidate, Colonel Ernesto Claramount, declared the legal path to power exhausted and led some 40,000 protesters in occupying the capital's main plaza. Coinciding with spontaneous demonstrations and strike action across the country, this protest met its brutal end three days later following violent repression at the hands of paramilitary and then army forces.[13] This explosion of protest, followed by its violent suppression, triggered a pattern similar to that in Guatemala. Over the course of 1977 and increasingly throughout 1978, the Salvadoran popular opposition swelled.

In the countryside, the *Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños* (Salvadoran Christian Peasants' Federation, FECCAS), an organisation deeply influenced by the spread of liberation theology in El Salvador over the previous decade, joined forces with the *Unión de Trabajadores del Campo* (Union of Rural Workers, UTC) under the shared banner of the *Federación de Trabajadores del Campo* (Federation of Rural Workers, FTC). United, the FTC was more capable than any organisation before it to launch a challenge to the Salvadoran oligarchy's dominance in rural areas. They were joined by other groups, such as the teachers' union ANDES (*Asociación Nacional de Educadores de El Salvador*), under the wider banner of the *Bloque Popular Revolucionario* (People's

[11] Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 375.
[12] Dunkerley, 374.
[13] Dunkerley, 375.

Revolutionary Bloc, BPR), founded as the popular front organisation for the guerrilla group *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí* (Farabundo Martí People's Liberation Forces, FPL) in 1975.

Where the initial wave of repression in the wake of this activism came from paramilitary sources – chiefly ORDEN in the countryside – in December 1977 the Salvadoran government introduced the 'Law of the Defence and Guarantee of Public Order', which, according to James Dunkerley, was 'directly modelled on the security codes of the Southern Cone regimes'.[14] Staying in force until March 1979, this act provided the legal cover for the Salvadoran government and military to respond a series of actions launched by the BPR over 1978 with unprecedented violence. For example, in May 1978, members of the BPR occupied the metropolitan cathedral of San Salvador alongside several schools, embassies and churches to demand the release of eight imprisoned leaders. In response, - and in full view of the international media - President Romero ordered the military to fire on protesters, killing at least 25. Thereafter, the violence escalated, with any opposition activism met with repression, in turn leading to a rapid rise in retaliatory attacks by the armed Left. Official figures for guerrilla activity in El Salvador in 1978 recorded 188 assaults and 43 kidnappings or assassinations. While these numbers would rise from 1979, 1978 nevertheless represented a substantial increase on previous years: the combined total assassinations and kidnappings for 1977 (33) and 1978 made up 60 per cent of those recorded across the 1971–8 period.[15] The situation was serious enough that by July 1978 several foreign embassies had closed their doors.[16] By spring 1979 – by which point the Law of the Defence and Guarantee of Public Order had been rescinded under pressure from the Carter administration – the monthly death toll averaged above 60.[17]

These events in both Guatemala and El Salvador were not restrained by national borders, and it is therefore necessary to look to the regional context – and specifically events in Nicaragua – to contextualise them adequately. 1978 was a year of crucial importance for the Nicaraguan opposition movement. In January, hitmen working under orders from the Somoza regime assassinated Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of Nicaraguan opposition newspaper *La Prensa* and leader of opposition coalition *Unión Democrática de Liberación* (Democratic Union of Liberation, UDEL). Prompting massive outrage, the assassination led to a huge increase in support for the

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[14] Dunkerley, 377.
[15] EmbaSanSalvador, 26 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.
[16] Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 379.
[17] Dunkerley, 378.

Nicaraguan guerrilla, the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN) which the Somoza regime's security forces proved incapable of suppressing. That August, Sandinista forces occupied the National Palace in Managua, with similar actions across other major cities. Over the next eleven months, FSLN power and popularity grew and they emerged as the clear vanguard of the anti-Somoza struggle.[18] In July 1979 – where this chapter ends – the struggle finally came to a head, when Sandinista forces entered Managua triumphant, marking the first Latin American revolution since the Cuban Revolution two decades earlier. From the perspective of the Extreme Right, the similarities between the insurgencies in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua served as proof that they shared a single source: international communism.

Extreme-Right perceptions: Central America as a Cold War battleground

From the off, the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships and the wider transnational Extreme Right perceived these events in Central America as evidence of the expansion of international communism in Latin America, with the destabilisation of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua deeply colouring perceptions of those elsewhere. The World Anti-Communist League labelled the assassination of then-chairman of the Nicaraguan WACL chapter, Dr Francisco Buitrago Martinez, by FSLN guerrillas in October 1978 as an act of 'international Communist provocation'.[19] The pre-conference WACL Executive Board Meeting the following month opened with 'one minute of silent prayer in memory of those who had dedicated their lives in defense of freedom' with a particular focus on Buitrago Martinez, who 'lost his life in fighting communists'.[20] By coincidence, at the time of the assassination the Secretariat of the *Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana* (CAL) was visiting Nicaragua, carrying out a month-long fact-finding mission in response to the FSLN's attacks on several major cities over the preceding months. In his report, CAL General Secretary Rafael Rodríguez characterised the FSLN as 'depending directly from [sic] Havana and strictly obedient to Soviet interests' with the recent insurrection the result of 'Soviet-Cuban plans, supported by the Presidents of Venezuela,

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[18] Danuta Paszyn, *The Soviet Attitude to Political and Social Change in Central America, 1979-90 Case-Studies on Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 2000), 24.

[19] WACL Circular No. 9/1978, 16 October 1978, Folder 6 – WACL Correspondence, Box 62, KDP, HILA.

[20] Minutes of the 12th WACL pre-Conference Executive Board Meeting, November 27-28, 1978, R108F0999-1020, CDyA.

Panama and Costa Rica, to have Nicaragua become a base of operations for the communization of Central America'.[21]

Over the course of 1978 and early 1979 Argentine and Chilean diplomats in Guatemala and El Salvador likewise voiced increasing concern at the 'waves of violence' driven by 'subversion' that appeared to be gripping both countries, with local security forces apparently incapable of asserting control.[22] They reached the same diagnosis regarding the cause. In July 1978, the Argentine ambassador to Guatemala drew connections between events there and those in El Salvador and Nicaragua, attributing instability in all three countries to 'subversive action' that threatened to turn all of Central America into a '*zona roja*' subsequently capable of threatening the countries to the north and south of the isthmus.[23] Echoing this perception, in October 1978, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala pointed to Cuba as the 'hand' directing all three guerrilla movements, by June 1979 he warned that 'the Central American isthmus… appears to be in the clutches of castrocommunism'.[24]

Yet while equally present in Southern Cone embassy dispatches and WACL/CAL resolutions, this notion that growing instability in Guatemala, El Salvador and indeed Nicaragua owed to Cuban and Soviet incursions had very little basis in reality. As Danuta Paszyn has shown, the Soviet Union 'watched Nicaragua's autonomous uprising with only the remotest interest' and the CIA's own intelligence reports estimated that concrete Cuban assistance to the FSLN amounted to at most two or three planeloads of light weapons.[25] For their part, Guatemala and El Salvador barely appeared on the radar of either the Cuban or Soviet regimes

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[21] CAL Circular, 5 October 1978, Folder 4 – Subject File/Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Box 104, KDP, HILA.

[22] The language is remarkably similar across both countries' embassies in both Guatemala and El Salvador. See, for example, EmbaSanSalvador, 3 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 3 May 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; ESALV, 10 November 1978, No. 451/78, AH/0002, DAL, MREC; San Salvador, 10 February 1979, No. 33, CF, MREC; EmbaGuatemala, 30 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores to EmbaGuatemala, 18 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES., Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EGUAT, 26 June 1978, No. 287, CF, MREC; EGUAT, 13 February 1979, No. 41, CF, MREC.

[23] EGUAT, 24 July 1978, No. 335, CF, MREC.

[24] EmbaGuatemala, 3 October 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 11 June 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES. Telex/Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

[25] CIA reports also quoted in Paszyn, *The Soviet Attitude to Political and Social Change in Central America, 1979-90 Case-Studies on Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala*, 25.

prior to the Nicaraguan Revolution and even after this – when Cuban involvement in the region did increase – direct Soviet aid remained virtually non-existent.[26]

In light of this reality, the Chilean, Argentine and wider Latin American Extreme Right conviction regarding an international communist conspiracy in Central America in 1978-79 is a testament to the strength of their shared radical anticommunist worldview and the extent to which it shaped their perceptions of regional and global events. Over the course of 1978 both Southern Cone dictatorships came to understand these Central American regimes as engaged in the same Manichean struggle on which they staked their own legitimacy. By perceiving events in Central America as part of a binary conflict between communist subversion and anticommunist forces, they accordingly framed the escalating state and death squad brutality in Guatemala and El Salvador in 1978-79 as commensurate with the threat posed by the 'subversive' forces.

In the case of the Panzós Massacre of May 1978, for example, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala parroted the government line that the security forces had responded to aggression from the *campesinos* allied to guerrilla forces, rather than it being an act of deliberate violent repression against indigenous peasant organisers. Despite well-documented evidence of the disproportionate state-perpetrated violence that occurred at Panzós, and the ambassador's own recognition of Guatemala's 'land problem' as a major contributing factor to social unrest, the Chilean embassy reported that it was 'very difficult to conclude what truly happened, but whatever the reality the events were of undoubted gravity, especially if one takes into account that this is not a totally isolated situation' but rather fitted the pattern of 'armed confrontations between security forces and peasant supporters of the Guatemalan guerrilla'.[27]

This was typical of the Chilean embassies' interpretation of escalating levels of violent government repression in both El Salvador and Guatemala. Reports of right-wing perpetrated violence were consistently prefixed with words such as 'supposed', casting doubt on culpability, while accounts of the more infrequent guerrilla attacks were highlighted as evidence the Left's responsibility for the 'waves of violence'. Drawing directly on the cynicism with which the Latin American Extreme Right had responded to international human rights activism and Carter's human rights policy, in several instances Chilean diplomats went so far as to imply that the

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[26] Paszyn, 115.
[27] EmbaGuatemala, 26 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 7 August 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.

armed Left were deliberately provoking violent repression so as to play to the international context of heightened human rights scrutiny, aiming to 'distort the international image of the country'.[28] Opposition groups – like the *Frente Democrático contra la Represión* which emerged in Guatemala in March 1979 - were likewise cast as fronts for Marxist aggression, infiltrated and controlled by the guerrilla.[29]

After 1978, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala also began to portray longstanding aspects of Chilean-Guatemalan relations in terms of the heightened Cold War tensions in the Caribbean Basin. Chilean support for the Guatemalan government's stance on Belize had been a central plank in strong bilateral relations since 1973, most often framed in the language of anticolonialism. Yet in April 1978 the Chilean ambassador portrayed the impending decolonisation of Belize as a Cold War event. According to the ambassador, the majority of the Caribbean nations had been 'infiltrated by Cuba' and exhibited 'marxist tendencies'. The suggested formation of a Multinational Caribbean Force to undertake peacekeeping efforts in an independent Belize would therefore mark 'not only the beginning of the infiltration of Belize… but the definitive arrival of castrocommunism in Central America, one of the most important strategic ambitions of Fidel Castro, and of course, the Soviet Union' the latter of whom 'promotes the advance of their theories and tactics from its large embassy in San José [Costa Rica].'[30]

British documents show how these Chilean fears about the communist threat in the wider Caribbean had already generated a concrete foreign policy response through active support for Eric Gairy's authoritarian government in Grenada, at that stage facing mounting opposition from the leftist New Jewel Movement (who later deposed him in the revolution of March 1979). In January 1978, the British embassy in Trinidad and Tobago, reported the presence of 'three or five Chileans in Grenada training the defence force', and the departure of two Grenadians – one sergeant and one lieutenant – for Chile in September the previous year.[31] A June 1978 memorandum described further British investigations into Chilean military support for the Gairy government, reporting Gairy's own verbal confirmation that Chile had 'offered training facilities

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[28] EmbaSanSalvador, 23 May 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.
[29] EmbaGuatemala, 11 April 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES., Telex/Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[30] EmbaGuatemala, 7 November 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES., Aerogramas, Telex, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1977/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 17 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[31] Cable, Port of Spain to FCO, Chile/Grenada, 24 January 1978, FCO 99/194, The National Archives, Kew (herein TNA).

shortly after Grenada hosted the OAS meeting [in June 1977]' and accordingly six (although he later said two), Grenadians were sent to Chile for military training. Under further questioning, Gairy feigned ignorance of both 'Chile's anti-human rights stance' and the activities of Grenadian students in Chile, claiming he 'did not know where they were being trained but that it was chiefly for ceremonial duties'.[32]

It is likely that Gairy deliberately downplayed his relationship with the Pinochet dictatorship. Chilean aid was significant enough for Fidel Castro to characterise Gairy as 'a US agent and Pinochet's friend' in a conversation with Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov in April 1979, while Chilean documents suggest that this collaboration predated June 1977, given that the Chilean and Grenadian governments signed an Agreement of Technical and Scientific Cooperation in January that year.[33] While the exact details of Chilean involvement in Grenada are difficult to clarify, that the dictatorship was involved at all indicates the wider projection of Chilean influence and expansion of offers of military training across the Central America-Caribbean region in this period.

Unsurprisingly, Argentine diplomats in Central America also portrayed events in the isthmus in terms of the Cold War struggle. While reporting on Extreme Right death squad atrocities with greater frequency than their Chilean counterparts, Argentine diplomats remained overall sympathetic to their cause, emphasising guerrilla culpability for the rising violence at every turn. This twisting of events comes through in Argentine coverage of confrontations between the FPL and ORDEN, the rural paramilitary arm of the government intelligence agency, in El Salvador in late March and early April 1978 in the wake of Holy Week celebrations. ORDEN members had beheaded one FECCAS leader and disappeared several others. In response, FPL guerrillas assassinated five ORDEN members.[34] According to Argentine diplomats, however, the source of the confrontation was 'subversive elements continuing to occupy land and displace peasants unsupportive of their cause'.[35]

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[32] Cable, Washington to FCO, Chile/Grenada, 21 June 1978, FCO 99/194, TNA.
[33] Memorandum of Todor Zhivkov – Fidel Castro Conversation, Havana, 9 April 1979, Bulgarian document accessed via Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111071, accessed 4 July 2018; DL 1671, Aprueba el Convenio Básico de Cooperación Técnica y Cientifica entre los Gobiernos de la República de Chile y de la República de Grenada, 26 January 1977, *Actualización de Decretos Leyes dictados por la junta de gobierno de la República de Chile*, números 1501 al 2000, Tomo IV (1990), http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0053669.pdf, accessed 17 May 2021.
[34] McClintock, *State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador*, I:187.
[35] Cable secreto, San Salvador, 7 April 1978, No. 94, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.

In part, the Southern Cone dictatorships' impressions of the communist threat in Central America was influenced by their sources of information. As detailed in the previous chapters, both regimes had already cultivated closer relations with the Central American Extreme Right, particularly after Carter's inauguration in January 1977. Already embedded in local politics, it is likely that the ambassadors for both Southern Cone countries were deeply influenced by conversations with local politicians and businessmen who shared their conception of the Cold War struggle, including those active in WACL, CAL and CIS (Council for Inter-American Security) such as Manuel Ayau in Guatemala or Orlando de Sola in El Salvador. Yet these embassies also represented just one part of the evolving Southern Cone-Central American relationship. Representatives of both dictatorships continued to participate in WACL conferences – in the United States in April 1978 and in Asunción, Paraguay, in 1979, where they mixed with these delegates from Central America who tirelessly sought to raise the alarm about events in the region.

These relationships also continued outside both WACL and diplomatic channels – Mario Sandoval Alarcón, for example, made two visits to the Southern Cone after leaving office in July 1978. Despite holding no formal government role, Sandoval Alarcón was granted audiences with the highest levels of both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, including meetings with the Argentine president.[36] While the significance of these discussions for concrete Southern Cone aid to Central America will be dealt with in due course, it is likely that this ongoing interaction between the undisputed leader of the Guatemalan Extreme Right and the highest levels of both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships shaped their impressions of the geopolitical threat posed by events in Central America.

More importantly, however, the Southern Cone dictatorships' perception of events in Guatemala and El Salvador was deeply coloured by their own conceptions of the fundamentally transnational nature of the anticommunist struggle. For both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, although in distinct ways, events in Central America represented a direct extension of the communist threat they faced at home. Just as the Pinochet dictatorship had recognised the 'similarity in thinking' between their regime and those in Guatemala and El Salvador when they

[36] Oficio secreto, EGUAT, 20 July 1978, No. 325, CF, MREC; EmbaGuatemala, 4 September 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; Oficio, Guatemala, 15 February 1979, No. 35, AH/0004/2, DAL, MREC.

found themselves among the eight Latin American anticommunist regimes subject to human rights-based US sanctions in 1977, so they saw the Chilean armed forces' struggle against subversion reflected back at them as Central America grew increasingly unstable in 1978-79.

In El Salvador, these comparisons drew explicit parallels between the situation there and the dictatorship's own 'struggle against subversion' at home. Using the very language employed by the military to justify its actions in the wake of the coup in September 1973, in May 1978 the Chilean ambassador described the possible existence of a 'Plan Z' in El Salvador – a plan for armed insurrection to install a Marxist government.[37] Then, from early 1979, the Chilean foreign ministry began requesting information regarding the presence of Chilean exiles in Central America.[38] This request was likely prompted by the knowledge that members of the Chilean armed Left in exile were fighting alongside the FSLN in Nicaragua from September 1978.[39] Although there is a little evidence of Chileans within FMLN ranks before 1981 (nor those of the Guatemalan guerrilla), it is clear that Chilean officials understood increasing guerrilla activity in El Salvador as being rooted in the same ideological struggle in which the regime was engaged at home.[40]

Similarly, as early as June 1977, with the Guatemalan guerrilla still in the infancy of its resurgence, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala used the strength of the Argentine guerrilla before the March 1976 military coup as a reference point in assessing the rise of two Guatemalan guerrilla groups, the EGP and the FAR (*Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* - Rebel Armed Forces), revealing the implied connections between the two left-wing movements and common subversive threat.[41] On the other side of the coin, in April 1979 Chilean diplomats recognised that the Guatemalan army 'shared the same nationalist objectives and principles' that 'inspire and guide' the Chilean government in the face of the subversive threat.[42] If these struggles shared

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37 EmbaSanSalvador, 5 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; the supposed existence of a 'Plan Z' under the Allende government – to bring about communist domination – was a central part of the Pinochet dictatorship's propaganda effort in the wake of the September 1973 coup. No evidence has ever been found of its existence.
38 MinRel to EmbaGuatemala, 18 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
39 On Chilean exiles in Nicaragua, see Victor Figueroa Clark, 'Chilean Internationalism and the Sandinista Revolution, 1978–1988' (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), 95, 121, 298.
40 On the presence of Chilean exiles fighting alongside the Salvadorean FMLN, see Olivares Mardones, *Guerrilla combatientes chilenos en Nicaragua, El Salvador y Colombia*, 101.
41 EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1977, Oficios, SEC./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
42 EmbaGuatemala, 11 April 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

common roots, it followed that the Chilean model, soon to be codified in the 1980 constitution, could provide a common solution.

For the Argentine dictatorship, Central America represented a direct extension of the so-called 'Dirty War' at home. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the Argentine dictatorship's political project was ultimately destructive, concerned first and foremost with the eradication of 'subversion' – broadly defined – rather than a wider political model like that undergoing institutionalisation in Chile in the late 1970s. The dictatorship had reduced the domestic armed Left to virtually nothing two years earlier, and by 1978 their attention turned firmly overseas, where the presence of Argentine exiles was taken as proof that the Argentine armed forces were fighting a *guerra sin fronteras* against a transnational Left that required a transnational response. Perhaps the clearest sign of this shift in focus lay in the introduction of a new military training course in Argentina in 1978: COE-600, 'Intelligence for Overseas Officials', explicitly designed to 'improve technical knowledge, especially in relation to the fight against subversion'.[43]

The presence of Argentine exiles in Mexico and Central America made the region ripe for the waging of this *guerra sin fronteras*. As shown in the last chapter, the Argentine dictatorship was aware of the presence of exiles in Mexico and Central America from 1976, and this became a greater cause for concern as the situation in the region grew more unstable. From 1978, Argentine diplomats complained of exile influence on the Mexican government, at this time accused of pursuing a pro-guerrilla policy in its involvement in the conflicts on the Central American isthmus.[44] Then, in June 1979 in the final weeks before the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Argentine embassy in El Salvador reported on transmissions from a guerrilla-run radio station, *Radio Noticias del Continente* (Radio News of the Continent) based in Costa Rica. A presenter with a 'marked Argentine accent' had been delivering programmes detailing supposed Argentine aid to Somoza, retransmitting interviews with Montoneros (Argentina's urban guerrillas) currently in Mexico and Nicaragua, and attacking the governments of Chile, Uruguay and Colombia, alongside the Argentine regime.[45]

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[43] Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 111.
[44] EMEXI [Argentine Embassy in Mexico], 11 September 1978, No. 465, CF, MREC.
[45] Cable Secreto, San Salvador, 30 July 1979, Nos. 271-3, CF, MREC.

For the Argentine dictatorship, the connections between the 'subversives' to be eliminated at home and those acting in Central America were unquestionable and the Argentine military thus perceived events in Central America within the same ideological framework that had dictated the regime's brutal repression at home. The Argentine ambassador made this much explicit in conversation with Guatemalan President Lucas García shortly after his inauguration in July 1978. Discussing the success of the World Cup in Argentina the previous month, the ambassador emphasised how only by achieving 'order and security' had the regime been able to 'lay the foundations for political and economic stability'. The two agreed that the terrorist threat Guatemala faced was one and the same as that which the Argentine dictatorship had neutralised on the domestic front, before agreeing to further discussions regarding the strengthening of relations between the two countries in light of these similarities.[46] It was through this paradigm – the belief that the conflicts in Central America constituted a direct extension of those in Argentina – that the Argentine dictatorship set about offering new, direct support to the counterinsurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador.

The Southern Cone Solutions

Events in Guatemala and El Salvador over 1978 and early 1979 – particularly when taken, as they were, in the context of those in Nicaragua – firmly established Central America as a central geopolitical concern for both Southern Cone dictatorships. Crucially, from both the Chilean and Argentine perspective neither the Salvadoran nor the Guatemalan governments appeared to be coping adequately with the subversive threat that they faced. Diplomats from both Southern Cone dictatorships depicted 'waves of violence' engulfing the two Central American republics, local security forces that seemed unable to control the perceived 'subversive threat'.[47]

Both Southern Cone dictatorships understood this apparent inability of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran security forces to cope in terms of the fundamental shifts that had occurred in the inter-American system since 1977, although the precise impact of US policy varied between

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[46] Oficio secreto, EGUAT, 3 July 1978, No. 292, CF, MREC.

[47] Oficio, EmbaSanSalvador, 3 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 3 May 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; ESALV, 10 November 1978, No. 451/78, AH/0002, DAL, MREC; San Salvador, 10 February 1979, No. 33, CF, MREC; Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores to EmbaGuatemala, 18 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EGUAT, 26 June 1978, No. 287, CF, MREC; EGUAT, 13 February 1979, No. 41, CF, MREC.

the two Central American countries. While both El Salvador and Guatemala had terminated US military aid in the wake of the introduction of Carter's human rights policy, their respective histories of US support greatly shaped how they fared following this termination – and correspondingly, how effective a lever US aid would prove to be in encouraging restraint in state repression. Historically, the Guatemalan government, and by definition, military, received the lion's share of US aid to Central America. Despite a cliff-edge drop in such aid following the 1977 termination, these decades of preparation – not to mention continuous experience combatting guerrilla forces since 1960 – left the Guatemalan military and security forces in a much stronger, better trained and better equipped position than its neighbours as popular opposition to the regime grew in the late 1970s. By contrast, the relatively small volume of aid received by El Salvador over the same period, combined with a *relatively* more peaceful and democratic experience in the previous decades, left the Salvadoran government ill-equipped to deal with the tide of popular opposition and subsequent guerrilla movement that exploded after spring 1977. As a result, the Salvadoran government was far more susceptible to US pressure, a point that did not escape the Chilean and Argentine diplomats observing events in the country.

Chilean and Argentine reports of ongoing violence in El Salvador were consistently accompanied by commentary on the impact of US policy on the Salvadoran government's ability to respond. In April 1978, the Chilean ambassador wrote of how the authorities 'feared taking repressive measures [against guerrilla attacks on businesses and organised peasant opposition in rural areas] given the possibility of being denounced by the United States as violators of human rights'.[48] The Argentine ambassador pointed to security forces' inability to control subversive elements in November that year.[49] Describing unrest in the armed forces regarding the internal situation in February 1979, the Argentine ambassador described President Romero as responsible for refusing to permit the military and security services to fight against subversion to the fullest extent.[50] When, in March 1979, Romero decided to overturn the 1978 Law of the Defence and Guarantee of Public Order that had granted the military and security forces extensive powers to combat subversion, the Chilean ambassador predicted that US pressure would continue to be the primary factor weakening the Salvadoran government's ability to respond to the subversive threat.[51]

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[48] The Catholic Church in El Salvador was also identified as amplifying this pressure. EmbaSanSalvador, 3 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.
[49] ESALV, 10 November 1978, No. 451/78, AH/0002, DAL, MREC.
[50] Cable Secreto, San Salvador, 10 February 1979, No. 33, CF, MREC.
[51] MRE to EmbaSanSalvador, 2 March 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

While the human rights policy exerted far more pressure in El Salvador, the termination of military aid nevertheless also weakened the Guatemalan regime. Both Chilean and Argentine diplomats openly acknowledged the challenge Guatemala faced in replacing the gap left by military aid, and so in this way too, the United States was held responsible for weakening counterinsurgency measures across the region.[52] This combination of a rising 'subversive threat' and unprecedented absence of US military and counterinsurgency support drove both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships to increase involvement, born of the notion that each represented an applicable, although distinct, model for anticommunist counterinsurgency. Yet while both dictatorships shared these similar motivations, their ongoing neighbourly dispute not only made any cooperation in Central America out of the question but placed the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships in competition with one another, at least for the remainder of 1978. By 1979, with the Beagle dispute under papal arbitration and instability in Central America escalating, concern about the 'subversive threat' replaced Chilean and Argentine national interests in driving involvement in Central America. Nonetheless, the two dictatorships continued to work independently of one another, and each case can therefore be treated separately.

Chile: Central America as a mirror of the recent past

Even before the escalation of guerrilla activity, scenes from Chile's recent history had been deployed as instructive examples in local political conflicts in Central America. During the campaign in opposition to the agrarian reform of 1976, Salvadoran Extreme Right groups had frequently deployed paid adverts in the Salvadoran media that cited Chile's experience of land reform under Allende as proof that the planned Salvadoran reform would lead to the 'destruction of production' and 'precipitate the revolutionary process'.[53] As Salvadoran politics had grown more unstable throughout 1977, individuals on the Extreme Right once again offered Chile as a potential model. That year, right-wing journalist Sidney Mazzini V cited Chile under Allende as a negative image of El Salvador's potential future, and offered the Chilean regime

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[52] See, for example, EGUAT, 28 May 1979, No. 221, AH/0039/1, DAL, MREC.

[53] 'La promesa y los resultados de la reforma agraria chilena en torno a las 80 hectareas inafectables' *La Prensa Gráfica*, 29 July 1976, FARO Campos Pagados, Folder 1, Centro de Información, Documentación y Apoyo a la Investigación, Biblioteca P. Florentino Idoate, S. J., Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, San Salvador, El Salvador (herein CIDAI); 'La destrucción de la agricultura chilena por los planificadores' *La Prensa Gráfica*, 28 July 1976, Agricultores del Oriente, Folder 4, CIDAI.

since 1973 as potential 'path to follow'.[54] This notion was likewise present in Guatemala, and at the 1977 WACL conference Mario Sandoval Alarcón had praised the Pinochet dictatorship's success in rescuing the country 'from the clutches of communism'.[55] In 1978, then, Central Americans and Chileans alike already saw political parallels between Central America and Chile, illustrating the Latin American Extreme Right's shared political imaginary.

Yet it was not until 1978-79 that the Pinochet dictatorship took proactive steps to provide assistance to the beleaguered governments of Guatemala and El Salvador in a conscious effort to replicate the Chilean 'model'. At this stage, Chilean involvement focused overwhelmingly on El Salvador, the country with which it held the stronger set of bilateral ties, and which Chilean diplomats judged to be facing the greater communist threat. Over the course of 1978, military relations with El Salvador continued to strengthen. In January 1978 a delegation from the Chilean *Academia de Guerra* visited El Salvador, and a Salvadoran delegation – led by Colonel Carlos Vides Casanova - reciprocated in December that year.[56] While at least in part driven by ongoing Chilean-Argentine competition in the context of the Beagle dispute, an examination of the concurrent expansion of scholarships for military training in Chile reveals an increasing focus on counterinsurgency training. All growth in scholarships in late 1978 and the first half of 1979 came from the *Carabineros* (Chilean armed police force) and focused on intelligence and 'the maintenance of domestic order'.[57]

These military relations were supplemented by the continued intensification of transnational and bilateral political ties. In the same period, prominent members of the Chilean Right who were involved in the writing of the new constitution visited El Salvador to extol the virtues of the Chilean political model. In July 1978, the *Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada* (ANEP), one of the organisations central to the Salvadoran Extreme Right's defeat of the 1976 land reform, hosted Pedro Ibáñez, the former *Partido Nacional* senator and member of the

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[54] 'Un enfrentamiento es inevitable?' *Diario de Hoy*, 17 November 1977, Unión Civica Salvadoreña, CIDAI; EmbaSanSalvador, 20 April 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1977/AMRE.
[55] EmbaGuatemala, 11 May 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES., Aerogramas, Telegramas/Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
[56] EmbaSanSalvador, 30 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE; Cable, El Salvador, Visita a Argentina de delegación militares de El Salvador (Vides Casanova), 1 December 1978, No. 302, Colección Forti, MREC.
[57] Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores to EmbaGuatemala, 18 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

Chilean State Council who had visited Guatemala in 1974. In El Salvador, Ibáñez shared his views on the 'Chilean reality', and the 'advances achieved and experience gained'.[58]

This was followed, more importantly, by a visit from Jaime Guzmán, the chief ideological architect of the Pinochet dictatorship, in February 1979. Once again organised by ANEP rather than the Chilean embassy, Guzmán spent two days in El Salvador, dining with prominent members of the Salvadoran Extreme Right as well as holding meetings with members of the high command of the Salvadoran armed forces.[59] Discussion included topics as diverse as 'the social market economy and its successes achieved in Chile, as well as the ways in which Marxism infiltrates and eats up any organisation in order to implant its ideology'. This second topic was of particular pertinence as Guzmán visited while a series of strikes and stoppages convulsed El Salvador.[60] Guzmán's visit demonstrates how this period marked an intensification in relations not only between the two states, but also between prominent right-wing individuals and groups in both countries that lay beyond the parameters of traditional diplomacy. Given his prominent role in the upper echelons of the Pinochet regime, it is by no means inconceivable that Guzmán conducted state business on the same visit.

Indeed, it is likely that Guzmán's visit directly informed the most concrete step towards the expansion of Chilean support to the Salvadoran counterinsurgency in the run up to the Nicaraguan Revolution. Just a month after the visit, Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta, the Salvadoran Deputy Secretary of Defence and Public Security, approached the Chilean embassy in a 'strictly personal capacity' with a proposition.[61] As second in command to the Defence Secretary General Federico Castillo Yanes, Iraheta's already influential position in the Salvadoran military was bolstered by the ill health of the former, who left much of the running of the Ministry in Iraheta's hands.[62] Known for taking a hard line against 'subversion', Iraheta was an 'invariable friend of Chile' and had spent a year (1969) in Santiago in the Chilean army's *Academia de Guerra*. He was a 'fervent admirer of the Chilean armed forces'.[63]

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58 EmbaSanSalvador to Señor Ministro, 13 July 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.
59 Telex, EmbaSanSalvador, 6 February 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES., Aerogramas, Telex/El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
60 EmbaSanSalvador, April 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES., Aerogramas, Telex/El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
61 EmbaSanSalvador, 5 March 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
62 'Leading Personalities in El Salvador, 1978', FCO 99/197, TNA.
63 EmbaSanSalvador, 5 March 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 12 February 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

Drawing on these personal connections, Iraheta requested a trip to Chile to hold discussions with Pinochet concerning the situation in El Salvador and the potential role for the Chilean government in supporting the armed forces. Mere weeks after Guzmán extolled the virtues of the Chilean 'model' to the Salvadoran military and Extreme Right groups, Iraheta cited unofficial approval for his mission from President Romero and emphasised his admiration for the Chilean regime as an upstanding example of successful government in the face of a communist threat. The stated objectives of the visit were explicit: Iraheta sought Chilean help in the conversion of El Salvador's small *Escuela de Policía* into 'something more professional in accordance with the needs of the present', desired to enquire about the 'possibility of [El Salvador] acquiring artillery munition and coilless rifles' and wished to discuss with the respective authorities Chilean offers to train El Salvador's military personnel.[64] Faced with rising instability at home, the Salvadoran armed forces looked to Chile – and the Chilean 'model' – for assistance. This incident, paired with the strong relations the Pinochet dictatorship fostered with the Salvadoran Extreme Right, demonstrates how by 1979 El Salvador had become an area of great geopolitical significance for the Chilean regime, and a potential venue for the replication of its model in the face of an analogous subversive threat.

Crucially, these visits and Iraheta's approach to the Chilean embassy were unofficial in nature, conducted in a 'private capacity' or through non-state groups, such as ANEP. This was no coincidence, but the direct result of the ways in which Jimmy Carter's human rights policy and the international scrutiny it engendered continued to force Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships to conduct their relations in a covert manner, often through transnational and/or supposedly 'non-state' channels, as discussed in the previous chapter. For the history of transnational anticommunism, it was in this shift toward 'non-state' channels, not in the reduction of human rights abuses, that Carter's human rights policy had its greatest impact.

In December 1978 the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador acknowledged precisely this dynamic. In a report written for the annual meeting of Chilean ambassadors in Santiago, the ambassador ascribed the failure to schedule a mooted trip by President Romero to Chile to the exertion of US pressure on the Salvadoran government. Despite recognising the valuable support from successive Chilean military and technical missions, pressure from the United States had inhibited the Salvadoran government from making concrete gestures of friendship; faced

[64] EmbaSanSalvador, 5 March 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

with a fight for its own international reputation, the Salvadoran government 'did not wish to be labelled, as much internally as externally, as an unconditional friend of Chile' despite 'continuous manifestations of friendship and affection demonstrated on an extra-official level by those very same authorities'.[65]

These same preoccupations also dampened the Chilean Foreign Ministry's enthusiasm for providing assistance to the Salvadoran military. In response to Iraheta's March 1979 approach, Chilean Foreign Minister Hernán Cubillos wrote to the Chilean Minister of Defence, General César Raúl Benavides Escobar, highlighting the 'risks' that a Chilean police training mission to El Salvador would entail. Cubillos raised concerns about the potential negative repercussions in the international media were the Chilean presence revealed, citing recent media coverage of Chilean military advisers in Grenada (detailed above) as an example.[66] He recommended that Salvadoran officers be sent to Chile instead. Despite Cubillos' misgivings, Iraheta's visit did go ahead, if not until September 1979, in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

This episode is indicative of a wider cleavage between different constituent parts of the Chilean dictatorship in relation to Chilean involvement in Central America, and Chilean foreign policymaking in general. At precisely this moment of increased Chilean involvement in support of anticommunist regimes in Central America, Cubillos (appointed in that year, 1978) began a 'radical reorganization' in the dictatorship's foreign policy, as the Chilean foreign ministry began to pursue '*apertura'*, seeking to alleviate isolation by deepening its diplomatic relations with a states of diverse ideological outlooks, most notably, communist China, while concurrently improving its image in the international community.[67] In line with this stance, at a public level Cubillos sought to emphasise at every turn that, as he put it on one occasion in May 1978, 'Chile does not seek to be an anticommunist leader'. The regime had, after all, castigated Carter's human rights policy as an unacceptable intervention in the affairs of another state, and insisted in turn that Chile would not engage in such activities even on ideological grounds.[68]

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[65] EmbaSanSalvador, 26 December 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1978/AMRE.
[66] MRE to Ministro de Defensa Nacional, 15 March 1979, Vol. 526, Min Def, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.
[67] 'Canciller Cubillos: "El Pacífico une a Chile con China"', 4 October 1978, *Revista Ercilla*; Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial, 1900-2004*, 412.
[68] 'Chile no pretende ser líder del anticomunismo', 18 May 1978, *La Tercera*.

Yet at the same time, the Chilean military resisted the foreign ministry's efforts to apply this new, public foreign policy, to anything that could be deemed military affairs. For example, on one occasion in September 1979, the Chilean defence ministry responded to a foreign ministry request for information in relation to international arms sales by insisting that such matters were exclusively the concern of the armed forces.[69] This clash between the public and private faces of Chilean foreign policy directly shaped the dictatorship's involvement in Central America and while it is possible to glean an idea of the extent of Chilean engagement in the region through foreign ministry documents (such as the developments in Chilean-Salvadoran relations told above), even the foreign ministry itself was excluded from many aspects of military relations.

This imperative to keep Chilean-Central American cooperation out of the public eye also shaped Chilean-Guatemalan relations. Here, the Chilean ambassador acknowledged the need to keep the embassy's close relationship with Extreme Right leader Mario Sandoval Alarcón under wraps. Shortly before Sandoval Alarcón left government in July 1978 the ambassador conceded that as the leader of a political party, 'the embassy cannot maintain close relations with him' – at least in the open.[70] Despite recognising the need to keep Chilean-Guatemalan relations low profile, at this stage, there was no tightening of Chilean-Guatemalan military relations on the same scale as that in El Salvador, and certainly no plans for the full-scale overhaul of Guatemalan training facilities. In part, this appears to be a matter of prioritisation of resources, and the Chilean embassy in Guatemala frequently cited the lack of a Chilean military attaché resident in Guatemala (instead sharing the attaché based in El Salvador) as the primary obstacle to closer relations.[71] Moreover, as we shall see, the Guatemalan military enjoyed a comparably closer relationship with the Argentine armed forces.

Yet even given these circumstances, scholarships for Guatemalans to receive military training in Chile did increase in early 1979. At the beginning of 1978 there were a total of 10 Guatemalan students in Chilean military academies, spread fairly evenly between army and *Carabinero* training schools, and the Chilean embassy cited this figure again in June that year.[72] In

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[69] Jefe del Estado Mayor de la Defensa Nacional al Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores (Subsecretario), 3 September 1979, Vol. 526, Min Def, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE.
[70] EmbaGuatemala, 27 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[71] See, for example, EmbaGuatemala, 27 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[72] EmbaGuatemala, 17 April 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 27 June 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.

January 1979, the Foreign Ministry instructed the Chilean embassy to extend the offer of two further scholarships for *Carabinero* training in the context of Guatemala's 'national security', and in February two more Guatemalan students travelled to Chile to undertake aviation training with the Chilean Air Force, bringing the total to 14, plus one major undergoing *carabinero* training, by the Nicaraguan Revolution that July.[73]

Chilean Foreign Ministry documents offer very little to explain the discussions informing this expansion in scholarship provision, suggesting they took place beyond the local Chilean embassy's remit. Certainly, this period was also one of ongoing strengthening of ties between the Pinochet dictatorship and the Guatemalan Extreme Right, and in particular, Mario Sandoval Alarcón. Within weeks of leaving the vice presidency in July 1978, Sandoval Alarcón visited Chile. Foreign ministry records confirm his arrival in the country, accompanied by his daughter, but give no further indication of his activities there.[74] Given that Sandoval Alarcón visited Argentina on the same trip and sought a meeting with President Videla, it is likely he sought a similar meeting in Chile, perhaps driven by recent events in Guatemala, namely the massive escalation in opposition activity in the wake of the Panzós Massacre two months earlier. While technically out of government, Sandoval Alarcón maintained strong links with influential individuals within the Guatemalan military, including, for example, General Aníbal Guevara Rodríguez, who had accompanied him on his trip to the Southern Cone while Vice President in 1977 and became Chief of Staff in the Guatemalan Army in June 1979, following the assassination of General David Cancinos Barrios by the EGP.[75]

Given these links between Sandoval Alarcón and the soon-to-be third in command in the Guatemalan army, it is conceivable that discussions relating to the expansion of Chilean scholarships for Guatemala took place on the former's 1978 trip to Chile. Furthermore, just nine months later, in April 1979, Sandoval Alarcón returned to the Southern Cone, primarily in order to appear as an honoured guest and speaker at the 12th WACL conference in Asunción, Paraguay, that month. While it is unclear if Sandoval Alarcón went on to Chile on this occasion, while in Asunción he mixed once more with crucial members of the Latin American and wider

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[73] EmbaGuatemala, 18 January 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 14 March 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[74] EmbaGuatemala, 4 September 1978, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1978/AMRE.
[75] EmbaGuatemala, 18 June 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES. Telex/Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

Extreme Right, including the aforementioned Chilean, Pedro Ibáñez, another of the speakers.[76] Given Sandoval Alarcón's appeal to Chile on the eve of the Nicaraguan Revolution, it is probable that these transnational activities helped strengthen his relationship with the Pinochet dictatorship, and through him the Chilean regime's connections with the Guatemalan Extreme Right.

Argentina: counterinsurgency without borders

The expansion of Argentine involvement in Central America over the course of 1978 and the first half of 1979 primarily took place in Guatemala. Developments in this period fall into two categories: the expansion of training opportunities for members of the Guatemalan armed forces arranged primarily through bilateral military ties, and the deepening of transnational ties to the Guatemalan Extreme Right. In both cases, but particularly the latter, this expansion of Argentine aid largely circumvented the Argentine Foreign Ministry.

On the first aspect of Argentine involvement, the Argentine armed forces offered a small but significant increase in scholarship provision over the course of 1978. In March that year, one new Guatemalan scholarship holder arrived at Argentina's military academy (*Colegio de la Nación*), and in October the Argentine armed forces offered two scholarships for Guatemalan students to attend the new course in 'Intelligence for Overseas Officials', COE-600.[77] In addition, in July – in the context of escalating political instability in Guatemala in the wake of the presidential transition - discussions between the Argentine ambassador and the Army Chief of Staff General David Cancinos Barrios regarding 'local subversion' led to an agreement for the Argentine armed forces to 'study the creation of a military aviation school and an increase in air force bases' in Guatemala, to expand the provision of training for Guatemalan officials and to study the possibility of an Argentine role in the acquisition of aeroplanes (Pucara jets) and other related material.[78] These discussions were followed by a series of high profile military visits.[79]

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[76] WACL Circular Letter No. 4, Report on the Twelfth WACL General Conference, 11 May 1979, Folder 4 – WACL Conference File, 1979, Box 60, KDP, HILA.
[77] Telegrama Ordinario Recibido, Guatemala, No. 86, 2 March 1978, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 111.
[78] See Table 1, row 2.
[79] See Table 1.

Table 1: Argentine-Guatemalan Relations, 1978-79

Date	Event
June 1978	Argentine embassy in Guatemala seeks information on Argentine 'terrorist' Carlos Alberto Durich.[80]
July 1978	Argentine ambassador and Army Chief of Staff David Cancinos Barrios agree to study expanding Argentine military aid to Guatemala.[81]
July 1978	Mario Sandoval Alarcón visits Buenos Aires, seeking meetings with military leadership.[82]
September 1978	Cancinos Barrios invited to visit Buenos Aires in December 1978 (no confirmation or rejection of invitation in Foreign Ministry archives).
January 1979	Argentine embassy in Guatemala requests further information on the outcome of military exchanges over the course of 1978.[83]
March 1979	Guatemalan Defence Minister, General Otto Spiegeler, visits Buenos Aires.[84]
April 1979	Mario Sandoval Alarcón visits Buenos Aires on same trip he attends 12th WACL Conference in Asunción; seeks out Carlos Alberto Durich.[85]
April 1979	Carlos Midence appointed honorary 'agricultural attaché' in the Guatemalan embassy in Buenos Aires.[86]

Further details on these military agreements and the ensuing military exchanges are largely absent from Argentine foreign ministry documents. While this makes it difficult to provide a full analysis of the development of Argentine military support to Guatemala, this absence in itself provides useful insight into the structure of the Argentine dictatorship and the

80 Telegrama ordinario recibido, Guatemala, 22 June 1978, No. 126, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; Oficio secreto, EGUAT, 26 June 1978, AH/0002, DAL, MREC.
81 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 27 July 1978, No. 158-159, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; EmbaGuatemala, 11 July 1977, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1977/AMRE.
82 Oficio secreto, EGUAT, 20 July 1978, No. 325, CF, MREC.
83 Cable secreto, EGUAT, 5 January 1979, No. 7, CF, MREC.
84 Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 110.
85 Oficio, Departamento América Latina to EGUAT, Posible visita a la República del Ex-Vicepresidente de Guatemala, 15 February 1979, No. 35, AH/0004/2, DAL, MREC.
86 Caja 102-1980, Argentina, classification 141-D. Archivo, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala, Guatemala City.

limited role that the Foreign Ministry played in coordinating the expansion of the so-called 'Dirty War' overseas. Indeed, in January 1979 the Argentine ambassador to Guatemala acknowledged this dynamic when he complained that the embassy had not been informed of the outcome of two military exchanges between Guatemala and Argentina the previous year: a visit by Argentine officials to Guatemala and a reciprocal trip to Buenos Aires, led by the Guatemalan defence minister, General Otto Spiegeler.[87] Just as the Argentine armed forces had used transnational ties in their attempts to send Israeli weapons to Guatemala in 1977 and provide clandestine assistance (coordinated through CAL) to the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, so they used both covert military channels and transnational ties to expand their support for the counterinsurgency in Guatemala.

Indeed, it is possible to identify evidence of Argentine personnel active in Guatemala from mid-1978 through other instances where the Argentine ambassador expressed frustration at being kept out of the loop. In August 1978, the Argentine ambassador raised issues with communications from the Argentine Air Force requesting authorisation for the landing of Argentine aircraft in the country, and for flyovers through Guatemalan airspace. Embassy staff complained that messages were being sent in military code, 'rendering them practically incomprehensible' to diplomats, leading on at least one occasion to miscommunication with the Guatemalan authorities.[88] An incident two months earlier, in June 1978, raised similar signs of an active Argentine military presence in Guatemala. Over a series of dispatches that month, the Argentine embassy had reproduced Guatemalan government reports regarding an individual of Argentine nationality going by the name of Carlos Alberto Durich Fernández. The reports named Durich as one of 'two foreign terrorists' in the country, who were being sought by security forces, accused of organising 'terrorist acts' on behalf of the Extreme Right. Neither the embassy nor Guatemalan government agencies had been able to locate Durich and passed this information on to Buenos Aires.[89] Unbeknownst to embassy staff, Durich was actually an Argentine naval intelligence informant and former Triple-A member, operating in Central America in an official capacity. According to Ariel Armony, in 1978 he was serving as advisor to Anastasio Somoza's secret police and the leader of the Argentine hit team in Nicaragua, Task

[87] See Table 1, row 5.
[88] EGUAT, 30 August 1978, No. 373, AH/0002, DAL, MREC.
[89] Telegrama ordinario recibido, Guatemala, 22 June 1978, No. 126, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; Oficio secreto, EGUAT, 26 June 1978, AH/0002, DAL, MREC.

Force 3.3.2., that operated out of the *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* (Navy Mechanics School, ESMA) in Buenos Aires.[90]

Durich's presence in Guatemala – and the embassy's apparent ignorance regarding his activities in Central America – points to the other side of Argentine military involvement in the isthmus, an operation directed by hardliners within the military high command and largely conducted through transnational ties. Here, Mario Sandoval Alarcón was once more the key Guatemalan contact point. At around the time that the Argentine ambassador met with Cancinos Barrios in late July, Mario Sandoval Alarcón had arrived in Buenos Aires (on the same trip that he visited Chile). While the ambassador was 'unaware of the motive of the visit', he knew that Sandoval Alarcón sought meetings with President Jorge Rafael Videla and other senior Argentine officials. While, as the ambassador noted, the structure of the trip – visiting countries across the Southern Cone – was similar to that undertaken in July 1977 regarding support for Guatemala over Belize, it is unlikely that this was what Sandoval Alarcón wished to discuss with Videla now he was out of government.[91] More likely, the MLN leader's visit was concerned with the coordination of the Argentine military presence in Central America.

Certainly, Carlos Alberto Durich and Mario Sandoval Alarcón were directly connected. In April 1979, Sandoval Alarcón stapled another visit to Buenos Aires onto his trip to Asunción to attend the 12th WACL Conference. While the Argentine embassy was again ignorant of his motives, among the few details Sandoval Alarcón did reveal ahead of his trip in April 1979 was his intention to contact Carlos Alberto Durich upon arrival in Buenos Aires. Durich was, according to Sandoval Alarcón, 'the only Argentine with whom he maintained a close and daily friendship' during his official visit to Buenos Aires as Vice President in July 1977.[92] Durich occupied the same Argentine *nacionalista* circles as those who had long dominated Argentine participation in WACL and CAL, and his personal relationship with Sandoval Alarcón was likely linked to the latter's high standing in these organisations. Indeed, aside from Sandoval Alarcón, Durich's other principal Guatemalan contact was no other than Carlos Midence, Sandoval Alarcón's nephew, MLN loyalist and member of the Guatemalan delegation to the 10th WACL conference in Taiwan in 1977.[93] According to Ariel Armony, Midence operated as an

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90 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 82, 87.
91 See Table 1, row 3.
92 See Table 1, row 7.
93 Participants of the 10th WACL and 23rd APACL Conferences, April 1977, Folder 1 – WACL Conference File, 1977, Box 60, KDP, HILA.

intermediary for Argentine operatives in Central America. As well as Durich, he was the contact point for his associate Alfredo Zarattini, the Battalion 601 agent active in Nicaragua who had represented Argentina at the World Youth Anti-Communist League (WYACL) conference in Managua in May 1979.[94]

Guatemalan foreign ministry documents confirm the pseudo-ambassadorial role that Midence performed on behalf of the MLN in this period as part of the wider web of transnational connections between Argentine and Central America: in December 1978 he had met with Guatemalan foreign minister Rafael Castillo Valdez to request that he be granted an *ad honorem* position in the Guatemalan embassy in Buenos Aires; the following April he was duly appointed 'Agricultural Attaché'.[95] The presence of Sandoval Alarcón's nephew and MLN loyalist under official cover in Buenos Aires just as the 'subversive threat' in Central America escalated in early 1979 is indicative of the ways in which these transnational relationships, first fostered in forums such as the WACL and CAL, produced concrete conduits of anticommunist support that mirrored – and interacted with - the very structures of traditional state diplomacy. While it is difficult to ascertain Durich's precise activities in Guatemala in 1978, these connections demonstrate the dominance of Extreme Right *nacionalista* Argentines in these overseas operations. This activity in 1977-78 laid the foundation for a rapid and concrete expansion of Argentine involvement in the country in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

This covert Argentine military presence in Central America did not expand into El Salvador until after the Nicaraguan Revolution. While the Argentine dictatorship viewed events in El Salvador with caution, they limited their response to building closer ties to Extreme Right allies in government. In this context, the Argentine ambassador greeted the appointment of Jose Antonio Rodríguez Porth as Salvadoran foreign minister in April 1978 warmly, describing him as 'a true friend of our country'.[96] Porth had previously advised ANEP, and his wife was a member

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[94] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 87 Armony names 'Raul' not Carlos Midence here, but goes on to describe him as Alarcón's nephew. Press records suggsest that the 'nephew' was Carlos, and his uncle (Sandoval Alarcón's brother-in-law) was Raul. See, for example, Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots* (1983), 12 and Raul Midence Rivera's testimony before the US Congress in 1954. Communist Aggression in Latin America, Ninth Interim Report of Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Latin America of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression, House of Representatives, Guatemala, September-October 1954 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington: 1954).

[95] These documents are among those found in a Guatemalan Foreign Ministry document marked 'Caja 102-1980, Argentina', classification 141-D. Archivo, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala, Guatemala City.

[96] Cable secreto, S. Salvador, No. 121, 25 April 1978, AH/0009, DAL, MREC.

of the *Frente Feminino Salvadoreño* (FFS), linking them both to the Extreme Right front that dominated Salvadoran participation in WACL and CAL and had come together to defeat the 1976 land reform.[97] Over the course of 1978 and the first half of 1979, the Argentine embassy regularly forwarded pamphlets produced by ANEP and similar groups regarding the rising instability in El Salvador back to Buenos Aires, and on occasion passed on intelligence on internal government proceedings from another prominent figure on the Salvadoran Extreme Right: Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta, the Deputy Secretary of Defence and Public Security.[98] This cultivation of relationships with the Extreme Right was supplemented with some deepening of bilateral military ties. At least one Salvadoran student travelled to Buenos Aires for police training in February 1978, while the Salvadoran military delegation that visited Chile in December 1978 also made an unofficial stop in Buenos Aires.[99] This tightening of relations would bear fruit later in 1979, when the Nicaraguan Revolution drove the conflict in El Salvador to dizzying new levels, marking the formal beginning of the Civil War.

Conclusion

Just as in 1977 the Latin American Extreme Right had been united in its condemnation of Carter, by 1979 there existed broad agreement that Nicaragua, and Central America more broadly, were now vital arenas of the Cold War. From thousands of miles to the South, both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships had watched these developments with increasing concern, perceiving events in Central America as directly connected to the struggle against subversion on which each staked their legitimacy at home. Convinced of the utility of their own experiences as models for the Central American regimes to follow, both dictatorships responded with increased direct support to the Central American counterinsurgency, with the former more focused on Guatemala and the latter El Salvador.

The Southern Cone dictatorships' rapidly growing concerns in relation to Central America reveals how their distinct Extreme Right outlook gave them a unique perspective on the international significance of events on the isthmus. This set them apart from both the United States government and other more moderate Latin American governments such as those of

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[97] Leading Personalities in El Salvador, 2 May 1979, FCO 99/197, TNA; David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval, *Los guerreros de la libertad* (San Salvador, 2008), 50.

[98] Oficio secreto, ESALV, 24 October 1978, No. 436/78, AH/0016, DAL, MREC; in April 1979, the Argentine ambassador cited Iraheta as a source for an upcoming speech by President Romero asking for political apertura. Cable secreto, San Salvador, 25 April 1979, No. 97/98, CF, MREC.

[99] Telegrama ordinario recibido, San Salvador, No. 52, 23 February 1978, AH/0009, DAL, MREC; Cable enviado, San Salvador, No. 302, 1 December 1978, CF, MREC.

Mexico and Venezuela. Although these latter two countries were anticommunist in outlook and US allies, their perception of the Sandinista struggle was not dictated by the Cold War binary, and both lent their support to the FSLN. In contrast, for the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships the prospect of an FSLN victory rang alarm bells for eventual total communist domination of the isthmus. It is here, then, that the 'Extreme' aspect of the Extreme Right's conception of the global Cold War struggle comes through most clearly.

Exploring the means by which the Southern Cone and Central American dictatorships' grew closer together also reveals the largely unrecognised but nonetheless significant impact of Carter's human rights policy (and the wider human rights movement) on the way anticommunist dictatorships conducted their international relations in the late 1970s. Conscious of unprecedented international human rights-related scrutiny, members of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships and their fellow Extreme Rightists in Central America increasingly used clandestine, transnational ties as a conduit for political and material support. This shift can only be understood through the adoption of a transnational approach.

Going forwards, these transnational ties would assume fundamental importance. From their foundation, both the WACL and the CAL had been explicit in their ambition to foster transnational anticommunist *action* rather than mere discussion, and the 12th Conference in April 1979 ended with a rallying cry for precisely such action in Central America. Calling upon Latin American countries 'to improve their common defence against Communism, particularly by strengthening treaties of intra- or inter-continental defence', the final communique emphasised Nicaragua's ongoing 'struggle against communism' in particular and stressed Latin Americans' own ability to take on this fight. 'Latin America, particularly the countries belonging to the Southern Cone and especially Chile' had 'shown to the world that Communism can be defeated even when in power'.[100]

This invocation of the Southern Cone dictatorships as a model for their regional allies to follow rang true, and just a little over two months later Mario Sandoval Alarcón travelled south, to Chile and Argentina, in his last gasp effort to save the Somoza regime in Nicaragua. While it was too late for Somoza, the web of transnational connections that made Sandoval Alarcón's trip

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[100] Joint Communique of the 12th Conference of the World Anti-Communist League, Asunción, Paraguay, 27 April 1979, enclosed in WACL Circular Letter No. 4/1979, 11 May 1979, Folder 4 – WACL Conference File, 1979, Box 60, KDP, HILA.

possible would go on to play a critical role in providing support to both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran Extreme Right as the conflicts in both countries reached new peaks in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Chapter 4: The Aftermath of the Nicaraguan Revolution, 1979-80

Introduction

'The first of the "Central American dominos" has fallen… [and] revolution threatens El Salvador and Guatemala with widespread terrorism and rebellion…The geo-political implications of the events, and of the role of sister nations in the West in those events, are sobering, and beg to be studied carefully.'[1] These words are drawn from the publication arising from the Council for Inter-American Security's Inter-American Symposium held at the Catholic University of America, 19-24 August 1979, in the foreword to a panel on the 'Crisis in Central America'. A little over a month earlier, on 17 July, Anastasio Somoza DeBayle had resigned as President of Nicaragua, fleeing to Paraguay via Miami and Guatemala City. Two days later, Sandinista forces entered Managua and established a new five-member ruling junta. By April 1980, the two non-Sandinista members of that junta had resigned their positions, formalising exclusive FSLN control over government.

The Nicaraguan Revolution was a watershed moment in the Cold War with great significance not only for the revolutionary Left, but also for the Extreme Right and the wider inter-American system. The collapse of the Somoza regime made a Central American revolution a tangible possibility. It provided an immediate boost to the armed Left across the region and pushed these neighbouring conflicts to a new, more violent level. Beyond Central America, the Revolution cemented fears that had been expressed about communist expansion and the damage done by US foreign policy under Carter since 1977. Taken alongside the Grenadian revolution in March and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, for anticommunists across the globe, 1979 represented a year of international communist aggression to which the US response had been wholly inadequate.

In this context, the period after July 1979 represented a new phase in transnational anticommunist collaboration in Central America, characterised by both increased cross-border interactions and exchanges of ideas and new and improved channels for material assistance to military and paramilitary forces. Where this chapter focuses on this transnational Right response to the Nicaraguan Revolution, the one that follows turns to address how, in parallel to actively

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[1] Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979 (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), 45.

compensating for the perceived impact of US foreign policy, the Latin American Extreme Right sought to change that very policy itself.

First, though, we must explore the concrete impact that the Nicaraguan Revolution had on the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador. Only then is it possible to examine the Latin American Extreme Right's perception of the geopolitical significance of the isthmus after 1979. The depth of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' concerns about events in Central America, and their conviction that further communist victory there could in turn threaten South America, is a testament to extremity of their Extreme Right views and their genuine belief in that communism constituted an existential threat.

Having established this, we can assess the role that the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships played in the transnational response to the 'subversive threat' posed by events in Central America. Over the course of late 1979 and 1980, both regimes increased their support for the counterinsurgency in both Guatemala and El Salvador. Throughout, national specificities in both the Southern Cone and Central America shaped this support. In the Chilean case, the process of institutionalisation at home profoundly shaped perceptions of and responses to events in Central America, whereby the dictatorship presented the political model undergoing codification at home as a potential solution to the conflicts abroad. For the Argentine dictatorship, Central America represented another battlefield in the *guerra sin fronteras* against subversion that lay at the core of its political programme.

In Central America, the rapidly changing political landscape in El Salvador (compared to relative stability in Guatemala) drove both Chilean and Argentine involvement further outside of traditional bilateral channels into the realms of transnational and purportedly non-state organisations, most notably the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and its Latin American chapter, the *Confederación Antcomunista Latinoamericana* (CAL). In this period, as both dictatorships sought to keep their involvement in Central America out of the public eye, these transnational ties – that is to say non-state ties and contacts - developed over the previous two years assumed a new and fundamental degree of importance.

The Impact of the Nicaraguan Revolution in Central America

As the first successful leftist revolution since the Cuban Revolution two decades earlier, the Nicaraguan Revolution had a profound and immediate effect on the conflicts in Guatemala

and El Salvador. In the words of James Dunkerley, while 'it would be misconceived constantly to measure these other countries by the yardstick established by the FSLN' the Revolution 'produced a distinct regional condition in which it is plausible to imagine a Central American revolution, however distant and variegated that might be'.[2] The Sandinistas' triumph empowered the Central American Left, providing a source of inspiration and morale in the immediate term, which, as the FSLN regime consolidated, eventually translated into material support for the armed Left in other countries on the isthmus.

In Guatemala, the Revolution prompted an upswing in both popular opposition to the government and guerrilla activity. On 18 July, just a day after Somoza's resignation, the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (Rebel Armed Forces, FAR) kidnapped the Guatemalan vice-minister for foreign relations, Alfonso Alonso Lima, demanding the release of two missing comrades and the suspension of raids by the security forces and applying pressure for a rapid recognition of the new Nicaraguan government.[3] The following months were marked by increasing strike action and further kidnappings.[4] In September 1979, a new guerrilla group, ORPA (*Organización del Pueblo en Armas,* Organisation of People in Arms) announced its public existence, bringing the total number of organizations on the armed Left to four; a little over a year later these groups would declare their intention to form a united front.[5] Extreme Right death squad activity proliferated in the same period, with the public declaration of a new death squad, '*Orden de la Muerte'* and new spates of violent attacks on, and disappearances of, rural *campesino* organizers.[6] In November, Mario Sandoval Alarcón announced the formation of the '*Frente contra la subversión comunista*' (Front Against Communist Subversion) to provide 'political and personal support' to the Guatemalan army as it sought to 'combat the communist threat and defend national sovereignty'.[7]

These violent confrontations continued for the next twelve months as the body count grew higher. While some non-violent methods of protest were successful – for example

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[2] James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London: Verso, 1988), 337.
[3] EmbaGuatemala, 20 July 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; EGUAT, 23 July 1979, No. 283/79, AH/0039/1, DAL, MREC.
[4] EmbaGuatemala, 10 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE; Allan Nairn, 'Controversial Reagan campaign links with Guatemalan government and private sector leaders', Council on Hemispheric Affairs research memorandum, 30 October 1980.
[5] EmbaGuatemala, 10 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[6] EmbaGuatemala, 10 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[7] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, 12 November 1979, No. 545, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC.

plantation workers won a wage rise in March 1980 – the Guatemalan military met peaceful activism with increasingly disproportionate repression, feeding support for the guerrillas. The most egregious example came in late January 1980, when indigenous *campesino* activists from the northern and western highlands occupied the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City in protest against increasing military repression of their communities. In response, Guatemalan security forces stormed the embassy leaving 37 dead, among them Vicente Menchú, the father of Rigoberta Menchú, who would go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the Spanish consul, Jaime Ruiz del Árbol.[8] The Spanish ambassador was among the few survivors; the only activist to survive, Gregorio Yujá, emerged with serious injuries and was subsequently kidnapped from his hospital bed and murdered.[9] The massacre garnered almost universal international condemnation and the Spanish government immediately suspended diplomatic relations. However, this international opprobrium did little to stem the tide of government and paramilitary violence: by the summer of 1980 death squads were assassinating trade unionists on a weekly basis and rightist terror directed against clergymen deemed 'subversive' reached such extremes in El Quiché that the entire diocese was temporarily closed.

Meanwhile, in a foreshadowing of what was to come in the following years, the Guatemalan military increasingly targeted rural indigenous communities, killing 60 at San Juan Cotzál, El Quiché, in August 1980.[10] These new heights of repression – carried out both directly by the Guatemalan military and indirectly through death squads – nevertheless succeeded in the principal goal of maintaining the upper hand over the guerrilla insurgency, if at an extreme and terrible human cost. It is in this regard that the clearest distinction can be drawn between the course of events in Guatemala between July 1979 and November 1980 and those in neighbouring El Salvador.

In El Salvador, the Nicaraguan Revolution transformed the existing levels of internal instability into a full-blown crisis. On 12 August 1979, the three largest guerrilla groups – the FPLN (*Frente Popular de Liberación Nacional*), the FARN (*Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional*) and the ERP (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*) announced their intention to set aside their ideological differences and work together following the Sandinistas' triumph, declaring that 1980

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[8] This episode is recounted in chapter 14 of Menchú's memoir, Rigoberta Menchú, *me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985).
[9] Michael Cangemi, 'Ambassador Frank Ortiz and Guatemala's "Killer President," 1976–1980', *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 4 (2017), 633.
[10] Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America*, 476.

would be 'the year of the liberation of El Salvador'.[11] Over the course of August, guerrillas assassinated four members of ORDEN, while the Left's associated popular organisations – among them the BPR (*Bloque Popular Revolucionario*) and LP-28 (*Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero*) carried out peaceful occupations of both major cathedrals in San Salvador, as well as the cathedral in Santa Ana, El Salvador's second city.[12] In September, at least in part in response to the continued indiscriminate murder of student and trade union leaders by paramilitary groups, left-wing activity escalated further, with an array of kidnappings, assassination attempts and bombings directed against the land- and business-owning elite and the security services, combined with popular demonstrations in the streets across the country.[13]

With the country close to collapse, on 15 October 1979 officers within the Salvadoran military staged a coup, unseating President Carlos Humberto Romero Mena. Led by young, more moderate officers in the army, the coup established a new five-man ruling junta composed of both military and civilian members, including the leader of the October coup, Colonel Adolfo Majano, a political moderate, and prominent figures from the popular opposition movement, chief among them Guillermo Manuel Ungo. Gaining the almost immediate backing of the US State Department and the liberal-leaning Catholic Church headed by Archbishop Oscar Romero (a key voice in the opposition movement), the new junta announced a radical programme that included nationalisation of banks, land reform, and greater state control of the export crop sector.[14]

The coup marked a realignment in US-Salvadoran relations as aid soon began to flow back into the country and US Ambassador Robert White became an influential advisor to the new junta.[15] Meanwhile, the new government immediately sought to distance itself from rightist groups operating both within and outside of the state. With mass retirement imposed on the upper echelons of the military hierarchy (14 generals alongside 46 colonels -- almost the entirety), right-leaning military men were removed from across the government.[16] ORDEN was disbanded, and the leader of the Extreme Right faction within the military, Major Roberto

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[11] Salvadoran guerrillas' statement to the Mexican media, quoted in EmbaSanSalvador, 3 September 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[12] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 September 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[13] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[14] Crandall, *The Salvador option: the United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 125.
[15] EmbaSanSalvador, 5 Nov. 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[16] EmbaSanSalvador, 18 Dec. 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

D'Aubuisson, lost his position, with the anti-subversive intelligence operation he operated, ANSESAL, closed.[17]

Despite the new junta's professed reformist principles, the armed Left – quite correctly - took it to be a US-hatched government, and continued to call for revolution, inspired by the Sandinista triumph. As Andrea Oñate has argued, the Salvadoran Left 'were so confident that they would meet the same fate as the Sandinistas that a popular FMLN slogan became '*Si Nicaragua venció, El Salvador vencerá*' (If Nicaragua succeeded, El Salvador will succeed).'[18] By the coup of October 1979, the ERP had already dispatched a representative to Managua to make contact with Cuban advisors who had entered the country soon after Somoza's fall, marking a crucial first step in attaining long hoped-for Cuban aid for the Salvadoran insurgency; a superficial change in the Salvadoran government's composition had no hope of altering this trajectory.[19]

At the other end of the political spectrum, Extreme-Right elements now purged from government unleashed autonomous 'countersubversive' measures in the wake of the October coup, convinced the new government was unfit to act against the ongoing communist insurgency. These paramilitaries were likely assisted by the flood of right-wing Nicaraguan exiles into the country since July. US intelligence estimated up to 1,300 former members of the Nicaraguan National Guard arriving in El Salvador in this period.[20] Their arrival had been facilitated by Extreme-Right members of the military, including Colonel Eduardo Iraheta, a close ally of the Southern Cone dictatorships.[21]

The result was a huge increase in political violence, with 9,000 Salvadorans killed in the year following the coup. Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated by right-wing death squads under orders from Roberto D'Aubuisson in March 1980, was the most high-profile victim among them.[22] A move led by right-wing elements within the military to limit the scope of the

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[17] EmbaSanSalvador, 5 Nov. 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[18] Oñate-Madrazo, 'Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970–1992', 91.
[19] Oñate-Madrazo, 79; According to Russell Crandall, the new FSLN regime in Nicaragua has also already begun supplying weapons to the FMLN by this stage. See Crandall, *The Salvador Option: The United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992*, 127.
[20] Memorandum, 'El Salvador: The Right Wing', 25 March 1981, Digital National Security Archive, *El Salvador: War, Peace, and Human Rights, 1980-1994*, Accession Number: EL00060.
[21] Cable secreto, San Salvador, 11 July 1979, No. 243, CF, MREC.
[22] Ibid, 128.

first revolutionary junta (JRG)'s structural reforms in late December 1979 led to the latter's collapse in early January, with the resignation of all three civilian members alongside the majority of the cabinet. The second JRG that followed was less reformist in its composition. The more conservative *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party, PDC) dominated civilian participation in the government, while two leading conservative voices from within the armed forces, Defence Minister General José Guillermo García and then head of the National Guard, Colonel Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, solidified their positions of influence.[23]

Nonetheless, the second JRG was far from unified. The PDC belonged to the moderate, reformist wing of the Salvadoran Right and a chasm soon opened between them and the more combative anticommunist group within the military, who favoured a violent, all-out counterinsurgency.[24] These differences came to a head in May 1980 when members of the Extreme Right, led by Roberto D'Aubuisson, attempted a coup against the Salvadoran government. On 7 May, military forces loyal to Colonel Majano and the moderate, Christian Democrat-led faction in the junta stormed a farmhouse outside the capital, detaining 24 men – D'Aubuisson among them – and seizing documents that revealed their plans for a new, Extreme-Right-leaning junta with D'Aubuisson at its head.[25] Although the conspirators were initially arrested, from this point on the PDC remained in power only in name. With Majano facing widespread rebellion from conservative elements within the armed forces, D'Aubuisson and his allies were released from imprisonment within days, and shortly afterwards the conservative military leadership began to remove progressive officers from positions of influence within the government and armed forces, culminating in the ousting and exile of Majano himself in December 1980.

Without the support of the armed forces, the land reform was halted with immediate effect, and eventually formally rescinded. The conspirators had succeeded in curtailing reform efforts and neutralising the PDC and progressives in the military. In the months that followed, state violence increased exponentially, with hundreds of civilian casualties per month in turn

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[23] Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 171.
[24] Crandall, *The Salvador option: the United States in El Salvador, 1977-1992*, 129.
[25] 'El Salvador: Arrest of Rightist Coup Plotters', 8 May 1980, Digital National Security Archive, *El Salvador: War, Peace, and Human Rights, 1980-1994*, Accession Number: EL00031; EmbaSanSalvador, 13 May 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.

helping to drive the swift radicalisation and unification of the armed Left.[26] It was this political turmoil within the government and military that formed the backdrop for escalating violence in El Salvador throughout 1980 as the country became the central focus point in efforts to avoid 'another Nicaragua'.

Latin American Extreme Right Perceptions of the Nicaraguan Revolution

The Nicaraguan Revolution provoked a united response from the Latin American Extreme Right. Somoza's fall validated the anxieties about the state of the Cold War in the hemisphere – and indeed globally – that the Extreme Right had been harbouring since the mid-1970s and which had grown even more heightened in relation to Central America over the last two years, as traced in the previous chapter. A month after the Revolution, CAL General Secretary Rafael Rodríguez distributed a circular to all CAL and WACL member units regarding recent events in Nicaragua. His words captured much of the Latin American Extreme Right's perception of the situation in the isthmus and the wider Cold War in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. 'Nicaragua is invaded and Central America is directly threatened', he began; it had been victim to a 'conspiracy' that the CAL had denounced 'for years'. This conspiracy had four central elements: first, the Soviet Union, its agents in Cuba and throughout the hemisphere; second, Fidel Castro, who 'after the celebration of the Tricontinental Conference in Havana and the Conference of the Latin American Organization of Solidarity (OLAS), stated and planned the Communist invasion and domination of Latin America'; third, President Carter with his hypocritical 'pro human rights' policy who had betrayed both 'the defense of America and especially the traditional friends of the United States'; and finally, 'those Catholic hierarchs who… insist on being allied to the Communist guerrilla, adopting the false banners of "freedom to the oppressed".' Rodríguez warned that the Nicaraguan Revolution's effects would be 'extended to the whole of the Central American area' and beyond this to Latin America.[27] As per Rodríguez's circular, the Latin American Extreme Right's perception of geopolitical significance of the Nicaraguan Revolution centred around two key elements: the advance of international communism (through the Soviet Union, Cuba, and progressive Catholicism); and the dereliction of duty as leader of the anticommunist bloc on the part of the United States under Carter. The

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[26] Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right', 221. The other main driving force in the unification of the Salvadoran armed Left under the banner of the FMLN was the Cuban government: unification was a central condition for Cuban support to the insurgency. Oñate-Madrazo, 'Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970–1992', 94–95.
[27] CAL Circular Letter No. 9/79, 17 August 1979, Folder 4 – Subject File/ Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Box 104, KDP, HILA.

Extreme Right believed that a coordinated response to the former was essential to compensate for the latter.

Central America: a regional threat

For those across the political spectrum, the fall of Somoza provided a concrete example of what might follow in El Salvador, and then even Guatemala, or, eventually, Honduras. There were of course differences between these cases, with each profoundly shaped by national specificities already laid out in this thesis. However, to the Extreme Right, these differences did not matter. As the quote from the August CIS symposium in the opening lines of this chapter indicates, the fall of Nicaragua, ('the first of the "Central American dominos"') solidified Central America's status as *the* chief arena of the Cold War, of primary concern not just to the Latin American Extreme Right but also their allies within the US New Right. The entire isthmus was now under threat. Going forwards, this reading of the Nicaraguan Revolution would shape how those on the Extreme Right perceived events elsewhere in Central America, particularly in Guatemala and El Salvador.

The Nicaraguan Revolution heightened existing Extreme Right scepticism about the opposition movements elsewhere on the isthmus. At the same CIS symposium in August 1979, General Álvaro Valencia, former commander-in-chief of the Colombian army, used the Nicaraguan example to argue that 'popular fronts' were mere vehicles for communist takeover and could not be trusted; this notion was echoed by the Chilean embassy in Guatemala, which produced a report describing the popular opposition (including the Christian Democrats) in the 'Northern Triangle' of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, as 'infiltrated by subversion' and likely to 'seek to take the path followed in Nicaragua' given the chance.[28] This conviction was strengthened in April 1980, when the resignations of Alfonso Robelo and Violeta Chamorro from the five-person revolutionary junta left the Nicaraguan government in the sole hands of the FSLN, whom the former publicly accused of seeking to turn Nicaragua into a Marxist state.[29] For the Extreme Right, this simply bore out Valencia's prediction that 'when they [the FSLN

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[28] *Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979* (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), 50; EmbaGuatemala, 3 September 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

[29] Terri Shaw, 'Last Non-Sandinista Steps Down From Junta in Nicaragua' *Washington Post,* 23 April 1980.

comandantes] think it is appropriate, the democratic mask will fall down, and a new Cuban style, Russian-manipulated regime will replace the present one.'[30]

For those on the Extreme Right, the presence of a revolutionary Left government in Central America also constituted a direct threat to the rest of Latin America. This concern, as shown in the last chapter, had already been raised before the triumph of the Revolution in July 1979. In January 1980 unknown assassins killed Adolfo Cuellar, head of the Salvadoran WACL and CAL chapter and founding member of CAL. In the circular announcing his death, the CAL – once more through its chief spokesman, Rafael Rodríguez – framed Cuellar's death in international terms. He had been murdered 'by direct orders of International Communism' and 'deserving of the honors of a general killed in action'. [31] This metaphorical battle once more invoked a very broad definition of the communist threat, drawing in Extreme Right concerns about liberation theology and the Salvadoran Catholic Church. According to Rodríguez, Cuellar had been a victim of the war between 'communism and patriotism' playing out in El Salvador's streets, Churches, mass media and government.[32]

In his speech to the WACL conference the following April, Rodríguez elaborated on this analysis. There, he held 'the rural guerrilla directed by the Sandinistas and the Argentine Montoneros, the urban guerrilla in which the Uruguayan Tupamaros appear', the US ambassador and part of the Salvadoran clergy loyal to Archbishop Oscar Romero's legacy 'morally responsible for the assassination of Adolfo Cuellar'.[33] By placing Cuellar's assassination in this broader hemispheric context, Rodríguez's speech reveals how the Latin American Extreme Right conceived of events in El Salvador as intrinsically linked to the regional Cold War struggle. The Extreme Right believed that the Nicaraguan Revolution had placed the entire Central American isthmus – and by extension Latin America as a whole – at risk of the advance of international communism. They believed that this international threat required a robust response.

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[30] Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979 (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), 50.
[31] CAL Circular 001/80, 17 January 1980, Folder 4 – Subject File/Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Box 104, KDP, HILA.
[32] CAL Circular 001/80, 17 January 1980, Folder 4 – Subject File/Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Box 104, KDP, HILA.
[33] 'Reporte presentado por el Profesor Rafael Rodríguez, Secretario General de la Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana ante la Asamblea General del XIII Congreso de la WACL', 25 July 1980, Folder 1 – WACL Conference File 1980, Box 61, KDP, HILA.

Southern Cone Specificities

While the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships shared much of the worldview of the wider Extreme Right regarding the international significance of the Nicaraguan Revolution, events in Nicaragua also prompted reflection on their own specific national contexts. For the Pinochet dictatorship, events in Central America in the tumultuous months of mid-1979 directly intersected with the ongoing process of institutionalisation at home. This process was designed to secure Pinochet's rule and was specifically framed in terms of the ongoing Marxist threat. Following the constitution's approval via a plebiscite of highly questionable legitimacy, Maximiano Errázuriz, a close associate of Jaime Guzmán and a right-wing lawyer, journalist and professor in two of Chile's most prominent universities as well as the *Academia Superior de Seguridad Nacional* (Academy of National Security), expounded on its explicit anticommunist roots. In his preface to *Bases de la Nueva Institucionalidad Chilena*, Errázuriz placed the new constitution within the context of the threats of the age. At the time the previous constitution, dating from 1925, had been written, there were rights that 'the constitution of 1925 did not contemplate, because they were not under threat'; specifically, 'moral, spiritual and family values'. It was only 'when Marxist totalitarianism began to destroy' such values that it was made 'necessary to consider their constitutional protection'. In short, through the creation of a 'protected democracy', the new constitution was explicitly framed as a means to prevent the experience of 1970-1973 ever occurring again; by extension, its legitimacy rested heavily on the notion that the communist threat remained constant and ongoing. In this context, events in Central America played a crucial role.

Just a week after the Nicaraguan Revolution, writing in conservative magazine *Ercilla,* Jaime Guzmán drew an explicit connection between events in Central America and this ongoing process at home. Somoza's regime, he argued, had been weakened by its dependence on the United States, its deep corruption and attendant 'lack of civic conscience', leading to its ultimate downfall. In contrast, the *nueva institucionalidad* and Pinochet's leadership made Chile strong and independent in the face of the Marxist threat.[34] Guzmán would reprise this theme – why the Pinochet regime was not susceptible to the weaknesses that befell Somoza – once again in 1984.[35] Through its actions since September 1973 – from initial repression through radical economic reform and then the *nueva institucionalidad*, the Pinochet dictatorship – or at least its

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[34] Jaime Guzmán, 'El contraste entre Nicaragua y Chile', 25 July 1979, *Ercilla*, accessed via Archivo Fundación Jaime Guzmán, CJG.79.06.

[35] Jaime Guzmán, 'Para que Chile no sea otra Nicaragua', 23 March 1984, *La Segunda*, accessed via Archivo Fundación Jaime Guzmán, CJG 84.10.

most prominent intellectuals – believed they had developed an independent anticommunist model. This model formed a possible blueprint for anticommunist forces in El Salvador and Guatemala to follow in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution. As the Chilean Ambassador to El Salvador wrote in April 1980, Chile constituted 'a visible example of peace, tranquillity, labour freedom and economic and social development for all the countries of Central America'.[36]

The Nicaraguan Revolution and subsequent rising instability in Guatemala and El Salvador provided the Pinochet dictatorship with the opportunity to tout its successful 'model' of anticommunist governance while simultaneously providing the evidence of the ongoing international communist threat necessary to justify the imposition of that model – dictatorship – at home. Indeed, members of the dictatorship emphasised the threat Nicaragua posed to the rest of Latin America accordingly. In March 1980, Chilean foreign minister Hernán Cubillos warned that while 'it is easy to say that it [the threat posed by Nicaragua to the rest of Central America] is far from us, we believe that it is a cancer that is going to spread if someone does not stop it in some way'. He went on to lament the substantial Chilean presence among those 'guerrillas and subversive elements' being trained by Cubans in Panama to come to South America.[37] With the communist threat still so present in the hemisphere, the struggle for 'freedom' against communist totalitarianism, not questions of democratisation, remained the central concern.[38]

For the Argentine dictatorship, events in Central America continued to be perceived as part of the regime's '*guerra sucia sin fronteras'* (dirty war without borders) which had justified Argentine support to the Somoza regime since 1977. The presence of Argentine exiles in Central America underpinned the Argentine conceptualisation of events in the isthmus, with the conflicts there perceived as a direct extension of their 'dirty war' at home. On 8 August 1979, three weeks after the FSLN victory, the Argentine foreign ministry wrote to its embassy in Managua requesting information on Montonero participation in the 'recent revolutionary process'.[39] The embassy's response outlined the presence of an undetermined number of Montonero militants fighting alongside the FSLN, as well as 15-20 doctors and at least one Argentine pilot occupying 'an important post' within the new Sandinista air force.[40] That same

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[36] EmbaSanSalvador, 28 April 1980, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.
[37] Hernán Cubillos, Intervención en "Escuela de Negocios Adolfo Ibáñez", como Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, March 1980, Folder 9 - Speeches and Writings, Speech on foreign affairs, March 1980, Box 1, HCSP, HILA.
[38] 'Pinochet ante la "ofensiva democrática"', Qué Pasa?, No. 435, 16 August 1979.
[39] Cable secreto, Cancillería - EmbArgentina en Managua, 8 August 1979, No. 382/383, CF, MREC.
[40] Cable secreto, Managua, 13 August 1979, No. 404/405, CF, MREC.

month the Argentine embassy in San Salvador forwarded recordings from the pro-guerrilla Costa Rica-based radio station, Noticias del Continente. Broadcast using what the Argentine ambassador reported was equipment donated to Costa Rica by North Korea, the majority of the radio hosts themselves were 'judged by their accents' to be Argentine; and their broadcasts were characterized by 'constant attacks' on Argentina and the ruling 'tyrannies' in that country, Chile and Uruguay.[41]

These broadcasts had also reached Guatemala, drawing the attention of the Argentine ambassador who made a similar report, highlighting the prevalence of Argentine music in the broadcasts and the focus on human rights abuses and the 'peoples' liberation struggle' in the Southern Cone.[42] By October 1980, when the Argentine embassy in Madrid reported a conference in that city involving members of the Chilean MIR (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*, Revolutionary Left Movement), the PRT (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores*, Argentine Communist Party), its armed wing, the ERP (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo,* People's Revolutionary Army), the Salvadoran FDR (*Frente Democrático Revolucionario,* Revolutionary Democratic Front) and the Guatemalan solidarity committee, the connections between the armed struggles in the Southern Cone and in Central America were already abundantly clear.[43] For both Southern Cone dictatorships, as well as those on the Extreme Right more broadly, the Nicaraguan Revolution held enormous international significance and would mark a new phase in the escalation of the situation in Central America, and their role within it.

Looking North: US power in 1979-80

What, then, of the United States? As outlined earlier, the role of US foreign policy was central to the Latin American Extreme Right's diagnosis of the causes of the Nicaraguan Revolution, insofar that the Revolution served as proof that Carter's human rights policy – the central target of Extreme Right activists across the hemisphere and beyond since 1977 – was allowing the expansion of communism worldwide and actively weakening anticommunist forces. As the Extreme Right mounted their transnational response to the instability that spread across Central America in the Revolution's wake, questions of US power and policy remained of central importance.

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[41] Oficio reservado, San Salvador a S.E. el Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, 7 August 1979, No. 359/79, CF, MREC.
[42] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, 9 August 1979, No. 365, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC.
[43] Telegrama ordinario, Madrid, 23 October 1980, AH/0020, DAL, MREC.

Many on the Latin American Extreme Right had initially hoped that Somoza's fall would prompt a change in direction in US foreign policy, and, when this did not occur, had cautiously welcomed US military aid to El Salvador after the October 1979 coup. Yet by 1980, the Extreme Right had become despondent about the possibility of any full reversal of course in the Carter administration's policy in Central America. Instead, US policy continued to represent a threat to the anticommunist struggle. Or, as the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador put it in April 1980, the situation in Central America continued to be aggravated by 'the ostensible intervention of the United States in relation to human rights' – an intervention made 'without recognising that it was opening the door to Marxism in Central America'.[44]

As such, it is critical to note that many of the actions of those on the Extreme Right both within and outside of government in this period were conceived in a direct effort to compensate for the misapplication of US influence. Crucially, these Extreme Rightists were not opposed to US influence *per se* but objected to the ways in which Jimmy Carter in particular had used the United States' historic power in the hemisphere to undermine the very same anticommunist struggle that it had led for so long. To use the example of El Salvador, Aaron Bell has shown how this understanding underpinned Extreme Right activism in opposition to the US-backed land reforms proposed in 1976 and once again in 1979. The Salvadoran Extreme Right 'identified land reform as not only a communist-inspired threat to the very principles of the Salvadoran nation, but also as a program imposed by a foreign power that had seemingly abandoned its own principles, and that was now interfering in Salvadoran affairs to the benefit of the left-wing radicals intent on destroying the country.'[45] As both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships expanded their assistance to the Central American counterinsurgency in 1979-80, they did so at least in part as compensation for the ongoing absence of US anticommunist leadership.

The transnational anticommunist response: a call to arms

The Nicaraguan Revolution prompted a call to arms across the Latin American Extreme Right. With the Sandinista triumph confirming fears about US inaction and with 18 months left on the clock of the Carter administration, its members believed now was the time to take

[44] EmbaSanSalvador, 28 April 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.
[45] Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 194. Bell shows that members of the MLN in Guatemala shared this outlook.

support for the anticommunist cause in El Salvador, and to a lesser extent, Guatemala, to the next level. On 8 November 1979, at the Conference of American Armies (CEA) in Bogotá, Colombia, General Roberto Eduardo Viola, Commander in Chief of the Argentine army called for 'close cooperation in the struggle against communist subversion'. Emphasising that militaries must not remain on the margin of domestic politics, Viola argued that to 'ignore the changes' in the nature of peace and war risked more countries 'succumbing to the clutches of international communism'. Viola's call for greater transnational military collaboration against the 'subversive threat' won the support of military commanders from Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Haiti, and meetings at the summit went on to discuss new training, including 'ideological courses', so that the American militaries had 'a clear vision of the subversive problems that they must confront'.[46]

Viola's speech at the CEA – significant for its institutional setting - was the culmination of a series of declarations calling for greater unity and coordination made by those on the Extreme Right since the WACL conference in Asunción in April 1979. These calls had reached new levels of urgency in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution. As Rafael Rodríguez put it in his August 1979 circular to WACL and CAL members, the anticommunist international was facing 'a stage that will demand more effort, sacrifice and real will for cooperation and solidarity among all Latin American anti-Communists… Let us do all we can… let us help with our utmost efforts whenever the safety of one country, even if it may not be ours, is in danger.'[47]

For the Latin American Extreme Right, the Nicaraguan Revolution was the product of coordinated transnational and international communist aggression. The only commensurate response was one that mirrored the nature of the threat they faced. As General Ramón Díaz Bessone lamented at the CIS conference in August 1979, there existed 'no Organization of Free World Nations… no Free World International' but perhaps now was the time for that to change.[48] These anticommunists faced both a literal struggle against guerrilla insurgency and a political struggle against 'subversion' in all its forms – from liberation theologists to popular front organisations and the long-maligned 'smear campaigns' of the international human rights

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[46] 'Lucha antisubversiva: los ejércitos americanos aprueban un plan argentino' 10 November 1979, *Clarín*.
[47] CAL Circular Letter No. 9/79, 17 August 1979, Folder 4 – Subject File/ Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana, Box 104, KDP, HILA.
[48] Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979 (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), 18.

movement. It was, in the words of Anderson and Anderson, in Central America that 'the World Anti-Communist League would make its stand'.[49]

Both the Chilean and Argentine military dictatorships responded to this call, believing that they had something to offer to the besieged anticommunist forces to the north. Despite their shared diagnosis of the geopolitical threat posed by events in Central America, relations between the two Southern Cone dictatorships remained fractious after the 1978 border dispute, and cooperation in Central America remained largely out of the question. The regimes' responses continued to be shaped by national factors. For the Pinochet dictatorship, Chile's process of institutionalisation provided a playbook to overcome the subversive threat and would offer some military support alongside this political guidance. The Argentine military, which saw Central America as transnational battlefield, were willing to contribute their own material resources on a significant scale. Moreover, developments on the Central American Extreme Right after the Nicaraguan Revolution shaped the form both dictatorships' involvement took.

Developments on the Central American Extreme Right

Before addressing the support provided by the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, it is necessary to understand the development of the Extreme Right in Central America in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution, and, more specifically, the ways in which those on the Extreme Right became further enmeshed into the wider transnational anticommunist network. As shown in the previous chapter, prior to July 1979 the Guatemalan MLN, and Mario Sandoval Alarcón in particular, formed the main nexus for connections between Central America and both the Southern Cone and the World Anti-Communist League. In Guatemala, the Nicaraguan Revolution sparked no major change in this respect; Alarcón remained the unchallenged leader of the MLN and his party – along with the private business organisations with which it was closely associated – the central node connecting Guatemala to the wider transnational anticommunist network. By contrast, in July 1979 the Salvadoran Extreme Right continued to lack a coherent institutional structure. In the months after the Revolution – likely growing directly out of his trip to the Southern Cone in July 1979 – Sandoval Alarcón sought to use his connections to support his brothers-in-arms in El Salvador, and – in the face of the growing 'subversive threat' - connect them to a larger international support network.

[49] Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 120.

In this respect, Sandoval Alarcón was practicing what he had preached at the WACL conference in Asunción in April 1979, where he called for the reorganisation of national anticommunist forces in order to form 'the first anticommunist international'.[50] That spring, Sandoval Alarcón's nephew, the Salvadoran David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval, helped found the *Movimiento Nacionalista Salvadoreño* (MNS). Drawing on the organisations who had come together to oppose the government's proposed agrarian reforms of 1976, the formation of the MNS was the first step in the institutionalisation of El Salvador's Extreme Right.[51] It was not, however, until early October 1979 – after the Nicaraguan Revolution and amidst political turmoil in El Salvador – that the MNS sought Sandoval Alarcón's tutelage to expand its activities. According to Panamá Sandoval's account, around 12 October Sandoval Alarcón recommended that the MNS make contact with sympathetic individuals within the Romero government to win support for their programme. While it is unclear what form this took, these efforts would be almost immediately derailed with the 15 October coup and subsequent ejection of the most significant Extreme-Right individuals from positions of influence.

Although the coup threw the Extreme-Right faction within the military into disarray, it also provided the circumstances for a new stage in transnational anticommunist collaboration. Lacking access to government officials, the MNS adopted a new tack and in late 1979 Panamá Sandoval and his comrades began to make regular visits to Guatemala, where they received advice directly from Sandoval Alarcón. Panamá Sandoval claims it was on one of these trips that Alarcón first mentioned Roberto D'Aubuisson's name and that a few days later, at Sandoval Alarcón's behest, members of the MNS met with D'Aubuisson at the home of Alfredo Mena Lagos, a prominent Salvadoran businessman.[52] Together the MNS and D'Aubuisson assembled the *Frente Amplio Nacional* (FAN, National Broad Front), uniting figures from ANEP, right-wing women's organisations (including the largest, the *Frente Femenino Salvadoreño*, FFS), the *Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales* (Salvadoran Industry Association, ASI) and members of the recently-dissolved ORDEN, among others. The foundation of the FAN drew together these disparate groups under a single banner, and they quite literally paraded their newfound unity in a series of

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[50] Ponencia de la delegación de Guatemala, Partido Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, XII Congreso de la Liga Mundial Anticomunista, Asunción, Paraguay, 23-27 April 1979, R108F1588, CDyA; Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 198.
[51] Panamá Sandoval, *Los guerreros de la libertad*, 36.
[52] Panamá Sandoval, 49; Aaron Bell has cast doubt on Panamá Sandoval's claim that it was Sandoval Alarcón who introduced the MNS to D'Aubuisson. other sources suggest it may have been Alfredo Mena Lagos, which is certainly possible given the location of the meeting. Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 178.

enormous marches through the streets of San Salvador under the banner of the 'Crusade for Peace and Work' (*Cruzada por Paz y Trabajo*) in December 1979.[53]

Perhaps most importantly, from this point – in late 1979 - the existing ties between the Salvadoran Extreme Right and the wider transnational network, discussed in the previous chapter, were brought together under one roof. Men such as Ricardo Fuentes Castellanos, Orlando de Sola and Juan Vicente Maldonado who had attended CIS symposiums in 1977 and 1979 and were intimately involved with El Salvador's most prominent private business organisations, began working alongside individuals closely linked to Extreme Right factions within the Salvadoran politics and the military.[54] Besides Roberto D'Aubuisson, the latter group included senior politicians and their family members, including Ana María Rodríguez Porth of the FFS and her husband, José Antonio Rodríguez Porth, Salvadoran foreign minister until October 1979.[55] The latter Porth was also closely associated with other groups on the Salvadoran Extreme Right. He had negotiated on behalf of ANEP in the successful effort to defeat the 1976 agrarian reform and travelled to Washington D.C. as part of an ANEP-sponsored delegation to defend the results of El Salvador's fraudulent elections in 1977.[56]

Together, these individuals from across the Salvadoran Extreme Right sought to build a political organisation that could both provide direct support to El Salvador's military establishment and organise in the mirror image of the perceived transnational and international communist threat. These individuals and groups' connections to the Southern Cone and the wider transnational anticommunist network – as well as the access provided by their close relationship to Sandoval Alarcón and the MLN - proved critical as they formulated their vision for El Salvador in the year after the October coup.

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[53] Oficio, Embajada de la República de Argentina a MREC, 'Informar sobre manifestación de mujeres', 11 December 1979, No. 573/579, AH/0042/1, DAL, MREC; Oficio, Embajada de la República de Argentina a MREC, 'Informar sobre grandiosa manifestación, 28 December 1979, No. 573/579, AH/0042/1, DAL, MREC.

[54] On Castellanos' support for FAN, see Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 234. On Orlando de Sola, see 'The New American Right Cooks Up a Hot Potato' in Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots* (1983). Juan Vicente Maldonado, a some-time ANEP president, appeared at the August 1979 CIS symposium alongside the Guatemalan Carlos Simmons, a member of Sandoval Alarcón's MLN. 'Inter-American Symposium – 1979, Program' August 1979, Folder 12 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium Correspondence, 1979, Box 12, Records of the Council for Inter-American Security (herein CIS), HILA.

[55] Panamá Sandoval, *Los guerreros de la libertad*, 49–51.

[56] MRE to EmbaSanSalvador, 2 March 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE. Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 144.

Chile: promoting a 'Pinochetazo'

These developments on the Central America Extreme Right most directly impacted Chilean-Salvadoran relations. At first, in the initial months after the Nicaraguan Revolution, the existing, often clandestine ties at the heart of Chilean-Salvadoran relations grew stronger, as the Salvadoran military sought Chilean assistance in the face of the enhanced threat they faced. Building on the request made by Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta in March 1979 for Chilean assistance in an overhaul of the Salvadoran police academy (discussed in the previous chapter), in September 1979 two Salvadoran delegations visited Chile. On 7 September, Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta departed for Chile, accompanied by his senior, Minister for Defence and Public Security, General Federico Castillo Yanes.[57] The pair were followed four days later by the Salvadorean foreign minister, Dr José Antonio Rodríguez Porth.[58] Given its unofficial nature, documentation from Porth's visit is scarce, with Chilean diplomatic correspondence stating only that his motive for travel was 'strictly confidential' and would 'touch upon topics of bilateral interest'.[59] However, the telex from the Chilean embassy confirming the details of his visit came within a minute of another from the Chilean ambassador reporting an audience in the Salvadorean Foreign Ministry where Porth had confirmed the government's intention to increase spending on military personnel and armed forces equipment.[60] This evidence, while limited, points to an immediate and significant increase in Chilean support following the Nicaraguan Revolution.

These clandestine connections to individuals within the Salvadoran government were short-lived. The military coup on 15 October 1979 in El Salvador had fundamentally changed the make-up of the country's government, and correspondingly the nature of the Chilean-Salvadoran relationship. The coup led to the ejection of all three of Chile's recent clandestine visitors from government, with both military officers fleeing to Guatemala alongside President Romero.[61] Crucially, it also placed others sympathetic to the Chilean 'model' outside of state structures, including Roberto D'Aubuisson. Where Guatemala's military rulers represented the correct 'system of government' to combat the subversive threat, the US-supported, reformist governments that followed the October coup in El Salvador provided a solid counterexample.

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[57] EmbaSanSalvador, 3 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Telex, EmbaSanSalvador, 4 September 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[60] Telex, EmbaSanSalvador, 31 August 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[61] EmbaSanSalvador, 6 November 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

Compared to the staunch anticommunism of Romero, those making up the new government were, according to the Chilean ambassador's alarmist reports, 'communists, Christian Democrats, centrists, socialists...' with a strong church influence and who would open the door to groups of the extreme left acting with force.[62]

These judgements were deeply coloured by the Chilean Extreme Right's narrative of Chilean history before 1973. The presence of Christian Democrats in government drew comparisons to Eduardo Frei Montalva's presidency (1964-1970), which had preceded Allende's election (and PDC votes had played a crucial role in the subsequent congressional approval of Allende's victory). In the dictatorship's view, Christian Democracy was thus considered one step away from communism.[63] These fears were merely heightened after the formation of the second JRG in January 1980. The new foreign minister, Fidel Chávez Mena, had in fact lived with Frei while studying at Chile's *Universidad Católica* in the early 1960s, making the connections between the Christian Democrat parties in both countries appear all the more concrete.[64] These parallels did not stop with the PDC; the Chilean embassy also drew comparisons between events in El Salvador and those in Chile during the Allende years. In November 1979, the ambassador described how 'as happened in Chile under the last government, here it is occurring; the university students are wholly dedicated to political activism and subversive actions, supported by their teachers'. The economic story was the same.[65] Like in their own official history of Chile under the Allende government, El Salvador was the target of international communism, and events there were of international significance.

In the face of escalating political conflict into the first half of 1980, the Pinochet dictatorship presented itself an alternative model. Rooted in the conviction of the applicability of its own experience, the Chilean embassy in San Salvador sought to promote Chile's 'political process and the economic development achieved' in the country. This project had the intention of 'informing, representing, observing and obtaining support for our country on all fronts of action, in order to achieve a thorough knowledge of the true image of our current economic and

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62 Ibid.

63 Suspicions about Christian Democracy as an instrument of communism had been voiced long before Allende's election and became incorporated into the dictatorship's historical narrative after 1973. See, for example, Fabio Vidigal Xavier da Silveira, *Frei, el Kerensky chileno*, 4th edn (Buenos Aires: Cruzada, 1968); Marcelo Casals Araya, *La creación de la amenaza roja: del surgimiento del anticomunismo en Chile a la 'campaña del terror' de 1964* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2016), Ch. 5.

64 EmbaSanSalvador, 1 February 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.

65 EmbaSanSalvador, 13 November 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.

social development, of its internal stability and political development' in order to 'bring together both nations for the benefit of their own activities derived from international activities.'[66] While these aims were partially rooted in the dictatorship's long-term goals of fostering a more positive international image, when couched in discussion of the situation in El Salvador and Chile's role in supporting the armed forces, there is little doubt the ruling junta genuinely believed they had valuable advice to give to those who were receptive to a 'Southern Cone' solution to the ongoing conflict in El Salvador, and subsequently sought to foster relationships with individuals and groups who were sympathetic to that vision.

While the October coup had successfully removed many of the most senior right-wing voices within the Salvadoran military, the institutional links between the Chilean and Salvadoran armed forces remained strong and military relations had 'not changed in the fundamental sense'.[67] A month after the coup, the Chilean ambassador once again raised the possibility of cementing Chilean military influence through a mission to organise the training of Salvadoran security forces under one roof, as well as an increase in provision of scholarships to Chile for officers at every level of the security forces.[68] Although Chilean documents shed no further light on the fate of these discussions, it appears likely that they bore fruit: in June 1980 the Argentine ambassador, in a discussion of that country's aid to El Salvador, described the extensive Chilean influence over the Salvadoran military derived from 'the sending of instructors' from Chile to El Salvador.[69] While this represented a significant advance, it was outside of government that the Pinochet dictatorship found the most sympathetic reception for its vision for El Salvador.

As the previous chapter explored, the greatest admirers of the Chilean dictatorship in El Salvador lay beyond government, within the Extreme Right groups that were now rapidly institutionalising under the umbrella of the FAN. Faced with a Christian Democrat-dominated government held up by US support, these Extreme Rightists sought to cultivate their own sources of political and military support.[70] With the help and connections of their Guatemalan benefactor, Mario Sandoval Alarcón, in March 1980 a small FAN delegation, led by David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval and accompanied by Sandoval Alarcón's nephew, Carlos Midence,

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[66] EmbaSanSalvador, 28 April 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.
[67] EmbaSanSalvador, 18 Dec. 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[68] EmbaSanSalvador, 13 November 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE.
[69] Cable secreto, El Salvador, 19 June 1980, No. 482-485, CF, MREC.
[70] Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 198.

travelled south, visiting Paraguay, Chile and Argentina. In Chile, the group were hosted by Gustavo Alessandri Valdés, Chilean delegate to WACL and CAL, and later military-appointed mayor of Santiago and founder of the right-wing party *Renovación Nacional* (National Renewal). Panamá Sandoval related how these countries' experiences provided instruction to the fledgling FAN: 'fighting the nightmare of international terrorism, they seemed to suffer what we were suffering, but in advance.'[71] Given the direct involvement of the Chilean junta in Chilean participation in WACL and CAL, there is little doubt that this trip took place with the knowledge of, and was likely directed by, the upper echelons of the Chilean dictatorship.

While it is difficult to substantiate the nature of the instruction provided to Panamá Sandoval's group in Chile, these connections between Chile and the FAN were thrown into sharp – and relatively public - relief on the occasion of Roberto D'Aubuisson's attempted coup in May 1980. Made up largely of former army officers ejected from their positions in October 1979, among the coup plotters was none other than long-time ally of Chile, former Sub-Secretary of Defence Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta.[72] In an interview following the coup D'Aubuisson expressed his high esteem for the Chilean government, with accompanying reporting citing the March 1980 FAN trip to the Southern Cone and stating that they received 'ideological and economic support' there.[73] In his report on D'Aubuisson's statements post-coup, the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador described how there were those in El Salvador who 'continuously speak of a "*pinochetazo*" in the sense of imposing an exclusively military government in order to impose order, act firmly against subversion and bring about the structural changes that the country requires'. The ambassador attributed this positive impression of Chile to D'Aubuisson's public declarations, which had appealed to the Centre and the Right 'making them aware that the Southern Cone countries' position and solution would be correct for the resolution of the Salvadoran case'.[74]

The political influence of Chile's greatest admirers on the Salvadoran Extreme Right was at least partially restored in the wake of the failed May 1980 coup, and it is in the links between the Pinochet dictatorship and these individuals on the Extreme Right that lies perhaps the most

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[71] Ibid.
[72] 'Frustrado Golpe de Estado en El Salvador', *El País*, 3 May 1980.
[73] EmbaSanSalvador, 27 May 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.
[74] EmbaSanSalvador, 27 May 1980, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE. This section draws heavily on arguments made in Avery, 'Promoting a "Pinochetazo": The Chilean Dictatorship's Foreign Policy in El Salvador during the Carter Years, 1977–81'.

important development in Chilean-Salvadoran relations in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution. Conversations between these groups would continue at the CAL IV meeting in Buenos Aires in September 1980, and Chile would remain and important role model as FAN soon evolved into ARENA, a fully-fledged Extreme Right political party.

In comparison to the situation in El Salvador, the Guatemalan government remained relatively stable in the eighteen months after the Nicaraguan Revolution, despite rising guerrilla activity. As a result, the nature of the relationship between the Pinochet dictatorship and Guatemala did not fundamentally change. Rather, with Guatemala now at greater risk from 'subversion', Chilean support for the Guatemalan government and Extreme Right intensified. In the initial aftermath of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala emphasised that country's significance within the regional context: the 'forces of totalitarianism' understood Guatemala's status as the largest and 'most powerful' country on the isthmus, and might target it accordingly, adopting the strategy of 'first bringing down the "the big one", after which the smaller ones, El Salvador and Honduras, would fall easily'. Nevertheless, in part owing to its 'system of government', he wrote, Guatemala was the strongest 'bulwark against Marxism and leftist forces' on the isthmus.[75]

The Chilean ambassador attributed that relative stability to the similarities between the Guatemalan regime and Chile's own. Careful to emphasise the supposed legitimacy of the elections that had brought Lucas García to power in 1978, the Chilean ambassador pointed to the support the government enjoyed within private business, the 'pursuit of strong and protected democracy' and the 'determined fight against subversion and communist infiltration' as factors uniting the Chilean and Guatemalan governments. This Chilean approval for the 'system of government' in Guatemala would be important in defining the channels through which subsequent support took, forming a clear distinguishing factor between the Guatemalan and Salvadoran cases after 1979.

The Chilean ambassador's esteem for the Guatemalan government was not, however, free of paternalistic or racist connotations, and Chilean superiority continued to be implied, if not always made fully explicit, throughout embassy correspondence. As the ambassador reminded Foreign Ministry officials back home, the Guatemalan government had to manage a

[75] EmbaGuatemala, 20 July 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.

country where 'more than 50 percent of the population was pure indigenous, neglected, and with low living conditions'; Chile and Guatemala experienced 'distinct national realities' with vastly differing levels of development.[76] Although Guatemalan armed forces were already pursuing a successful counterinsurgency strategy in comparison to their neighbours, Chilean diplomats believed they could still learn from the Chilean model, in both political and military terms.

The largest increase in direct Chilean support to Guatemala after July 1979 came through police training, illustrating the increased focus on improving counterinsurgent capabilities in the face of the renewed 'subversive threat'. In October 1979, Cesar Mendoza Durán, junta member and Director of the *Carabineros,* invited his Guatemalan counterpart, Minister of the Interior Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz, to visit Chile the following month to see *Carabinero* infrastructure and learn more about the organisation of the force.[77] According to the testimony of his then-press secretary and – it would later transpire - undercover guerrilla spy, Elías Barahona y Barahona, Alvarez Ruiz returned from the trip enthused by the training the *Carabineros* were prepared to offer Guatemalan security forces. According to Barahona y Barahona, 75 members of the Guatemalan police departed for training in Chile by the end of 1979.[78] It is worth noting that this represents a significant difference from the 14 students that the Chilean embassy recorded as the total number of Guatemalans across all branches of military training in Chile in January 1980, although Chilean embassy correspondence does show a steady uptick in police training scholarships made available in the first ten months of 1980.[79]

Sources beyond Chile suggest that this deal on police training also involved the sending of Chilean police trainers to work in Guatemala. In February 1980, in the wake of the Spanish Embassy Massacre, the Argentine ambassador raised the presence of 'Chilean police instructors training the local forces' as a possible reason for the Chilean ambassador's refusal to condemn

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[76] EmbaGuatemala, 2 January 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.
[77] Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores to EmbaGuatemala, 9 October 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES., Telex/Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[78] Documents relating to Barahona y Barahona's revelations, widely publicised in September 1980 and afterwards, are held in the Centro Académico de la Memoria de Nuestra América at the Colegio de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales of the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México and are accessible online. The above is drawn from these documents which are uncategorised within a larger file: 'Elías Barahona. Guerrillero infiltrado en el régimen de Lucas García. Guatemala, 1980-1982', T GT3, Fondo A, Centro Académico de la Memoria de Nuestra América (herein CAMeNA), Mexico City, Mexico, accessed online https://selser.uacm.edu.mx/expedientes.php.
[79] For the Chilean embassy's figures, see EmbaGuatemala, 2 January 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE; on police scholarships in 1980, see EmbaGuatemala, 6 October 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.

the Guatemalan security forces' unprecedented attack on the Spanish embassy.[80] Naturally, the Chilean ambassador's report on the events in the Spanish embassy made no mention of any Chilean interests in Guatemala, instead faithfully parroting the Guatemalan government's line that the peaceful protestors had in fact been guerrillas planning an uprising, and even implying that the Spanish ambassador himself may have been involved in those plans.[81] Just as they had on the occasion of the Panzós Massacre two years earlier, the Chilean embassy continued to wilfully perceive events in Guatemala through the lens of the wider ideological struggle, dismissing even the most irrefutable evidence of the security forces' violent repression of peaceful protesters.

Aside from this increase in assistance to Guatemala's National Police, in December 1979, the Guatemalan government requested ten further scholarships from the Chilean armed forces, ranging from pilot training to military engineering.[82] The Chilean embassy's Plan of Action for 1980 accordingly resolved to 'detect' Guatemala's 'needs' in light of the Guatemalan armed forces' 'appreciation' of their Chilean counterpart and 'the way in which the military government had led the country'.[83] While this represents the extent of direct evidence of Chilean-Guatemalan military collaboration extant in the Chilean Foreign Ministry archives, once more Argentine documents give tantalising glimpses of further collaboration outside of diplomatic channels. In May 1980, the Pinochet dictatorship hosted the Conference of Commanders in Chief of American Air Forces (*Conferencia de Comandantes en Jefe de Fuerzas Aereas Americanas*, CONJEFAMER) in Santiago. The Vice-Minister of Defence Colonel Salazar Asturias headed the Guatemalan delegation and had lunch with the Argentine ambassador to Guatemala and the Argentine military attaché upon his return to Guatemala. There he divulged some details of discussions, including those surrounding the military threat posed by Cuba and 'the danger' facing Latin America. The conference also, as we will see, included discussion of future Argentine aid to the Guatemalan security sources.[84] It is very probable, given what we know about the increased Chilean training of Guatemalan police forces, that similar conversations also took place with Chilean military personnel.

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80 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 8 February 1980, No. 77/78/79, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC.
81 EmbaGuatemala, 4 February 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.
82 MRE to Ministro de Defensa Nacional, 'Solicitud de becas Gobierno de Guatemala', 4 December 1979, Vol. 526, Min Def, Fondo Ministerios/1979/AMRE.
83 EmbaGuatemala, 18 April 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.
84 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 2 June 1980, No. 389-395, CF, MREC.

While the 'similarities' between then Chilean and Guatemalan governments meant that much of the relationship between the two countries occurred through state channels, this did not equate to a complete reduction in the importance of the transnational ties cultivated through WACL, CAL and CIS, among other forums, in the years before the Nicaraguan Revolution. In the months after July 1979, the transnational ties between Chilean and Guatemalan Extreme Right intellectuals remained strong, both providing a source of solidarity and facilitating the promotion of the Chilean political model in Guatemala. In October 1979, for example, Manuel Ayau, Rector of the Universidad Francisco Marroquín, MLN politician, member of the Mont Pelerin Society and active participant in the Council for Inter-American Security (CIS) symposiums, hosted Dr Gustavo Cuevas Farren, Chilean law professor and vocal proponent of the 1980 constitution, in Guatemala City, where he spoke about Chile's ongoing 'institutional process'.[85] Three months later, Pedro Ibáñez Ojeda, fellow member of the Mont Pelerin Society, member of the Chilean State Council and whose son, Gonzalo, played a central role in CIS, wrote to Ayau expressing support for him and the wider Guatemalan Extreme Right (his 'group of friends'). 'Your struggle is also our struggle, and if we can do anything from here, please write to me without hesitation', declared Ibáñez.[86] These transnational ties likely helped facilitate the expansion in direct material aid outlined above.

Moreover, it was, of course, a Guatemalan – Carlos Midence – who played a critical role in facilitating the relationship between the Pinochet dictatorships and the FAN in El Salvador, accompanying Panamá Sandoval on the March 1980 tour of the Southern Cone. Moreover, three months later, in early June 1980, Sandoval Alarcón himself visited Chile once again. A week ahead of his arrival, the Guatemalan foreign ministry informed the Chilean embassy in Guatemala of the trip and requested that it make the Chilean government aware of his impending arrival, and also inform junta member Admiral José Toribio Merino, his host in both 1977 and on the eve of the Nicaraguan Revolution in early July 1979. Sandoval Alarcón also expressed his desire to speak with Pinochet.[87] Despite lacking any formal position within the Guatemalan government (and indeed, as the Chilean embassy mentioned, technically a 'leader of the opposition'), this visit was clearly quasi-official in nature. As the Chilean embassy in

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[85] EmbaGuatemala, 10 October 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1979/AMRE.
[86] Letter, Gustavo Ibáñez Ojeda to Manuel Ayau, 4 December 1979, Colección Pedro Ibáñez Ojeda, Caja No. 61 Correspondencia A a E, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, 52, https://repositorio.uai.cl/handle/20.500.12858/290 accessed 9 August 2021.
[87] Telegrama reservado, EmbaGuatemala to Subsec, 27 May 1980, Oficios, ORD., Telex/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.

Guatemala confirmed, Sandoval Alarcón provided support to the Lucas García government and the anticommunist struggle and they had been informed of his visit by the Guatemalan Foreign Ministry.[88] Indeed, Sandoval Alarcón himself had prepared a 'complete report on subversion and the global, Central American, and Nicaraguan situations' for the Guatemalan delegation to circulate at the CEA in November 1979, illustrating the links he – and the MLN – continued to possess with the Guatemalan armed forces.[89]

While the Chilean paper trail on Sandoval Alarcón's visit runs dry after his departure from Guatemala, the Argentine ambassador in Guatemala reported that while in Chile the MLN leader had given a blistering speech on the US 'intervention' in Guatemala's internal affairs and 'indirectly supporting the subversive groups'.[90] Once again, due to the paucity of Chilean sources it is difficult to ascertain any precise outcome of this trip, but regardless it illustrates the ongoing connections between Chile and Guatemala through the wider transnational network. Overall, there is little doubt that in the months after the Nicaraguan Revolution Chilean concern for, and willingness to provide aid to, the Guatemalan government increased exponentially in light of the new, more serious, 'subversive threat'. While military connections remained the central channel through which these relations occurred, Chile's ongoing transnational connections with the Guatemalan Extreme Right remained of central importance, particularly in the vital connections they helped forge with the Salvadoran Extreme Right over this period.

Argentina: a realignment of priorities

For the Argentine dictatorship, the Nicaraguan Revolution led to a re-evaluation and intensification of Argentine involvement in Central America. Prior to the Revolution, Argentine advisors working alongside Somoza's National Guard had been a significant element of the physical Argentine presence in the region and in July 1979, upon taking Managua's Inter-Continental hotel, Sandinista forces captured three Argentine military officers. By this point, the Nicaraguan Defence Ministry was also $7.7 million in debt to Argentine firm EDESA for arms purchased on credit during the Somoza regime.[91] In the wake of the Sandinista victory, the Nicaraguan revolutionary government cited this support for the previous regime as the reason

[88] Telegrama reservado, EmbaChile, 29 May 1980, Oficios, ORD., Telex/Guatemala/1980/AMRE.
[89] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 19 September 1979, No. 444-446, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC.
[90] Cable, Guatemala, 9 June 1980, No. 413, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC.
[91] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 77–78, 82–83.

for their decision to rename a school named after the Argentine republic (*Centro Escolar República Argentina*), setting the tone for Argentine-Nicaraguan relations going forwards.[92]

In December 1979, having lost their base in Nicaragua and amidst increasing political violence in both El Salvador and Guatemala, the Argentine junta ordered a review into the Argentine presence in Central America.[93] In a signal of intent, in March 1980 the Argentine military established a new military attaché position responsible for Guatemala and El Salvador; by October 1980, the General Staff proposed shifting further responsibility to this position from the Argentine embassy in Panama (the headquarters of the Argentine military on the isthmus), increasing representation for the different branches of the Argentine armed forces.[94] That same year, the Argentine foreign ministry created a new Department for Central America and the Caribbean in 1980, separate from the wider Department for Latin America, reflecting the growing geopolitical importance of the region.[95]

While a substantial part of Argentine involvement in Central America after the Nicaraguan Revolution revolved around the organisation of the first *contra* forces from a new base in neighbouring Honduras, less well known is the concurrent expansion of the Argentine presence in Guatemala and El Salvador.[96] In both countries, Argentine support for the counterinsurgency expanded through a combination of transnational channels and the reallocation of resources from Nicaragua with more direct bilateral assistance. Notably, as before July 1979, this assistance remained almost entirely clandestine in nature, fully divorced from the Argentine regime's public stance on Central America. Yet where Chilean support in large part centred around the form or system of government that the Central American republics adopted, Argentine support was more directly focused on aiding the counterinsurgency itself. As the Argentine Sub-Secretary for Foreign Relations, Commodore Carlos Cavandoli put it while meeting with Guatemalan foreign minister Castillo Valdez on a trip to Guatemala in May 1980,

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[92] Cable secreto, Managua, 7 August 1979, No. 382, CF, MREC.
[93] Acta No. 125, Reunión de Junta Militar, 19 December 1979, Tomo IV, Actas de la Dictadura, 41.
[94] EmbaGuatemala, 11 March 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE; Annex to Acta No, 156, Reunión de la Junta Militar, 14 October 1980, Tomo IV, Actas de la Dictadura, 138.
[95] Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 105–6.
[96] The best account of the Argentine role in the foundation of the contras remains Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*; On Argentine-Guatemalan relations in this period see Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)'; Rostica, 'La Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana. Las conexiones civiles y militares entre Guatemala y Argentina (1972-1980)'.

Guatemala was facing an 'identical struggle against terrorism' to that fought in Argentina; Argentine support increased in this context.[97] These differences, while subtle, reflect the differences in the dictatorships' underlying ideologies discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

The area where Argentine aid to Guatemala had perhaps the most concrete impact in the year after the Nicaraguan Revolution was in the provision of police and intelligence training (although other scholarships were also granted in this period).[98] Arrangements for this increased support took place in late 1979, in line with the parallel expansion of Chilean assistance. In mid-November, on the same trip that he visited Chile, the Guatemalan Minister of the Interior Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz stopped in Buenos Aires, where he toured the facilities of the *Policía Federal*.[99] While the details of the visit are not recorded in the Argentine Foreign Ministry archives, the following month, the *Policía Federal* advised the Argentine embassy in Guatemala that they had sent a brochure to the Guatemalan police authorities, describing the courses they could offer to Guatemalan trainees.[100] A copy of what is in all likelihood the first 18 pages of this very brochure is held in the Guatemalan National Police Archives. The 'Annual Scholarship Plan for Latin American Police Forces' detailed extensive counterinsurgency training offered in Argentina, including specialisations in communications (communication systems, radio transmission and reception, electronic devices) as well as teaching in intelligence, geopolitics, and psychology.[101]

It is clear that the Guatemalan military accepted this Argentine offer of support in one form or another as the nature of the training detailed in the brochure delivered in late 1979 tallies with the testimony of senior figures in the Guatemalan armed forces on the Argentine influence on Guatemalan counterinsurgency practice in this period. In interviews conducted by Jennifer Schirmer, members of G-2 (Guatemalan military intelligence) testified that it was the Argentines 'who trained us a lot in intelligence', introducing the Guatemalans to the use of new technologies and techniques. Central among these tactics was the use of an Israeli computer system, installed

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[97] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 6 May 1980, No. 313, AH/0042.2, DAL, MREC.
[98] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, 20 August 1979, No. 380, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC; Telegrama ordinario, Departamento Asuntos Culturales to Guatemala, 20 December 1979, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC.
[99] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 10 November 1979, Cable no. 539-541, AH/0600 vol. 89, DC, MREC.
[100] MREC, Departmento América Latina to Guatemala, 14 December 1979, No. 3896, AH/0031, DAL, MREC.
[101] Plan anual de becas año 1980 para Policías Latinoamericanos (18 páginas), doc no. 1377393, Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (AHPN), Guatemala City, Guatemala, accessed online via https://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu/, accessed 23 January 2022.

in 1980, alongside sophisticated Argentine computer network analysis to monitor electricity and water usage in Guatemala City, allowing the army to 'zero in on buildings with high electricity and water bills or overnight electrical or water surges, where it was assumed clandestine meetings were taking place or an illegal printing press was in operation, and provide address' which were subsequently raided.[102]

This direct support to the Guatemalan military also included an Argentine readiness to provide arms sales, a topic discussed by the Argentine ambassador with the Vice-Minister of Defence, Colonel Salazar Asturias, in June 1980 (after his trip to the Conference of Commanders in Chief of American Air Forces) and followed by a report that July of the Guatemalan intention to spend all of its remaining armed forces funding for the fiscal year on munitions and helicopters for the air force.[103] Later that year, the Guatemalan Army Chief of Staff, General Benedicto Lucas García (brother of the president), arranged a visit to Argentina that November to sound out the possibility of buying from Argentine sources.[104]

Once more, this Argentine military support contrasted sharply with the Argentine Foreign Ministry's official line on the bilateral relationship with Guatemala. As arms sales increased, Argentine diplomats continued to emphasise more benign assistance, such as donations of grain. This reflected divisions within the Argentine dictatorship between more moderate and hard-line factions, with the latter dominating Argentine assistance to the counterinsurgency in Central America. The Argentine response to the Spanish Embassy Massacre in January 1980 is a case in point. Unlike the Chilean ambassador, who proved all too ready to parrot the Extreme Right's line that the occupants of the embassy were disguised guerrillas and that the Spanish ambassador himself was a 'leftist militant', the Argentine ambassador joined with other foreign delegations to condemn Guatemalan government action and described events in the embassy with greater neutrality and accuracy: a violation of international law.[105] When the Guatemalan government requested that Argentina represent its interests in Spain following the rupture in Guatemalan-Spanish relations in the wake of the

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[102] Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 161.
[103] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 2 June 1980, No. 389-395, CF, MREC.
[104] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 21 July 1980, No. 486, CF, MREC.
[105] The description of the Spanish ambassador as a leftist militant is quoted in an Argentine oficio and attributed to Lionel Sisniega, second-in-command in the MLN. Cable, Guatemala, 6 February 1980, No. 8827, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC. For the Argentine ambassador's opinion and response to the matter, see Cable secreto, Guatemala, 2 February 1980, No. 49-52, CF, MREC; Cable secreto, Guatemala, 8 February 1980, No. 77/78/79, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC.

massacre, the Argentine government politely declined, citing the 'numerous international problems' that Argentina faced, among them the 'international smear campaign' and ongoing 'accusations of human rights violations'.[106] Conscious of the ongoing need to protect its beleaguered international reputation, the Argentine dictatorship sought to use transnational links to provide further support, reproducing the existing dissonance between Argentine foreign policy as conducted through the embassies and the actual actions of Argentine military operatives in Central America.

In the period after July 1979, the Argentine military also took increasingly direct control of Argentine participation in the wider transnational anticommunist network, marking a transition from the situation in the two years before, where the majority of Argentine delegates in forums such as WACL, CAL and CIS – such as Germán Adolfo Justo - were individuals linked to, but not formally part of, the military dictatorship. This transition involved both the institutionalisation and expansion of the roles of individuals already involved in these networks and the insertion of current or former members of the Argentine military into positions of power in relation to transnational organisations, most importantly through the figure of General Carlos Guillermo Suárez Mason, who had directed Argentine assistance to the Somoza regime and who, by late 1979, controlled Argentine participation in WACL and CAL, acting as chair for the upcoming CAL conference in Buenos Aires in September 1980.

Another key example of this co-option of wider transnational networks by the Argentine military is the aforementioned presence of General Ramón Díaz Bessone at the CIS symposium of August 1979. As discussed in the previous chapters, Argentine involvement in the earlier iterations of the symposium in 1975 and 1977 was minimal, in contrast to the deep involvement of Chileans such as Gonzalo Ibáñez. In contrast, Díaz Bessone represented the most Extreme Right faction within the senior ranks of the Argentine military: in December 1975, four months ahead of the coup that would bring the Argentine military dictatorship to power, the US embassy in Buenos Aires identified Díaz Bessone, alongside Suárez Mason, as among the hardliners within the senior ranks of the Argentine armed forces pushing for an 'out-and-out *golpe*'.[107] After

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[106] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 2 February 1980, No. 49-52, CF, MREC; Cable secreto, 4 February 1980, No. 121, CF, MREC; Cable secreto, EGUAT, 12 February 1980, No. 38, AH/0039/1, DAL, MREC. The Argentine government did later support Guatemala's position on this issue in the United Nations. Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 106.
[107] Telegram, AmEmbassy Buenos Aires to State Department, 29 December 1975, DOCID-32735131, NW 52968, April 2019 Declassification, Argentina Declassification Project.

March 1976, Díaz Bessone led the dictatorship's newly-established Ministry of Planning, a body with a broad remit for directing *el proceso.* Yet he left government in December 1977 after coming to blows with President Videla and Minister of the Economy José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz over both his preference for state planning and his rabid anticommunism, leading him to constantly propose war against the Soviet Union.[108] Thus although Díaz Bessone held no formal government post by 1979, he remained close to Suárez Mason, and at CIS he represented the very same faction of the Argentine military leadership that directly controlled Argentine involvement in Central America. At CIS, he mixed directly with individuals closely linked to the Central American Extreme Right, with Sandoval Alarcón's close associates Manuel Ayau and Carlos Simmons chief among them.[109]

As the Argentine military expanded its presence in Central America, it also repurposed and expanded the infrastructure it had previously used to provide support to Somoza's National Guard. In Ariel Armony's account, in the wake of the Revolution groups of ex-guardsmen, as well as Argentine operatives, fled Nicaragua for Guatemala, where they were warmly received by Sandoval Alarcón and, through him, the military dictatorship. While some of these set to work organising what would become the first *contra* forces, others sought to root out Argentine exiles working alongside the Left and 'collaborated with the military regime in the repression of leftist organizations'. Guatemala also served as a base to carry out similar tasks in El Salvador and Honduras.[110] These Argentines were led by Colonel Santiago Hoya (other aliases included: Santiago Villegas, José Ollas), who, alongside Colonel José Oswaldo Riveiro would also command Argentine involvement in contra forces from Honduras.[111]

Among the rest of the team were Alfredo Zarattini, the former Tacuara militant who had been absorbed into Battalion 601 and had represented Argentina at the WYACL conference in Managua in May 1979 while acting as an advisor to the Somoza regime, and his fellow former Tacuara militant, Juan Martín Ciga Correa (introduced in chapter two), who had also been in

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108 Telegram, AmEmbassy Buenos Aires to State Department, 6 October 1976, DOCID-32735130, NW 52968, April 2019 Declassification, Argentina Declassification Project; Cisneros and Escudé eds., *Historia general de las relaciones exteriores de la República Argentina*, Volume XIV, Capítulo 68: El régimen militar (1976-1983), Introducción.
109 'Inter-American Symposium – 1979, Program' August 1979, Folder 12 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium Correspondence, 1979, Box 12, CIS, HILA.
110 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 94.
111 Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino*, 290; Rostica, 'La Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana. Las conexiones civiles y militares entre Guatemala y Argentina (1972-1980)', 319.

Nicaragua, working as an instructor in the *Escuela Entrenamiento Básico de Infantería* (EEBI, Infantry Basic Training School) assisting Somoza's National Guard. According to Armony, these operatives posed as members of Argentine firms *Bridas* and *El Ganadero*, with Battalion 601 operations remaining in Guatemala until late 1981, with their payment arranged through one Major (ret.) Hugo Miori Pereyra, pointing to another WACL connection.[112] According to CAL documents, Pereyra became involved in CAL in 1979, while Pro-Secretary of the Legislative Advisory Commission in Argentina. Having attended the WACL conference in Asunción in April 1979, Miori Pereyra soon became leader of the Argentine WACL/CAL chapter, presiding over the delegation at the WACL conference in Geneva the following July, and playing a central role in the organisation of the IV CAL Congress in Buenos Aires in September 1980.[113] Both Miori Pereyra and Suárez Mason were members of the Italian masonic lodge, P-2, while the former was also linked to Díaz Bessone through connections to the Unification Church.[114]

Here, once more, Mario Sandoval Alarcón appears to have acted as the central node in the wider transnational network. In June 1980, on the same trip that he visited Chile, Sandoval Alarcón travelled to Argentina and met with President Videla.[115] While it is once again difficult to ascertain the topic of conversation, it is likely it related to ongoing Argentine activity in Central America. Three months later, Sandoval Alarcón returned to Buenos Aires once more, this time accompanied by three prominent members of the Salvadoran Extreme Right - Roberto D'Aubuisson (at this point living in exile in Guatemala), Ernesto Panamá Sandoval and Luis Ángel Lagos - to attend the IV CAL Congress.

At the Congress, the connections between the Argentine military, and Battalion 601 in particular, and the Central American Extreme Right were laid bare. With official endorsements from the military dictatorships of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia, the IV CAL Congress brought together many of the characters that have already featured in this thesis. Hugo Miori Pereyra was the coordinator of the Congress, with Suárez Mason acting as chair. Congress proceedings were funded by WACL and the Argentine army general staff.[116] CAL stalwart Germán Adolfo Justo and Battalion 601 operative Alfredo Zarattini were among the other

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112 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 94, 98, 162.
113 CAL Circular No. 4/82, 27 June 1982, R052F0554, CDyA.
114 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 259 (98).
115 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 9 June 1980, No. 409/10, CF, MREC.
116 CAL Circular No. 4/82, 27 June 1982, R052F0554, CDyA; Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 147; Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 162–63.

members of the Argentine organising committee.[117] Among attendees from the United States were John Carbaugh, aide to Senator Jesse Helms.[118] During discussion, concerns about the future of Central America dominated. In one resolution, delegates called upon 'all the truly anticommunist governments of Latin America' to expel all Jesuits with immediate effect, branding them 'Marxist neocolonisers'. In another, the Congress condemned the Nicaraguan government for its part in 'the communization of Central America'.[119]

By the autumn of 1980, the Argentine army had successfully used existing transnational connections to Guatemala through WACL and CAL to coordinate their physical presence in that country to help 'combat subversion' and forge direct links with the Guatemalan Extreme Right and military, bypassing their own embassy. These methods allowed the dictatorship to give covert support to the Extreme Right in Central America while retaining a degree of plausible deniability that was essential to their ongoing efforts to recuperate Argentina's international reputation.

These transnational ties to Guatemala were instrumental in the concurrent expansion of Argentine support to the counterinsurgency in El Salvador after July 1979. Where Argentine support to the Guatemalan military was well established prior to the Nicaraguan Revolution, in the Salvadoran case, the Sandinista triumph acted as a catalyst for the escalation of Argentine involvement. According to Ariel Armony, the Romero government in El Salvador requested support from Argentine intelligence experts in the [northern hemisphere] summer of 1979, and advisers were provided in response.[120] His account tallies with other available evidence, including Chilean embassy reports of Argentine activity and Roberto D'Aubuisson's own account of Argentine assistance as told to the journalist Craig Pyes.[121] As in Guatemala, this Argentine presence was coordinated by Battalion 601, and in the Salvadoran case, directed by Zarattini, who, as we know, was resident in neighbouring Guatemala by the autumn of 1979.[122]

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117 Cersósimo, '"El Proceso fue liberal": Los tradicionalistas católicos argentinos y el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1983)', 295.

118 CAL Circular No. 4/82, 27 June 1982, R052F0554, CDyA; Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 147; Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 162–63.

119 'Recomendación del Congreso Anticomunista' 4 September 1980, *ABC*, R231F0158, CDyA.

120 Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 84.

121 Oficio, Informe II Semestre 1979 – Apreciación Annual, 13 November 1979, Oficios, SEC.RES. ORD., El Salvador/1979/AMRE; Craig. Pyes and Laurie. Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Albuquerque Journal, 1983), 3.

122 EmbaSanSalvador, 13 November 1979, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1979/AMRE. Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 87.

The fall of the Romero government in El Salvador in October 1979 did not have the same impact on Argentine-Salvadoran relations as it had in the Chilean case. This owed to three principal reasons: first, as the previous chapter showed, the Argentine dictatorship had made a much more modest investment in relations with El Salvador in the 1977-79 period; there was less to lose. Second, where these relations had deepened in the short period between July and October 1979, they had done so based more on transnational connections to the Salvadoran Extreme Right, rather than to the government itself. Finally, the Argentine dictatorship did not share the Chileans' suspicion of Christian Democracy, given the PDC's minimal role in Argentine domestic politics prior to the 1980s. While the Argentine embassy in El Salvador expressed scepticism about the direction of the new government – raising concern about the increased activity of 'subversive groups' and lamenting the dissolution of ORDEN – the ambassador did not see the new ruling junta *in itself* as part of a wider communist conspiracy.[123]

Over the first half of 1980, the Argentine military presence in El Salvador increased, driven by senior Extreme Right figures in the Salvadoran military as well as Extreme Rightists now outside of government. In February 1980, the Argentine ambassador discussed potential Argentine training for the Salvadoran security forces with Defence Minister Colonel José Guillermo García, describing how such training would draw on the Argentine armed forces' 'experience in the struggle against subversion and terrorism', showing how the Argentine military conceived of events in Central America as an extension of the same supposed 'Dirty War' that they fought at home.[124] While, as ever, details of the subsequent Argentine deployment to El Salvador are sketchy at best in Foreign Ministry records, it is clear that the Argentine presence in El Salvador increased between March and May 1980.

In a series of cables between 8 and 10 March, the Argentine ambassador transmitted instructions on the steps that the Cancillería needed to take to accredit Argentine 'experts' due to arrive in the country, outlining the need for passports that would allow them to 'enter and exit the country during their mission', and seeking details on the quantity of 'arms and projectiles' that would be arriving with them, so as to ensure that they passed through customs with ease. These instructions came with direct reference to 'recent events in Bogotá', very likely a reference to Viola's vocal commitment to aiding other Latin American militaries to fight the *guerra sin*

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[123] Cable secreto, San Salvador, 5 November 1979, No. 463-469, CF, MREC.
[124] Cable secreto, San Salvador, 18 February 1980, No. 131/133, CF, MREC.

fronteras at the CEA meeting there in November 1979.[125] That same month, Ernesto Panamá Sandoval made his first trip to the Southern Cone on behalf of the nascent FAN. While his memoir does not provide any details of his delegation's activities in Argentina, it is worth noting that the Guatemalan who accompanied them – Carlos Midence – was the very same who had until previously been stationed in Argentina as an 'Agricultural Attaché' in the Guatemalan embassy (detailed in the previous chapter) which presumably facilitated Salvadoran access to the ruling junta.

Indeed, in an interview with Craig Pyes in the early 1980s, Panamá Sandoval claimed that Sandoval Alarcón had also provided the delegation with letters of introduction to high officials in the Argentine army, with whom they discussed the need to gather support for 'a right-wing counteroffensive in Central America'. He claimed that after returning from the trip, he wrote D'Aubuisson a 25-page report on the methods of psychological warfare and other anti-guerrilla strategies that he had learned about from Southern Cone leaders, a report which D'Aubuisson duly passed on to 'the right people in the Salvadoran army'.[126] It is possible that Panamá Sandoval's delegation also discussed the imminent deployment of more Argentine operatives to El Salvador.

By Panamá Sandoval's account, his delegation visited the Southern Cone before the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero on 24 March, an event widely linked to D'Aubuisson's burgeoning Extreme Right organisation.[127] Indeed US documents confirm that Argentine operatives linked to D'Aubuisson were possibly already in El Salvador by this point, with one, Emilio Antonio Mendoza, allegedly admitting to actually shooting Romero.[128] While it is difficult to substantiate the extent of this Argentine presence in March and the links between Panamá Sandoval's trip and Mendoza's presence and alleged actions, Aaron Bell has shown that ten Argentine trainers had certainly arrived by mid-May, 'where they allegedly met with D'Aubuisson and members of the Guardia death squad at the home of MNS treasurer Francisco Guirola'.[129]

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125 Cable secreto, San Salvador, 8 March 1980, No. 194, 10 March 1980, No. 196, AH/0039/2, DAL, MREC.

126 Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots*, 12.

127 Panamá Sandoval, *Los guerreros de la libertad*, 68–72.

128 'Emilio Antonio ((Mendoza))', 14 May 1985, EL00142, DNSA. Romero's assassination was later shown to be the work of members of D'Aubuisson's death squad network.

129 Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 201.

Throughout 1980, these connections between the Argentine military and the Salvadoran military and Extreme Right continued to intensify. In June 1980, in conversation with the Argentine ambassador, Colonel Abdul Gutierrez, the conservative-leaning military member of the JRG, expressed his admiration for the Argentine armed forces and raised the possibility of El Salvador sending a military mission to Argentina, with the objective of 'internalising the anti-subversive struggle'.[130] Two weeks later, in early July, the ambassador discussed the same idea with Defence Minister Guillermo García, who also stressed that the armed forces would resist any attempt by the junta to 'distance El Salvador from the Southern Cone'.[131] In itself, this reassurance points to the importance of transnational connections for the conduct of Argentine aid to the Salvadoran counterinsurgency after October 1979. While the Argentine ambassador could and did meet independently with the military leadership, traditional diplomatic channels – for example, through the PDC-controlled Foreign Ministry – were not suitable for the type of support that the Argentine military sought to provide. Instead, the Argentine military sought to bypass the civilians within the Salvadoran government altogether, and here, transnational networks would be key.

It is in this context that the IV CAL Conference is widely regarded as an important moment in solidifying ties between Argentina and the Salvadoran Extreme Right.[132] As the Andersons put it in their account of the Congress, 'like a college graduate "networking" for a job, D'Aubuisson was in Buenos Aires to make the necessary contacts'.[133] While before this point members of the Extreme Right had come into contact with Argentine operatives in Central America, and, in Panamá Sandoval's case, on his trip to the Southern Cone in March 1980, at the CAL conference the Salvadoran delegation mixed with individuals from the highest echelons of the Argentine dictatorship, including Suárez Mason himself. Within two months of the Congress at least fifty 'Argentine unconventional warfare advisers' were despatched to El Salvador and WACL committed to $8 million in funding towards this – and further - deployments of Argentine officers to Central America.[134]

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130 Cable secreto, El Salvador, 19 June 1980, No. 482-485, CF, MREC.
131 Cable secreto, San Salvador, 2 July 1980, No. 587-591, AH/0039/1, DAL, MREC.
132 Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 147–48.
133 Anderson and Anderson, 148.
134 Anderson and Anderson, 148. McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 214.

In December 1980, the US ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White, confronted the Argentine ambassador about this very episode, claiming that US intelligence showed Argentine military advisors operating alongside the Extreme Right in El Salvador and that these advisors had arrived with D'Aubuisson on his return from the Congress in Argentina that September.[135] Naturally, the Argentine ambassador pleaded ignorance – whether he in fact was ignorant is, of course, a different question. Nevertheless, the episode shows how by autumn 1980, as the civil war in El Salvador reached new heights, Argentine military involvement in the country had also reached unprecedented levels thanks to the military's co-option and strengthening of transnational connections in the period after the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Conclusion

By late 1980, Central America had become a central geopolitical concern for both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships. From their Extreme Right perspective, events in the isthmus presented a serious threat to the security of the entire region of Latin America. In response, each had provided direct support to the counterinsurgencies in Guatemala and El Salvador, offering their own national 'models' as examples. In Guatemala, both dictatorships provided training to the security forces through scholarships for training in the Southern Cone and boots on the ground in the country itself. In El Salvador, the Pinochet dictatorship offered a political model for the rapidly institutionalising Extreme Right as it sought to navigate the ever-shifting political landscape and restrictions imposed by the United States' unstinting support for the PDC. At the same time, the Nicaraguan Revolution forced a reorganisation of the existing Argentine physical presence in Central America, as operatives previously based in Nicaragua spread into Guatemala and El Salvador (as well as Honduras). There, the Argentine military leveraged its increasingly direct control over Argentine participation in WACL and CIS to work directly with Mario Sandoval Alarcón, placing Argentine officers in the service of the Extreme Right elements that he controlled in Guatemala, and the nascent Extreme Right organisation he shepherded into existence in El Salvador in this period. This unprecedented expansion of Southern Cone support continued to take place through both bilateral and transnational ties.

These changes also took place within the context of the ongoing perceived dereliction of duty on the United States in its traditional role as leader of the anticommunist struggle in the Western Hemisphere. In July 1980, the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador summarised the

[135] Cable secreto, San Salvador, 11 December 1980, No. 955-956, CF, MREC.

perceived damage US foreign policy was wreaking in Central America. He described how in the region, and to some extent the Western World as a whole, two great ideologies were 'fighting to impose themselves': on one side, Marxist-socialism, and on the other, Christian Democracy, 'together with tendencies more or less similar, such as social democracy'. While theoretically opposing one another, in practice, the 'more open and pluralist philosophy' of the latter was 'serving as a bridge' for the expansion of the former – Marxism – throughout the continent. Here the blame lay unequivocally with the human rights policies of Jimmy Carter, under whom there existed a 'fundamental contradiction' within the Western bloc; 'the world anti-communist leader' wrote the ambassador, was, because of his actions, 'the ally of Marxism'. In pursuing an 'arbitrary, one-sided and un-objective approach', Carter had turned his back on the United States' traditional anticommunist allies, and overseen the expansion of communism both worldwide, and, most importantly, in Central America.[136]

It is remarkable that despite continued animosity between Chile and Argentina, the ambassador concluded that without a change in the direction of US foreign policy, it might become necessary for Chile to collaborate with Argentina, and possibly even Brazil, to provide regional leadership – in the Southern Cone, in South America, and, most importantly, in Central America, an 'area of geopolitical tension and international interest'.[137] For now, however, the restoration of a proactively anticommunist government in Washington remained, in the words of one Guatemalan plantation owner, the 'only hope' for the Extreme Right, indicating the ongoing centrality of US power even at one of its lowest ebbs.[138] Indeed, from the perspective of the Latin American Extreme Right, the successful resolution of the conflicts in Central America required an about-turn in US foreign policy, and by extension a new US president. It was in this context that the outcome of the November 1980 presidential election assumed enormous importance, as the next chapter explores.

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[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] In an interview with the journalist Allan Nairn, Milton Molina, a wealthy plantation owner and reputed funder of Guatemalan death squads, described Reagan's election as the 'only hope' for the Guatemalan elite. Allan Nairn, 'Controversial Reagan campaign links with Guatemalan government and private sector leaders', Council on Hemispheric Affairs research memorandum, 30 October 1980.

Chapter 5: Reagan Arrives, 1980-82

Introduction

On the day of Ronald Reagan's election as US president, fireworks filled the sky above Guatemala City while supporters of the Lucas García regime celebrated with bursts of automatic weapons and a marimba band in front of the United States Embassy.[1] Meanwhile, the Salvadoran Extreme Right held 'feasts and dances… in the posh homes of El Salvador and Miami'.[2] Two and a half months later, on 21 January, Mario Sandoval Alarcón attended Ronald Reagan's inauguration in Washington D.C., dancing the night away at one of the balls that followed.[3] Those on the Latin American Extreme Right greeted Reagan's election as a turning point, marking the end of four years of suffering under Carter.

While Reagan's election did not, in fact, bring the changes that the Extreme Right expected, US policy toward Central America as it emerged over 1981 fundamentally shaped the development and eventual resolution of the civil wars in both Guatemala and El Salvador, and in turn curtailed the possibilities for Southern Cone-style 'solutions' to those conflicts. Thus, where in the first four chapters of this thesis the story of Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America has been very much framed by the Latin American Extreme Right's direct opposition to US policy in Central America, these final two chapters address the friction between US and Southern Cone visions for Central America that emerged as the Reagan administration sought to reassert the traditional US influence in Latin America. As a result, they devote much closer attention to the US perspective and to US foreign policymaking.

Reagan entered office in January 1981 having promised to 'stand firm with countries seeking to develop their societies while combating the subversion', 're-establish close and cooperative relations with the nations of Central and South America and repair the diplomatic

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[1] Warren Hoge, 'Repression in Guatemala Increases as U.S. is Seeking to Improve Ties', 3 May 1981, *New York Times*.

[2] 'The New American Right Cooks Up a Hot Potato' reprinted in Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots*, 38.

[3] 'Sandoval Alarcón regresará de Washington para abrir campaña' 17 January 1981, *Prensa Libre*, clipping consulted at CIRMA: Publicación Diario El Imparcial, Serie La Morgue (recortes de periódico), Sandoval Alarcón, Mario, 1981-1982, S13, 430 (2) 2-7; Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 270.

damage done by the Carter Administration'.[4] In Central America, the administration vowed to roll back international communism through massive assistance to the region's militaries and a proactive attitude in the face of the 'subversive threat' perceived to be emanating from Cuba and the Soviet Union and, since July 1979, Nicaragua. This policy stance, outlined during the 1980 campaign, was warmly received among those on the Latin American Extreme Right, not only because it aligned with their understanding of the correct path ahead for Central America, but because it reflected the vision for US power in the hemisphere that they themselves had helped formulate in transnational anticommunist spaces alongside fellow anticommunists from the US New Right over the previous four years. Following a brief chronological overview, the second section of this chapter establishes this transnational Latin American intellectual influence on Reagan's Latin America policy as expressed in the 1980 campaign, and explores how, in the very first months of the administration, this long-promised *volte face* in US foreign policy in Latin America appeared to bear fruit.

Yet, when we then examine the extent to which this vision transformed into actual US policy toward Central America and Latin America more broadly, the picture grows more complicated. While the inauguration of a new US president directly influenced ongoing Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America, it did not represent a clean break with the Carter years. The most detailed work to date on US-Southern Cone collaboration in Central America during the Reagan administration relates to US support for *contra* forces in Nicaragua. There, Ariel Armony describes how – true to the campaign pledges outlined above - the Reagan administration 'decided to give full-fledged support to the anti-Sandinista program' that the Argentine armed forces had put in place soon after the Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979, and as a result the Argentine dictatorship rapidly 'emerged as a U.S. surrogate in Central America'.[5] This chapter contends that this sort of cooperation did not emerge in the cases of Guatemala and El Salvador, principally as a result of restraints placed on US foreign policymaking by Congress. Notably, restraints that did not apply to US aid to the *contras,* as this support, directed to a non-state group as it was, was not subject to the same institutional restraints as the bilateral assistance planned for El Salvador and Guatemala.

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[4] Republican Party Platform of 1980, 15 July 1980, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1980, accessed 20 January 2022.
[5] Armony, 172

Over the course of 1981, the Reagan administration encountered severe opposition in its efforts both to downgrade human rights as a US foreign policy priority and to win congressional approval for the restoration of military and economic support to Latin America's anticommunist regimes. As a result, the policy eventually pursued by the Reagan administration – maintaining a rhetorical commitment to human rights (if more narrowly defined) and 'democratisation' – initially alienated the Extreme Right and created a gap between US and Southern Cone (particularly Chilean) prescriptions for the situation in Central America, in turn limiting the prospects for collaboration. In this context, both Southern Cone dictatorships' support for the counterinsurgency in Guatemala and El Salvador continued to develop largely independently of US policy in 1981-2. Yet despite the disappointment generated by Reagan's adoption of the language of human rights and 'democratisation' and an ongoing lack of substantial aid to Guatemala, Reagan's inauguration did lead to a massive injection of US military aid to El Salvador, contributing to an enormous increase in military-perpetrated violence. Moreover, members of the administration as well as the New Right more broadly maintained their transnational connections with the Latin American Extreme Right, providing them with encouragement as well as laying the foundations for future extra-official collaboration.

Central America in 1980-82

In late 1980 the violent conflicts in El Salvador and Guatemala had reached a new peak. Buoyed by Reagan's victory, the Salvadoran Extreme Right had launched a renewed campaign of terror, climaxing with the death squad-perpetrated assassination of six prominent leaders of the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR), the mass political movement aligned with the FMLN, on 27 November, and the rape and murder of four US Catholic missionaries on 4 December (later proven to be the work of the Salvadoran National Guard).[6] On 13 December, the conservative military leadership forced Colonel Majano, the already-weakened reformist voice in the ruling junta, from his position, leaving Colonel Jaime Abdul Gutierrez, the Commander in Chief of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, as the sole military member of the government, and vice president of El Salvador.[7]

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[6] EmbaSanSalvador, 2 January 1981, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE. Larry Rohter, '4 Salvadorans Say They Killed U.S. Nuns on Orders of Military', 3 April 1998, *New York Times*.
[7] Colonel Majano had handed his positions as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Chairman of the junta to Abdul Gutiérrez in May 1980, as recounted in the last chapter.

Then, in January 1981, the FMLN unleashed their 'Final Offensive', declaring that 'the time for the revolution has arrived'.[8] Over three days, 4,000 guerrillas launched coordinated attacks across the western half of the country (the departments of Santa Ana, San Salvador and Chalatenango), as well as those of San Miguel and San Vicente in the east. The Salvadoran military overcame the offensive with relative ease, inflicting almost 1,000 deaths in the process.[9] Despite these heavy losses and contrary to its name, the Final Offensive marked the beginning of a new phase in guerrilla-military confrontation as the military expanded counterinsurgency operations deep into the countryside. The ensuing brutality belatedly came to light in the wake of the El Mozote massacre in the eastern department of Morazán in December 1981, when US-trained Salvadoran forces systematically massacred more than 1,000 citizens in a single day.

Meanwhile, the Salvadoran Extreme Right continued to institutionalise. In May 1981, Roberto D'Aubuisson, at this point still living in exile in Guatemala, invited 300 supporters to the Hotel Cortijo Reforma in Guatemala City where together they made a 'declaration of principles' of their new political party. In late September 1981, back in El Salvador, party leaders registered ARENA (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*, Nationalist Republican Alliance) with the Salvadoran electoral authorities and the following month publicly announced its existence, celebrating the official foundation with a banquet at Hotel Sheraton.[10] The pieces were in place for the Extreme Right to contest the upcoming March 1982 constituent assembly elections.

In Guatemala, guerrilla activity rose in parallel with the 'Final Offensive' in El Salvador and was more than matched by security services and paramilitary activity. By February 1981, as campaigns for the 1982 presidential elections began, the Chilean ambassador reported an average of 20 assassinations per day.[11] As Anderson and Anderson describe, 'piles of mutilated bodies were being discovered every morning throughout the country, and a concerted campaign to eliminate the centrist parties was under way in Guatemala City' with 86 opposition politicians assassinated in the year after July 1980.[12]

[8] 'The "Final Offensive"', read aloud by Command Salvador Cayetano Carpio on *Radio Liberación*, 11 January 1981. Reprinted in translation in Marvin E. Gettleman et al., eds., *El Salvador, Central America in the New Cold War* (New York, N.Y.: Grove Press, 1981), 118–20.
[9] EmbaSanSalvador, 19 January 1981, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[10] Ferreira, *30 años trabajando por El Salvador*, 30–36.
[11] EmbaGuatemala, 23 February 1981, Oficios SEC.RES. 1-336/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
[12] Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 177.

Military counterinsurgency campaigns expanded. In July 1981, drawing on intelligence gathered with the help of Israeli and Argentine officers, Guatemalan security forces launched a successful offensive against guerrilla organisations in the capital, destroying up to 20 ORPA safe houses.[13] In August, Army Chief of Staff Benedicto Lucas García (brother of the president), ordered a rural military offensive against suspected guerrilla supporters, sweeping from the Pacific coast through the central highlands of Huehuetenango, El Quiché and Chalatenango.[14] While largely ineffective in hampering rural guerrilla activity, this 'clearance' campaign involved large-scale massacres that marked the beginning of a new, genocidal stage of the civil war focused on the overwhelmingly indigenous Mayan populations of the altiplano. Yet rural guerrilla activity merely increased in response, and in February 1982 the disparate guerrilla groups – the EGP, ORPA, FAR and PGT – united under a single umbrella organisation, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, URNG). With presidential elections looming the following month, in Guatemala the scene was set for a new and historic peak in state-perpetrated violence.

The Reagan Administration and Latin America

Reagan's election: a victory for the Latin American Extreme Right

When members of the Latin American Extreme Right celebrated Reagan's electoral victory in November 1980, they were doing so based on more than a fortunate alignment of Reagan's Cold War outlook with their own. To them, Reagan's election was at least partly the fruit of four-plus years of dedicated lobbying and networking. As indicated in chapter two of this thesis, where one aspect of the Latin American Extreme Right's response to the changes wrought to the inter-American system by the Carter administration had been to increase their involvement in and assistance to the counterinsurgency in Central America, another had been to attempt to directly influence US policy itself. While the immediate-term response to the Nicaraguan Revolution was to compensate for ongoing lack of US support for the counterrevolution, the Latin American Extreme Right had still hoped for the restoration of US leadership in the longer term. In the sixteen months between the Nicaraguan Revolution and the US presidential elections of November 1980 members of the Latin American Extreme Right had worked closely with members of the US New Right in the very same transnational organisations – CIS, WACL and CAL - that acted as vital conduits for Chilean and Argentine support to

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[13] Michael McClintock, *State Terror and Popular Resistance in Guatemala*, vol. II, The American Connection (London: Zed., 1985), 219.
[14] McClintock, II:220–21.

Central America. In doing so, these Latin Americans exercised a direct intellectual influence on the Reagan 1980 campaign platform and, come its triumph in November 1980, celebrated Reagan's victory as a victory for the Extreme Right across the hemisphere.

Existing histories of the genesis of Reagan's foreign policy in Latin America tend to focus on two documents, which were, according to Leogrande, 'the intellectual wellspring of Reagan's Latin American policy'.[15] The first, published in November 1979, was Jeanne Kirkpatrick's 'Dictatorships and Double Standards' in *Commentary.* Here, Kirkpatrick made a blistering critique of Carter's foreign policy record and advocated for the swift return of military aid to traditional anticommunist allies of the United States, arguing that these 'moderate autocrats' were compatible with US interests and at least susceptible to liberalisation and eventual transition to democracy, while 'revolutionary autocracies' (such as those in the Soviet Union, Cuba, and now Iran and Nicaragua) held no such potential.[16] Then, in May 1980, came the publication of *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties*, often referred to as the 'Santa Fe report'. The report was written by Lewis Tambs, Roger Fontaine, General Gordon Sumner, Lynn Francis Bouchey and David C. Jordan (together, these men constituted the self-styled 'Committee of Santa Fe'). The monograph, published by CIS, perhaps most famously declared that 'Détente is dead' and described the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union as 'World War III'.[17] Specifically, in relation to Central America, the report held Carter accountable for Somoza's overthrow and blamed his policy for the destabilisation of El Salvador, concluding that 'only the United States can, as a partner, protect the independent nations of Latin America from Communist conquest and help preserve Hispanic-American culture from sterilization from international Marxist materialism'.[18]

While the connections between these documents and Reagan's foreign policy platform are abundantly clear and do not need rehashing here, existing histories of the roots of Reagan's Latin America policy completely overlook the transnational roots of these documents and the ideas within them. Far from the product of domestic US politics operating in some sort of

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[15] LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*, 54.
[16] Jeane Kirkpatrick, 'Dictatorships and Double Standards' *Commentary*, 1 November 1979.
[17] L. Francis Bouchey, Roger Fontaine, David C. Jordan, Lt. General Gordon Sumner and Lewis Tambs, *A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties,* Second Ed. (CIS: Washington DC, 1981), 1. For typical analysis of the Santa Fe report by historians of US foreign policy, see Morley and McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over U.S. Policy toward Chile*, 15; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*, 55.
[18] Bouchey et al, A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties, 53.

vacuum, these figures on the New Right were deeply enmeshed in the wider transnational anticommunist network that developed over the course of the Carter administration.[19] This was most abundantly clear in the case of the Committee of Santa Fe. All five members of the Committee had already been involved in CIS since its beginnings in 1976-77, bringing them into direct contact with members of the Latin American Extreme Right. And the August 1979 symposium had been no different, with all five men in attendance.[20] Among the other participants were Manuel Ayau and Carlos Simmons of Guatemala's *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional* and Juan Vicente Maldonado, a Salvadoran businessman and president of the *Asociación Nacional de Empresa Privada* (ANEP). Representing the Argentine dictatorship were the economist and government advisor Ricardo Zinn and retired General Ramón Díaz Bessone, a close associate of General Carlos Suárez Mason, the commander of the Argentine presence in Central America. From Chile there was Gustavo Cuevas Farren and Chicago boy Hernán Cheyre.[21]

The stated purpose of the symposium was framed in terms of the imminent geopolitical threat: the 'perceptible surge in Soviet efforts to win strategic victories over the Free World', renewed 'Cuban penetration' and – foreshadowing the Reagan campaign critique of Carter - the manner in which the US appeared 'conspicuously lacking the will to challenge Soviet intrusion or dominance' in the hemisphere.[22] Participants had come together to 'provide useful understanding of the strategic military and economic, social and political forces confronting the Americas' and 'establish useful personal ties and associations'.[23] Events in Central America, unsurprisingly, dominated discussion.[24] In the months that followed – at precisely the time that the Santa Fe report was written - members of the Committee drew on these direct links to the Central

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[19] In this respect, this argument directly pushes back against the recent call to 'Recenter' the United States in the history of US foreign relations, see Bessner and Logevall, 'Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations'.
[20] 'Inter-American Symposium, 1979, August 19-August 24 at the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., Brochure' Folder 9 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium, 1977, 1979, Box 2, CIS, HILA.
[21] *Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979* (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), introduction; 'Inter-American Symposium, 1979, August 19-August 24 at the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., Brochure' Folder 9 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium, 1977, 1979, Box 2, CIS, HILA; 'Inter-American Symposium – 1979, Program' August 1979, Folder 12 - Conferences, Inter-American Symposium Correspondence, 1979, Box 12, CIS, HILA.
[22] Free World Security and the South Atlantic: Inter-American Symposium – 1979 (Council for Inter-American Security: Washington D.C., 1979), v.
[23] Ibid, vi.
[24] Ibid, see table of contents.

American Extreme Right and the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships as they travelled across Latin America.

In October 1979 two members of the Committee, Lynn Francis Bouchey and Gordon Sumner, travelled to Chile and Argentina. They made their first stop in Santiago, where they were hosted by the Chilean Foreign Ministry and chaperoned by two Generals, Carlos Morales (Comandante de Institutos Militares) and Carol Urzúa (Director del Personal del Ejército and noted for his loyalty to Pinochet), as well as María Eugenia Oyarzún, right-wing journalist and diplomat.[25] In Chile, Sumner and Bouchey met with the highest government authorities: among them General Nilo Floody, who had been chief of the Chilean military mission to the United States until 1977, General Carlos Forestier, Vice-Commander in Chief of the Army and the Foreign Minister, Hernán Cubillos, as well as Pinochet himself.[26]

In Argentina, the two men were hosted by the *Fundación Internacional Argentina*, the foundation financed by Ricardo Zinn, attendee at the CIS conference two months earlier.[27] Through Zinn (and likely their connection to Díaz Bessone), Bouchey and Sumner enjoyed similar access to the highest levels of power within the military dictatorship as in Chile, with meetings scheduled with Suárez Mason, Commander in Chief of the Army and future president, General Viola, President Videla, Foreign Minister Brigadier Carlos Washington Pastor and Commander of the Army First Corps and future president General Leopoldo Galtieri.[28] The itinerary also made space for talks with private business groups and the opportunity for Sumner to deliver a speech on 'the defence of the West', where he echoed the language used by many on the Latin American Extreme Right in the wake of the Nicaraguan Revolution, accusing Carter 'sacrificing the hemisphere on the altar of human rights' and praising Argentina's success in their

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[25] MRE to MinDef, 22 October 1979, Vol. 526, Min Def, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE; Program - South America trip, Oct-Nov 1979, Folder 1 – LFB, Lists/Meetings, Receptions, Dinner etc. 1977-1981, Box 1, CIS, HILA; Jefe del Gabinete del Sr. Ministro de Defensa Nacional a la Dirección de Protocolo del Ministerio de RR.EE., 'Remite relaciones conteniendo nómina de invitados a Ceremonia de Inauguración del "Altar de la Patria"', 31 July 1979, Vol. 526, Min Def, Fondo Ministerios, AMRE; 'El general Carol Urzúa, gobernador de Santiago de Chile, y otros dos militares, muertos a consecuencia de un atentado' *El País,* 31 August 1983.
[26] Program - South America trip, Oct-Nov 1979, Folder 1 – LFB, Lists/Meetings, Receptions, Dinner etc. 1977-1981, Box 1, CIS, HILA; José del Pozo Artigas, *Diccionario histórico de la dictadura cívico-militar en Chile período 1973-1990 y sus prolongaciones hasta hoy*, 2018, 183–84.
[27] 'Opinó sobre la Argentina un military norteamericano' *Clarín*, 2 November 1979, cutting in Folder 14 – Printed Matter, Clippings, 1979, Box 15, CIS, HILA; Juan B. Yofre, *Fuimos todos: Cronología de un fracaso 1976-1983* (Buenos Aires: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial Argentina, 2014), Kindle loc. 2511.
[28] Program - South America trip, Oct-Nov 1979, Folder 1 – LFB, Lists/Meetings, Receptions, Dinner etc. 1977-1981, Box 1, CIS, HILA.

'war against left-wing terrorists'.[29] A week later, using very similar terms, Viola would make his call to the Conference of American Armies in Bogotá for hemispheric unity against the transnational subversive threat (discussed in the previous chapter).

While there is no record of the content of these meetings in the CIS archives, it is likely that the conversations that Sumner and Bouchey held in both countries provided them with insight into the Chilean and Argentine perspective on hemispheric politics, and the shortcomings of US policy. This much is clear in a press release written by Sumner that appears to come from soon after their return to the United States. Entitled 'U.S. Decline: A South American Perspective', the document is a rallying call against the deterioration of US power in the Western Hemisphere. 'From Bogota [sic] to Buenos Aires', it begins, 'long-time friends in and out of government confess they have lost confidence that the United States will even protect its own vital security interest', citing Nicaragua, 'Soviet-Cuban expansionism' in Africa, the Middle East, Caribbean and Central America. Explicitly acknowledging the impact that the recent trip had had on his perspective on the issue, Sumner described how 'only from abroad does one see how seriously U.S. power is deteriorating in every dimension. The dangerous unreality of our current policies and of the Carter Administration's ideologically blurred perception of what is actually happening is clear from a South American vantage point'.[30]

This example is but one of a host of exchanges between the US New Right and the Latin American Extreme Right in the year before Reagan's election. In December 1979 two of the Committee's close associates, General Daniel Graham and Major John Singlaub, had travelled to Guatemala on behalf of the American Security Council (ASC). According to sources interviewed by journalist Allan Nairn, the pair spoke with senior government officials on behalf of the Reagan campaign, and Graham himself revealed to Nairn that he had 'told President Lucas García that on his return to the United States he would urge the Reagan campaign team to provide for the resumption of military training and aid to Guatemala as soon as a victorious Reagan would be installed in office'.[31] Indeed Guatemala proved a popular destination for

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[29] 'La retirada de Occidente' *La Nación*, 1 November 1979, Folder 14 – Printed Matter, Clippings, 1979, Box 15, CIS, HILA.
[30] General Gordon Sumner, 'U.S. Decline: A South American Perspective', Folder 5 – Printed Matter, Press Releases, 1977-1980, Box 16, CIS, HILA. Although undated, Sumner published a very similar piece in January 1980, 'Can U.S. protect its own interests?' *The Denver Post*, 8 January 1980, Folder 16 – LFB, Chron File for Annie, 1981, Box 1, CIS.
[31] Allan Nairn, 'Controversial Reagan campaign links with Guatemalan government and private sector leaders', Council on Hemispheric Affairs research memorandum, 30 October 1980.

campaign staff, and a third member of the Committee of Santa Fe – Roger Fontaine – also visited the country on at least two occasions over the first ten months of 1980, writing in the Miami Herald in July that year that 'the Guatemalans will be given what aid they need in order to defend themselves against an armed minority which is aided and abetted by Cubans'.[32]

These visits continued right up to the election: in September, six weeks before polling day, Reagan's advisors embarked on a further round of tours of Latin America, with Fontaine visiting Chile, Brazil, and Paraguay, and Graham joining him in Argentina.[33] Meanwhile individuals closely linked to CIS represented the US New Right at the WACL conference in Geneva in July 1980 and the CAL conference in Buenos Aires in September that year. At the former, Ray Cline, attendee at the CIS symposium the previous August, had addressed the delegates, echoing the conference's call for the United States to take a stand against Soviet expansionism.[34]

The continued circulation of these figures on the New Right around Latin America is the crucial context for understanding their ideas. The Reagan Latin America campaign platform was not simply the product of individuals on the New Right looking south with concern at the succession of events since 1977. Instead, it represented the culmination of four years of transnational anticommunist discourse building, in which the likes that made up the Committee of Santa Fe – and many more – shared ideas with, and were influenced by, in Sumner's own words, the Latin American 'vantage point'. After the first year of the Reagan presidency – during which, as we will see, it became apparent that these ideas would not make a smooth transition to actual US foreign policy – these connections would prove invaluable once again in providing the infrastructure for New Right involvement in Central America *outside* of the formal parameters of the state.

Early impressions: a return of US anticommunist leadership in the Americas

In its first months the Reagan administration appeared to herald the change in US foreign policy that the Latin American Extreme Right had desired for so long. From the off,

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32 Allan Nairn, 'Controversial Reagan campaign links with Guatemalan government and private sector leaders', Council on Hemispheric Affairs research memorandum, 30 October 1980.
33 'Reagan Aides, in South America, Say He Would Not Favor Dictators', *New York Times*, 22 September 1980.
34 Ray Cline, 'Alliances, Intelligence, And Seapower: Together We Stand', Folder 5 – WACL Conference File, 1980, Box 60, KDP, HILA.

long-time members of the hemispheric transnational anticommunist network, including members of the Committee of Santa Fe, assumed positions of influence in the Reagan White House. Roger Fontaine joined the National Security Council with responsibility for Latin American Affairs and Gordon Sumner took up a senior position in the State Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Lewis Tambs joined the National Security Council the following year (also with a Latin America portfolio), before becoming the US ambassador to Colombia in 1983. The remaining authors – Daniel Graham and L. Francis Bouchey – remained outside of the formal parameters of the state but remained active in the wider transnational network. Other newly appointed Reagan staffers included Michael Deaver as Deputy Chief of Staff, a former public relations professional whose firm, Deaver & Hannaford, had worked closely with both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran Extreme Right in the previous years. Jeane Kirkpatrick, meanwhile, became the new US ambassador to the United Nations.

Once installed in the White House, these allies of the Latin American Extreme Right soon exerted their influence over policy, with early statements and decisions going in favour of Latin America's anticommunist regimes and raising expectations of renewed US-Latin American anticommunist collaboration in the ongoing ideological struggle in Central America. For the Southern Cone dictatorships, the signs were good. In February 1981 the Secretary of State Alexander Haig publicly signalled the administration's hopes of strengthening relations with Chile, while behind closed doors the National Security Council set about discussing how to make 'changes in current foreign assistance legislation' to restart arms sales and military training to both Chile and Argentina.[35] A subsequent policy paper in April underlined the administration's intention to 'begin the task of repairing the ill feeling and strained relations between the United States and the rest of the hemisphere which have been wrought by neglect and misunderstanding of the Carter administration'.[36]

The administration also made its intentions clear regarding the volatile situation in Central America. In a March 1981 speech to CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference), Jeane Kirkpatrick described the region as 'quite simply the most important place in the world'

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[35] Morley and McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over U.S. Policy toward Chile*, 29. Point Paper, 'Latin America – What to Do?' 6 February 1981, Folder NSC 00001 6 Feb. 1981 [Caribbean Basin and Poland] (2), Box 1, Exec Sec, NSC Meeting File, RRPL

[36] Point Paper, 'Latin America – What to Do?' 6 February 1981, Folder NSC 00001 6 Feb. 1981 [Caribbean Basin and Poland] (2), Box 1, Exec Sec, NSC Meeting File, RRPL; Policy Paper, United States Policy Toward Latin America, 7 April 1981, Folder Latin America, U.S. Policy Toward [Apr 1981] (1), Box 9, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL.

for the United States'.[37] Two months later, the State Department dispatched Vernon Walters, Reagan's new ambassador-at-large, to Guatemala City. Walters held a long association with the Latin America and its militaries in particular dating back to an initial trip to Brazil in 1942 to facilitate Brazilian participation in the war effort. In the intervening years he had served almost every US president in some capacity, barring only Carter and Kennedy, and had been present in Brazil as a military attaché at the time of the 1964 coup.[38] In Guatemala, Walters delivered an encouraging message, describing the early steps the administration had made to allow the sale of three million dollars-worth of military trucks and jeeps to the Guatemalan army and inviting senior officials from the Guatemalan armed forces to Washington to discuss the way forwards against the guerrilla with their US counterparts.[39] On the thorny subject of ongoing serious human rights abuses in Guatemala, Walters told the Guatemalan government that the State Department would be satisfied with 'verbal assurances' of improvement on this front.[40]

The Reagan administration likewise followed through on its campaign promise to massively increase military assistance to El Salvador. Less than a week after Reagan's inauguration, Secretary of State Haig committed to the recall of Ambassador Robert White (perceived to be too moderate) and a five million dollar increase in military aid alongside an additional $17.9 million in unexpended AID and PL-480 assistance.[41] The following month, the State Department issued a White Paper to justify these increases which appeared to confirm their basic sympathies with the Salvadoran Extreme Right's diagnosis of the situation in El Salvador. The report 'claimed to present "definitive evidence" that "over the past year, the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into a textbook case of indirect armed aggression by Communist powers'.[42] By one account, D'Aubuisson himself supplied some of the documents for the White Paper, responding to a request from none other than Daniel Graham.[43] At face value, these early policy changes appeared to represent a victory for the Latin American Extreme Right and a radical departure from Carter's approach to the region.

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[37] Cable, USINFO to all posts, 24 March 1981, Folder Latin America, U.S. Policy Toward [Mar 81], Box 9, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL.
[38] On Walters' earlier career, see Vernon A. Walters, *Silent Missions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978).
[39] Cable, 'Initiative of Guatemala: Talking Points for General Walters', April 1981, Folder AT Guatemala [2], Box 3, Robert Lilac Files, RRPL.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Memorandum, Alexander M. Haig for the President, 'El Salvador', 26 January 1981, Folder NSC 00003 18 Feb 1981 (2), Box 1, Exec Sec, NSC Meeting File, RRPL.
[42] Quoted in LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*, 86.
[43] 'D'Aubuisson Says He Recruited Uncle Sam for a Civil War' in Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots*, 42.

These initial shifts in US foreign policy in Central America were not limited to bilateral relations with the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments. The Reagan administration also sought to capitalise on existing channels of support to the counterinsurgency in Central America, appearing to herald a new era of inter-American anticommunist collaboration. The National Security Council (NSC) discussed the possibility of working with the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships in Central America on at least three occasions in February 1981, and that same month the Reagan administration dispatched the aforementioned Vernon Walters to Brazil, Argentina and Chile with the aim of winning support for the administration's El Salvador policy.[44] In Brazil, the Reagan administration sought only tacit support, conscious that the dictatorship's process of *abertura* precluded any proactive involvement.[45] In Argentina and Chile, however, Walters' visit appeared more fruitful.

In Buenos Aires, Walters held a series of high-level meetings. The Argentine foreign minister, Brigadier Carlos Washington Pastor, gave Walters a warm welcome, and apparently responded to his briefing on the new US policy in El Salvador with a 'We told you how bad these guys were but you wouldn't believe us. Now you know'.[46] It is possible that this was an allusion to the aforementioned conversations held with Reagan's campaign team in late 1979, when Francis Bouchey and Gordon Sumner visited Buenos Aires. Now, with the latter firmly ensconced in the State Department, it was time for collaboration.

Walters also met with Argentine President-elect General Eduardo Viola and the heads of all three branches of the armed forces. Two of them - Commander in Chief of the Argentine Army and future president, General Leopoldo Galtieri, and Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral Lambruschini - were 'old friends' of Walters, dating from his involvement in Latin American affairs in the previous decades.[47] Galtieri briefed Walters on existing Argentine

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[44] Minutes, NSC Meeting, 6 February 1981, Folder NSC 00001 6 Feb. 1981 [Caribbean Basin and Poland] (1); Summary of Conclusions, National Security Council Meeting, 18 February 1981, Folder NSC 00003 18 Feb 1981 (1); 'El Salvador: Interagency Options Paper for the NSC', Memorandum for Mr. Richard V. Allen, 24 February 1981, Folder NSC0004 27 February 1981 [Poland, Caribbean Basin, F-15, El Salvador] (1), all in Box 1, Exec Sec, NSC Meeting File, RRPL.

[45] Cable, AmEmbassy Brasilia to SecState, 23 February 1981, Folder Brazil (02041981-09031981), Box 26, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.

[46] Cable, AmEmbassy Buenos Aires to SecState, Subj. My Talk with President-Elect Viola, No. 1335, 26 February 1981, Folder: Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (1), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL.

[47] Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Argentina/El Salvador, No. 1136, 26 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.

operations in Honduras and El Salvador. He described how 'various Salvadoran officers had been trained in counterinsurgency by Argentine anti-guerrilla specialists' and described 'some fifty Argentine officers operating in the Caribbean area'.[48] All three commanders, in addition to President Viola, echoed Pastor's 'we told you so' attitude yet emphasised Argentine support for US policy and offered to expand Argentine military operations in the isthmus. Walters departed Argentina confident that the two countries could work together in El Salvador: he concluded his report 'all we have to do is tell them what to do'.[49]

From Buenos Aires, Walters travelled to Chile where he received a similarly warm reception. There, military officials indicated that 'their own program of aid to Central American countries was longstanding and continuous' and 'would not stop' while expressing their desire for an improvement of US-Chile relations and the return of Chilean officers to US military academies.[50] They also promised to provide Walters the details of this program of aid, but if these were provided, they are not immediately accessible in the Reagan Library archives.[51] In a separate one-on-one meeting, Pinochet offered Walters Chile's 'full support', stating that 'he would do anything we [the US] wanted to help us in the Salvadoran situation'. [52] Walters returned to Washington confident that both dictatorships would prove willing partners in the struggle against international communism in Central America.

With these initial actions in its first two months, the Reagan administration appeared to mark a fundamental departure in US policy toward Latin America, fitting the common interpretation that the administration 'embarked upon the most hard-line, anti-communist agenda in at least two decades', elsewhere described as the 'Reagan offensive'.[53] Within months,

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[48] Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Argentina/El Salvador, No. 1135, 26 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[49] Cable, AmEmbassy Buenos Aires to SecState, Subj. My Talk with President-Elect Viola, No. 1335, 26 February 1981, Folder: Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (1), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL; Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Argentina/El Salvador, No. 1135, 26 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[50] Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Chile/El Salvador, No. 1163, 27 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[51] Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Chile/El Salvador, No. 1163, 27 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[52] Ibid; Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj. Chile/El Salvador, No. 1162, 27 February 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[53] Aaron Donaghy, *The Second Cold War: Carter, Reagan, and the Politics of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 116; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) ch. 9.

however, the Reagan administration ran up against restraints – namely congressional - that prevented this intended policy change from becoming a reality when applied to its relations with Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships. Although Carter had left the Oval Office, other parts of the US government remained as committed as ever to placing human rights at the centre of US-Latin American relations.

From hope to disappointment

Besides these initial steps toward restoring support to Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships, the Reagan administration made an early and concerted effort to downgrade the importance of human rights within US foreign policy. It was here that it first ran up against congressional obstacles that soon came to fundamentally shape – and, at least rhetorically, moderate – its Latin America policy. In February 1981 – on the same day that the State Department announced its intention to lift restrictions on EXIM financing to the Chilean dictatorship – Reagan nominated Ernest W. Lefever to the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.[54] This choice of nominee was a statement of intent from the White House. Lefever was a vocal critic of Carter's human rights policy and in his Senate hearing he called for the human rights considerations that the Carter administration had built into the US foreign policymaking process to be discarded, arguing that the United States had no right or power 'to promote human rights in other sovereign states'.[55] Unsurprisingly, human rights organisations in the United States and liberal members of Congress met the nomination with strong opposition and Lefever was ultimately rejected by the Senate.

The Reagan administration's failure to gain congressional approval for Lefever's appointment was the opening bout in what would be a long and drawn out fight between the administration and the human rights movement, whereby, as Vanessa Walker puts it, 'in the face of the Reagan administration's efforts to dismantle or disregard the basic frameworks they had built, the [human rights] Movement and their partners in Congress escalated their efforts to use human rights as a means to check presidential power and defend their agenda of anti-interventionism and dissociation'.[56] These efforts to restrain presidential power would

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[54] Walker, *Principles in Power*, 218.
[55] 'Ernest W. Lefever, Rejected as Reagan Nominee, Dies at 89', 4 August 2009, *New York Times*; Lefever's nomination is also examined in Sarah Snyder, 'The Defeat of Ernest Lefever's Nomination: Keeping Human Rights on the United States Foreign Policy Agenda', in *Challenging US Foreign Policy: America and the World in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. Bevan Sewell and Scott Lucas (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 136–61.
[56] Walker, *Principles in Power*, 221.

profoundly shape US policy toward Central America, and by extension toward Latin America more widely, in turn limiting the possibilities for US-Southern Cone anticommunist collaboration in the isthmus.

In the short term, Lefever's rejection made clear that the Reagan administration would need to continue to pay lip service to the idea of human rights as it sought congressional approval for its policy agenda in Latin America. Rasmus Sondergaard makes this case in his recent book, arguing that the congressional and public backlash against Lefever's nomination led the Reagan administration 'to re-evaluate its stance on human rights' and establish, in the words of NSC staffer Carnes Lord, a 'conceptual coherence in the idea of human rights'.[57] In this 'new' conception, human rights were cast in terms of the countersubversive struggle, with one speech outline written by Roger Fontaine in May 1981 arguing that 'opposing terrorism does not contradict support for human rights but essential precondition for it [sic]' and that 'the expansion of Soviet power and Communist political systems is the most fundamental threat to human rights in the contemporary world'.[58] Yet rather than born of the circumstances of Lefever's rejection, this anticommunist conception of human rights promoted by the Reagan administration, and on which it later relied in its efforts to win congressional support for its initiatives in Central America and beyond, was not new at all. Rather, it drew heavily on the anticommunist language of human rights that Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships had long used to justify their own regimes' existence throughout the Carter administration, often at meetings where members of the Reagan administration – including Fontaine - were present.

Although the Reagan administration's promotion of this anticommunist definition of human rights demonstrates the South-North intellectual influence that the Latin American Extreme Right exercised on their allies in the US New Right, this rhetoric alone ultimately proved ineffective in winning over opposition voices in Congress. Over the course of 1981, the Reagan administration encountered substantial congressional and public opposition to the path laid out by the Committee of Santa Fe. Policymakers in the White House were forced adjust their attitude to human rights and concomitantly soften the more radical commitments to a proactive anticommunist policy in Central America made in the November 1980 campaign platform. In El Salvador, by far the most pressing case and the White House's biggest priority,

[57] Søndergaard, *Reagan, Congress, and Human Rights: Contesting Morality in US Foreign Policy*, 65–68.
[58] Memorandum, Roger Fontaine to Richard V. Allen, 'South American Speech Outline', 18 May 1981, Folder South America [1981], Box 13, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL.

congressional approval for massive increases in military aid was made conditional on ongoing US support to the Christian Democrats, their reform programme and positive progress toward democratisation paired with frequent and public condemnations of Extreme Right death squad brutality. In a sign of this change of direction, in July 1981 the Reagan administration explicitly repackaged its El Salvador policy using the language of democracy promotion, hitching itself to the call for democratic elections that Napoleon Duarte and the wider PDC had been making since at least mid-1980.[59]

Following this policy shift, Vernon Walters – who had brought encouraging news to his Extreme Right contacts across Latin America in those first months of the Reagan administration – was now charged with explaining the White House's new policy position to its allies in the Central American Extreme Right and entreating them to reduce human rights abuses. As Walters later wrote in his memoirs, 'to three presidents of Guatemala and two of El Salvador, it was my job to tell them that if their armed forces insisted on killing bystanders, this was not only criminal but would lose them US aid'.[60] It is important to note that in the short term Walters' efforts – alongside wider institutional restraints - did little to reduce human rights abuses in El Salvador, as US military aid aided and abetted massive military brutality, including but not limited to the aforementioned El Mozote massacre. Nonetheless, the policy change would prove vital in the long term in determining the course of events in political development of that country, as the next chapter explores.

These restrictions on the El Salvador policy had knock-on effects on the long-hoped-for renewal of US-Extreme Right relations elsewhere, as the White House expended congressional good will on the Salvadoran case. In US-Guatemalan relations, the need to provide evidence of improvements in the human rights situation also severely hampered the prospects for the restoration of US assistance to the military. Where in the Salvadoran case the Reagan administration was able to tote the PDC's reformist agenda as proof of the country's prospects for imminent democratisation and a reduction human rights abuses, Guatemala was a distinctly harder sell. There were no civilians in the government onto whom the Reagan administration could attach its promises of future moderation. Guatemalan president Lucas García was neither willing to promote moderation in exchange for US support nor showed much interest in

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[59] Enrique A. Baloyra, 'The Salvadoran Elections of 1982–1991', *Studies In Comparative International Development* 28, no. 3 (1993), 18.
[60] Vernon A. Walters, *The Mighty and the Meek: Dispatches from the Front Line of Diplomacy / General Vernon Walters.* (London: St Ermin's Press, 2001), 292.

participating in US-conceived efforts to frame the struggle against the guerrilla in Central America - and particularly El Salvador – as inherently democratic in nature.

These conditions, combined with the Guatemalan military's far greater degree of success in containing the guerrilla insurgency (albeit at an enormous and horrific human cost), led to the downgrading of Guatemala among the Reagan administration's priorities, evident in the stark difference in funding levels by the end of 1981. By December, total US economic and military assistance to El Salvador scheduled for the following year was around $250 million. In contrast, Guatemala would receive just $6 million, despite its substantially larger size and population.[61] As a result, US-Guatemalan relations remained distinctly confrontational and, as we shall see, led the Guatemalan military to continue relying heavily on the transnational anticommunist support it had cultivated elsewhere – including the Southern Cone dictatorships – during the Carter administration.

Likewise, the administration's prioritisation of El Salvador came at a cost for the revival of relations with the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships. Administration officials feared that any effort to recertify either Southern Cone dictatorship would detract from their campaign to convince congressional opposition that El Salvador was meeting basic human rights conditions. This was particularly the case in terms of the recertification of Chile for military aid, insofar that the Pinochet dictatorship's ongoing refusal to cooperate with US enquiries into the Letelier assassination and its decision to expel four prominent human rights advocates in August 1981 made a mockery of any pretence that the regime was in any way willing to meet US human rights standards.[62] The latter event, which occurred just a day after Jeane Kirkpatrick had visited Chile and met with Pinochet, provided the human rights movement and congressional opposition with ample ammunition to attack the Reagan administration: the administration appeared to be preaching the importance of human rights while simultaneously seeking to develop warm relations with one of the region's most infamous human rights abusers.[63]

Despite initial signs in the first months of 1981, by the end of that year the Latin American Extreme Right's understanding of the best path forwards for the ideological struggle in Central America remained at odds with US foreign policy. It follows that the inauguration of

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[61] Raymond Bonner, 'Reagan dashes hopes of Guatemala', 16 December 1981, *New York Times*.
[62] Morley and McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over U.S. Policy toward Chile*, 30; Walker, *Principles in Power*, 227.
[63] Walker, *Principles in Power*, 226–30.

Ronald Reagan as President of the United States did not bring the new era in inter-American anticommunist collaboration in Central America that the Extreme Right had hoped for. Rather, forced by Carter-era institutional structures to require certification of the absence of violations of human rights on a country-by-country basis, the immediate reversal of Carter-era policy positions on every anticommunist regime proved impossible, forcing the administration to prioritise. This inevitably produced friction with those dictatorships – among them Chile and Argentina – that sat lower on the list of priorities. When it came to El Salvador and Guatemala, these limitations on US foreign policy made direct collaboration between the United States and the Southern Cone dictatorships more difficult than either party might have expected following Reagan's election in November 1980.

Chilean and Argentine involvement in Central America, 1980-82

Chile, El Salvador and the problem of the Christian Democrats

One of the Chilean Dictatorship's principal hopes was that Reagan's election would end the Carter administration's commitment to the Christian Democrats in El Salvador, whose presence in government since January 1980 had severely hampered Chilean-Salvadoran relations. In February 1981 the Chilean ambassador expected that 'the new North American administration would favour… a solution in which the military factor weighed more heavily than the political', a few weeks later conveying his hope that a military solution to the conflict – thanks to US assistance - could yet pave the way for an 'authentic process of democratisation' safeguarded by the Salvadoran military.[64] Such an outcome would at least partially tally with the Pinochet dictatorship's own model of military action leading to a 'protected democracy' and, with the PDC influence weakened, would be conducive to an improvement in Chilean-Salvadoran relations.

By mid-1981, however, it was apparent that the US military commitment, while large, would be matched in kind with a commitment to the PDC and its reform programme. In June, the Chilean ambassador expressed anxiety about the direction of Salvadoran government policy, raising concerns that the commitment to reform had driven the private business sector into opposition and would continue to fuel instability in the country.[65] This US commitment to the PDC appears to have played an important role in precluding significant US-Chilean collaboration

[64] EmbaSanSalvador, 17 February 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 6 March 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[65] EmbaSanSalvador, 26 June 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.

in support of the counterinsurgency there. At a basic level, the political agenda that the Reagan administration pursued through its support for the PDC was thoroughly at odds with the Pinochet dictatorship's vision for El Salvador: that is, as a country in crisis ripe for the application of a *pinochetazo,* as discussed in the previous chapter. Although the Reagan administration needed to prove to Congress that their policy in El Salvador was fostering democratic practices and a reduction in human rights abuses, the Pinochet dictatorship believed that the armed forces alone could 'lead the country on a path that allows it to find peace, progress, and true democracy'.[66]

To make matters worse, Chilean misgivings about the PDC only grew as the Salvadoran party grew in importance within the wider Christian Democrat movement. In April 1981, President Duarte – as president of the regional Christian Democrat organisation – hosted the 10th Conference of Latin American Christian Democratic Parties (Spanish acronym: ODCA). The conference, the Chilean embassy reported, was 'attended by conspicuous Chilean Christian Democrats'.[67] This no doubt increased the Pinochet regime's identification of the Salvadoran PDC's programme with that pursued under Frei in Chile. From their skewed Extreme Right viewpoint, this signalled the possibility that Duarte could still yet place El Salvador on the path to communist domination.

In light of these differences, Chilean support for the Salvadoran military continued on the trajectory set after the Nicaraguan Revolution, largely independent of both the United States and Argentina. Over the year and a quarter between January 1981 and March 1982 the Pinochet dictatorship continued to build stronger ties with the Salvadoran military despite PDC hostility to the Chilean regime. In an illustrative instance in August 1981, President Duarte as well as the PDC Mayor of San Salvador, Julio Rey Prendes, refused to even meet with a visiting Chilean delegation headed by the Chilean Vice-Minister for Foreign Relations, Colonel Fernando Arancibia Reyes, in protest at the Pinochet dictatorship's exiling (for the second time) of prominent Christian Democrat leader and former member of Frei's cabinet, Jaime Castillo Velasco two weeks earlier.[68] This friction with the PDC increasingly drove Chilean counterinsurgency support beyond the scope of Foreign Ministry oversight, entrenching it within exclusively military spaces.

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[66] EmbaSanSalvador, 6 March 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[67] EmbaSanSalvador, 27 April 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[68] EmbaSanSalvador, 31 August 1981, Oficios, RES. R(31-92), Telex/El Salvador/1981/AMRE.

This shift toward military channels was aided by the military status of the Chilean ambassador. Unlike his Argentine counterpart, the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador (since March 1979) was a high-ranking member of the army, General Arturo Vivero Ávila. According to a February 1981 embassy report, Vivero Ávila's military status allowed 'the embassy to maintain optimal relations with the High Command of the Armed Forces', offsetting the damage done to bilateral relations by 'the interference of the DC International, State Department and other transnational forces in the country'.[69] Vivero Ávila was supported by the Chilean military attaché, Colonel Fernando Salazar Lantery, who also acted as the embassy's second-in-command.[70]

Increases in assistance took a similar form to that granted in the three years beforehand. In spring 1981, five more members of the Salvadoran armed forces travelled to Chile: an additional officer to join the staff of the Salvadoran military mission in Chile, two more officers destined for the *Instituto Superior de Carabineros* and the army's *Academia de Guerra* respectively, and two cadets headed for training in the *Escuela de los Carabineros*.[71] Meanwhile, in El Salvador, the Chilean military attaché and the officer acting as OAS observer on the El Salvador-Honduras border provided training to the Salvadoran navy.[72] In May 1981, a high-ranking Salvadoran military delegation visited Chile. There, members of the Salvadoran high command met with senior members of the Chilean government, and Salvadoran Vice President Abdul Gutierrez awarded Pinochet a Salvadoran military honour.[73] While documentation on the delegation's time in Chile is scarce, the following month the Chilean ambassador described the Salvadoran high command's interest in procuring weapons from Chilean manufacturers and their ongoing interest in a Chilean military mission to reorganise and restructure the armed forces and army training centres – a request first made back in March 1979.[74]

By August 1981, it appears that the Chile was already providing weapons to the Salvadoran military. In a rare mention of Chilean military aid to El Salvador within the Reagan administration archives, a 17 August cable details negotiations between the US ambassador to

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[69] EmbaSanSalvador, 17 February 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[70] EmbaSanSalvador, 15 March 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[71] EmbaSanSalvador, 27 April 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[72] EmbaSanSalvador, 2 June 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[73] Telex, EmbaSanSalvador, 9 April 1981, Oficios, RES. R(31-92), Telex/El Salvador/1981/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 18 May 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[74] EmbaSanSalvador, 2 June 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.

Chile and Chilean Air Force Chief of Staff, General Javier Lopetegui, regarding the refuelling of 'Chilean aircraft bearing armaments for El Salvador' at Howard Air Force Base, a US base within the Panama Canal Zone.[75] On this occasion, the US ambassador sought to convince the Chileans to refuel at Panamanian, not US bases, to avoid 'awakening controversy', a proposal met with resistance from the government of Chile, which was 'suspicious of Panamanian motives and role in Central America' and 'strongly prefers the security of a refuelling stop under USG control'.[76] While this document offers a tantalising glimpse at some degree of logistical coordination between the United States and Chile with regard to El Salvador, the US reluctance to provide even logistical support as detailed here supports the notion that US-Chilean collaboration was very limited in scope.

In the last months of 1981 the Chilean dictatorship continued to increase the range of assistance on offer to the Salvadoran military, with planned increases in scholarships for study across all four branches of the Chilean armed forces (including the Carabineros, military police) and ranging from general courses (military intelligence, engineering, artillery) to specific counterinsurgency training: for example courses in 'Order and Security' or the 'prevention and control of terrorist activities and explosives' in the Escuela de Carabineros.[77] Conscious of the 'divorce' that existed 'between the PDC and the armed forces at the level of high politics' and the open conflict between the PDC and the private business community, the Pinochet dictatorship continued to deepen its relationship with groups sympathetic to its model, increasing military ties while the ambassador regularly gave speeches at businesses lunches and dinners extolling the 'socioeconomic revolution of Chile'.[78]

By late 1981, Chilean diplomats believed that, despite the Pinochet dictatorship's assistance and the high hopes surrounding the new US president, the Salvadoran government remained on the same chaotic path it had taken in October 1979. In this context, the Chilean ambassador expressed deep scepticism about the upcoming March 1982 elections. 'The determination of the United States' to bring about elections in El Salvador in 1982 'will be in vain', he wrote, 'if, at the same time, subversion and the guerrilla are not reduced to their

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[75] Cable, AmEmbassy Santiago to SecState, Subj: Chilean Military Assistance to El Salvador, 17 August 1981, Folder Chile (01201981-07311984) [5], Box 29, Exec Sec, NSC County File, RRPL.
[76] Ibid.
[77] MRE to EmbaSanSalvador, 8 October 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[78] EmbaSanSalvador, 24 August 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE; EmbaSanSalvador, 24 November 1981, Oficios, RES. R(31-92), Telex/El Salvador/1981/AMRE.

minimum expression'.[79] By proceeding to elections without first pacifying subversive forces, El Salvador would 'gradually end up destroying itself materially and morally'.[80] As the next chapter will show, the 1982 constituent assembly elections in El Salvador would test – and ultimately confirm – the Reagan administration's commitment to PDC rule, paving the way for 'democratisation' on US terms, and, by extension, ruling out any solution at all resembling a *pinochetazo* in El Salvador. This widening gap between US and Chilean views over the correct path for El Salvador, and the triumph of the former's approach, would play an important role in the subsequent reduction in Chilean involvement in El Salvador and the wider region.

Argentina and El Salvador: a case of (limited) inter-American collaboration

In contrast to the Chilean case, the centrality of the PDC to US foreign policy did not harm the prospects for Argentine-US collaboration in El Salvador. This owed to two factors already explored in the last chapter: first, that Argentine involvement in Central America was concerned with direct aid to the counterinsurgency rather than the promotion of a specific political model, and second, the Argentine military did not share the Chilean suspicion of the PDC, owing to the far more minor role that the Argentine Christian Democrat Party had played in that country's recent history. Together, these factors made closer collaboration with the United States possible and from early 1981 the Argentine military support the new Reagan administration's policy in El Salvador via direct support to their Salvadoran counterpart. Yet rather than a surrogate for the United States, Argentine involvement in El Salvador also went far beyond the parameters of US policy, as Argentine operatives in Central America continued to work alongside the Extreme Right, empowering the very forces that the Reagan administration was forced, time and time again, to condemn and disown.

In March 1981, mere weeks after Vernon Walters' trip to the Southern Cone, Reagan hosted General Viola, the incoming Argentine president, at the White House. There, Viola assured administration officials that 'the U.S. could count on Argentine support and collaboration to counter Soviet influence in Latin America' and that 'Argentina would continue to support the effort in El Salvador'; he confirmed this commitment once more in public remarks after the meetings.[81] Soon after, in Buenos Aires, the general secretary of the Argentine

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[79] EmbaSanSalvador, 24 November 1981, Oficios, RES. R(31-92), Telex/El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Cable, SecState to AmEmbassy Buenos Aires, Subj. Secretary's Meeting with President-Designate Viola, No. 8928, 18 March 1981, Folder Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (5), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL. Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the

army, General Alfredo Saint Jean declared that 'the Argentine Armed Forces have acquired internationally-renowned experience in unconventional warfare and they are willing to offer training and all kind of cooperation to allied countries', not just El Salvador.[82]

The Argentine embassy in El Salvador's response to Saint Jean's statement reveals the way in which the Argentine foreign ministry and its embassies continued to be excluded from aspects of the coordination of aid to El Salvador. After reporting on the coverage of the two Argentine generals' remarks in the Salvadoran press, the Argentine ambassador sent an urgent cable seeking 'information about the scope of [Saint Jean's] declarations' and 'instructions on how to respond to possible reactions in El Salvador' given that the embassy had 'not been consulted about the advisability of offering military aid and training' to El Salvador.[83] Although the Argentine ambassador certainly maintained close and friendly relations with senior figures in the Salvadoran military, his role remained largely restricted to non-military affairs. Common activities included facilitating visits by civilian members of the Salvadoran cabinet – such as PDC Foreign Minister Fidel Chávez Mena – to Argentina and assisting with the deepening of economic and commercial links between the two governments.[84] In one instance, when Colonel Flores Lima approached the Argentine ambassador regarding arms sales, he was instructed to make direct arrangements with the Argentine military attaché.[85]

As a result, much of Argentine assistance to El Salvador took place on a military-to-military basis, often bypassing both the Argentine embassy and civilian (PDC) members of the Salvadoran government. Between May 1981 and February 1982, senior members of the Argentine and Salvadoran armed forces met in person on at least five occasions, leading to an expansion of the Argentine provision of military training and weapons sales, the latter funded by

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President's Meeting with Argentine President-delegate General Roberto O. Viola, 17 March 1981, Folder Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (4), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL; Memorandum for the President, Your Meeting with Roberto Viola President-delegate of Argentina, 13 March 1981, Folder Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (2), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL. Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's Meeting with Argentine President-delegate General Roberto O. Viola, 17 March 1981, Folder Mar 17, 1981 – President Viola, Argentina, Mtg w President Reagan (4), Box 18, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL. Telegram, San Salvador, No. 160, 19 March 1981, AH/0978, DC, MREC.

[82] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 89.; 'Argentina ofrece ayuda military al Gobierno salvadoreño', *El País*, 20 March 1981 [accessed online, 10 Nov 2020, https://elpais.com/diario/1981/03/20/internacional/353890809_850215.html].

[83] Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 161, 19 March 1981, CF, MREC.

[84] Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 210, 27 April 1981, CF, MREC; Rostica et al., 'La masacre de El Mozote en El Salvador'.

[85] Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 475, 29 October 1981, CF, MREC.

generous loans from the Argentine state bank (see Table 2 for detail). A June 1981 Chilean summary of the training received by the Salvadoran military gives some detail on the nature of the assistance provided, naming Argentina in the provision of training for officers working in intelligence, aviation and the navy.[86]

Table 2: Argentine-US collaboration in Argentine military assistance to El Salvador, 1981-82

Date	Event
March 1981	President Reagan hosts General Viola (president-elect) at the White House
May 1981	US National Security Council decides to seek contributions from other countries, including Argentina, to raise $20 million in military sales and training for the Salvadoran military.[87]
May 1981	Salvadoran military delegation visits Argentina, led by Vice President Colonel Abdul Gutiérrez and including Colonel Flores Lima, Director of the Salvadoran National Guard, and two other members of the high command.[88]
October 1981	Colonel Flores Lima approaches the Argentine ambassador to El Salvador enquiring about the possibility of acquiring weapons and military training, financed by a loan from the Argentine government.[89]
November 1981	Argentine military delegation tours Central America 'promoting the sale of arms and munitions'.[90]
December 1981	General Galtieri meets Colonel Abdul Gutiérrez and Colonel Flores Lima in DC, while the latter are meeting with White House officials to request additional US assistance to El Salvador.[91]
Planned January 1982 (date of trip unknown)	Colonel López Nuila, Chief of Salvadoran National Police, plans trip to Buenos Aires to study the possibility of the Argentine Federal

86 EmbaSanSalvador, 26 June 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1981/AMRE.
87 Minutes of National Security Council meeting, 28 May 1981, Folder NSC 00010 28 May 1981 (1), Box 1, Exec Sec, NSC Meeting File, RRPL.
88 Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 248, 21 May 1981, AH/0978, DC, MREC; Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 211, 28 April 1981, CF, MREC.
89 Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 475, 29 October 1981, CF, MREC.
90 Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 481, 9 November 1981, CF, MREC; Cable secreto, Dpto. America Central y Caribe, No. 403, 20 November 1981, CF, MREC.
91 Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 517, 10 December 1981, AH/0978, DC, MREC; Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 518, 11 December 1981, AH/0978, DC, MREC.

	Police lending 'training and technical aid' to its Salvadoran counterpart.[92]
11 February 1982	*Banco de la República Argentina* approves a $20 million loan 'to finance the export of secret war material' to El Salvador.[93]
24 February 1982	Colonel Flores Lima visits Buenos Aires to discuss additional military aid, is offered an open credit of $100 million.[94]

Although Argentine foreign ministry records do not explicitly acknowledge any US role, taken together with documents from the United States, it is clear that this expansion of Argentine assistance via bilateral military channels took place in collaboration with the Reagan administration. For example, in a May 1981 NSC meeting on the Caribbean Basin Initiative and associated military support to El Salvador, Secretary of State Alexander Haig raised the precise figure of $20 million in military sales and training required by El Salvador, in the following sentence indicating his expectation that this contribution might come from 'other nations' among them Japan, Brazil, 'even Chile, and Argentina'.[95] Secret records from the *Banco Central de la República Argentina* (BCRA, Argentina Central Bank) show that these arms sales were finalised in early 1982, with the confirmation of a $20 million loan 'to finance the export of secret war material' to El Salvador on 11 February 1982.[96] Elements of this deal were likely negotiated in December 1981, when senior figures from both the Salvadoran and Argentine armed forces converged on Washington DC for meetings at the White House (see Table 2). It is possible this meeting also featured discussions of ambitious US-Argentine plans of assembling an Inter-American military force to combat the guerrilla in Central America under the aegis of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (commonly known as the Rio Treaty or by its Spanish acronym TIAR).[97]

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[92] Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 16, 14 January 1982, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC; Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 19, 15 January 1982, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC.
[93] Acta No. "S" 2, 11 February 1982, *Actas Secretas del BCRA 1981-1983*, Banco Central de la República Argentina, published March 2015, http://www.bcra.gob.ar/Pdfs/BCRA/ddhh/BCRA%20Acta%20S%202%2011%20de%20Febrero%201982.pdf, accessed 29 July 2020.
[94] Cable secreto, San Salvador, No. 77, 18 February 1982, AH/0982/2, Dirección Comuniaciones, MREC; Telex, EmbaSan Salvador, 18 February 1982, Oficios, ORD., Telex/El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[95] See Table 2, row 2.
[96] See Table 2, row 8.
[97] 'Más armas, receta de Washington ante el fracaso de la ofensiva antiguerrillera en El Salvador' *El País*, 13 November 1981, https://elpais.com/diario/1981/11/13/internacional/374454020_850215.html, accessed 11 March 2021.

While these cases show US awareness and facilitation of Argentine military aid to El Salvador, the Argentine dictatorship remained an independent actor in Central America. Indeed, given the pattern set by Argentine activity before 1981 described in previous chapters of this thesis, it is likely the Argentine armed forces would have provided this aid regardless of who occupied the White House. More importantly, while the cases above clearly dovetailed with stated US foreign policy aims to strengthen the Salvadoran armed forces, Argentine involvement in El Salvador went beyond these bilateral channels, extending, as it had before 1981, to direct assistance to the Salvadoran Extreme Right and its associated death squads. In this respect, the Argentine dictatorship's involvement went far beyond the stated parameters of US policy, which explicitly denied support for the Salvadoran Extreme Right, a factor on which congressional approval hung.

As the last chapter showed, in the wake of the IV CAL Congress in Buenos Aires in September 1980 the Argentine armed forces despatched up to fifty more 'unconventional warfare advisers' to El Salvador. Once there, they worked under the authority of Battalion 601, commanded by Colonel Santiago Hoya stationed in Honduras and ultimately answerable to Suárez Mason, organiser of the IV CAL Congress.[98] By Ariel Armony's account, these numbers continued to rise through 1981, with the Salvadoran military delegation's visit to Argentina in May 1981 (see Table 2) leading to an increase in Argentine counterinsurgency personnel in El Salvador to one hundred in total.[99] It is possible these numbers increased further still: in March 1982 Eduardo Luis Duhalde, president of Argentine human rights organisation CADHU (*Comisión Argentina de Derechos Humanos*) appeared before the UN Commission on Human rights in Geneva, Switzerland, where he denounced the presence of 180 Argentine military officers in El Salvador.[100] While it is difficult to substantiate Duhalde's claims with archival sources, it is evident from this – and a series of reports in international newspapers around the same time – that Argentine support for Salvadoran Extreme Right paramilitary operations continued to grow throughout 1981.[101]

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[98] Anderson and Anderson, *Inside The League: The Shocking Exposé of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League*, 148. McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 214. '"The Doctor" Prescribes Torture for the Hesitant', in Pyes and Becklund, *Salvadoran Rightists: The Deadly Patriots*.
[99] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 88.
[100] 'Guerra sucia en El Salvador: ¿dónde están ahora los asesores argentinos?' *Centroamérica en la mira*, No. 6, mayo-junio 1984, 24, Folder 3, Box 1, Salvadoran Subject Collection, HILA.
[101] These reports are summarised at ibid.

According to journalist Craig Pyes, these advisors' activities in El Salvador were mediated by Roberto D'Aubuisson and the FAN and – where they did work alongside government security forces – they collaborated with the National Guard, at this stage led by Colonel Vides Casanova.[102] These transnational ties not only show the continued independence of Argentine policy in El Salvador from the United States, but they also directly undermined US foreign policy by empowering D'Aubuisson and the Extreme Right. Indeed, in March 1981 CIA analysts recognised the threat that ongoing Extreme Right activity posed to US policy goals. They warned that the 'egocentric and reckless' leader of the Salvadoran Right, 'could play a spoiler role by continuing to encourage right-wing terrorists – many of whom are enlisted personnel in the security forces – and by issuing inflammatory public declarations against the junta and those sympathetic to the reform process.'[103]

While US-trained Salvadoran military units certainly perpetrated horrific acts of violence themselves – the El Mozote Massacre of December 1981 chief among them – this military support was conditional on a commitment to civilian rule and land reform, if arguably only to satisfy congressional restraints. On the other hand, in contrast to both US policy and the Chilean dictatorship's outlook, Argentine counterinsurgent support – conducted through both military aid and transnational ties to the Salvadoran Extreme Right – was not tempered by any political programme, but explicitly sought to replicate the all-out counterinsurgency that the Argentine junta judged to have been so successful at home. In this way the Argentine dictatorship's ongoing transnational ties to the Salvadoran Extreme Right empowered the very paramilitary groups whose ongoing existence so seriously undermined the Reagan administration's claims that their policy was conducive to improvements in the human rights situation in El Salvador.

Chile and Guatemala: continuity

In contrast to their opinion of the Salvadoran junta, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala continued to see in the Guatemalan government much of what they prized in Chile's own. The Lucas García regime was 'strong' and 'decidedly anticommunist' in outlook with the military the 'fundamental political power' in the country.[104] As guerrilla activity increased in both Guatemala's

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102 Ibid.
103 CIA Memorandum, 'El Salvador: The Right Wing', 18 March 1981, CREST, copy consulted in CIDAI, UCA, El Salvador.
104 Oficio, EmbaGuatemala, 'Remite Apreciación 2º Semestre 1980', 21 November 1980, Oficios, SEC.RES. 101-169, Guatemala/1981/AMRE; Oficio, EmbaGuatemala, 'Informe Bimensual correspondiente a Enero y Febrero 1981', 23 February 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES. 1-336, Guatemala/1981/AMRE.

cities and countryside over the course of 1981, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala maintained a sympathetic line with the Guatemalan government's reporting on nature of the ongoing civil war, replicating its Manichean worldview that emphasised the international origins of the 'subversion' and continuing to portray the government as legitimately 'elected' by the people.[105] And, like his counterpart in El Salvador, the Chilean ambassador expressed disappointment and scepticism at the direction of US foreign policy under Reagan. In relation to discussion of a 'Mini Marshall Plan' of massive private investment for Central America in July-August 1981, the Chilean ambassador remarked on the impossibility of such a plan having any positive impact without first defeating the guerrilla insurgency and pacifying the country. After all, he wrote, 'what private investor would invest in an area convulsed by violence?'[106]

Despite these concerns over both US foreign policy and the increasingly frequent and violent confrontations between the Guatemalan military and the guerrilla (as well as other supposedly 'subversive' forces), the 1980-82 period did not mark an increase in Chilean assistance to Guatemala, with relations largely proceeding along the lines established the previous year. Although Guatemalan military delegation visited Santiago in March 1981 and the Chilean Vice Minister Foreign Relations made offers of assistance regarding further military and police training scholarships in August 1981, these discussions appear to have had limited practical impact in terms of any increase in the number of Guatemalans travelling to Chile, at least as far as they were recorded in embassy correspondence.[107] While the Chilean ambassador continued to point to the 'excellent' relationship between Chile and Guatemala and celebrated the exchange of foreign ministry visits in 1981, at almost every opportunity he also lamented the absence of a Chilean military attaché based in Guatemala. Reports on the military aspect of bilateral relations regularly emphasised that the attaché shared by the Guatemalan and Salvadoran embassies was, by virtue of being based in San Salvador, far more focused on the latter country's needs. Having an attaché based in El Salvador, was, 'as if the Guatemalan military attaché stationed in Bolivia were concurrent with Santiago'.[108]

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105 Oficio, EmbaGuatemala, 'Informa declaraciones de Secretario de RR.PP. de la Presidencia', Oficios, SEC.RES., 1-336, Guatemala/1981/AMRE; Oficio, EmbaGuatemala, 'Remite Plan de Acción año 1981', 16 March 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES., 1-336, Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
106 EmbaGuatemala, 24 August 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES., 340-672/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
107 Telex, EmbaGuatemala, 12 March 1981, Aerogramas, Telex/Guatemala/1981/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 27 August 1981, Oficios, RES. 340-672/Guatemala/1981/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 16 December 1981, Oficios, RES., 340-672/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
108 Telex, EmbaGuatemala, 12 August 1981, Aerogramas, Telex/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.

It is difficult to ascertain why the Chilean armed forces proved so unresponsive in relation to these pleas. Available foreign ministry documents are overwhelmingly made up of those sent from the embassies to the Foreign Ministry, privileging the views of the ambassador, while the lack of access to military archives makes it difficult to grasp the armed forces' decision making. Nonetheless, it is possible to venture an explanation based on the circumstances in which the Pinochet dictatorship found itself at this juncture. First, in July 1980, the MIR (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria*), which had begun moving its fighters back into Chile from 1978, assassinated the head of the Chilean army intelligence school, Colonel Roger Vergara, timing the action to coincide with the regime's formal approval of the 1980 constitution. This act – which caught the Chilean security services by surprise – led to the appointment of new leadership of the CNI (*Centro Nacional de Informaciones*) and ended that agency's three years of relative moderation in the wake of the Letelier assassination, resuming the violent tactics of the DINA that preceded it. Over the next three years state-perpetrated violence increased enormously, while the armed Left also grew more active. While these events were not as far removed from Central America as one might initially think – the Chilean embassy in Guatemala forwarded information about MIR training camps in Nicaragua in May 1981 – it is nonetheless likely that the escalating violence at home served as a distraction from more ambitious Chilean involvement abroad.

Perhaps more pressingly, by late 1981 the first signs of impending economic crisis emerged in Chile. These signs were significant enough to earn mention in the press in Central America, with clippings faithfully relayed back to Santiago.[109] While the full impact of the economic crisis and subsequent politics of *apertura* would not become apparent until after the spring of 1982, it nonetheless likely contributed to Chilean reticence to commit any further military resources to Guatemala in this period. With limited resources as a result of these changes on the domestic front, two principal reasons explain why the Chilean dictatorship would focus its efforts on El Salvador rather than Guatemala. First, Chilean diplomats perceived the Guatemalan military to be enjoying far greater stability and faced a far lower threat of imminent Marxist revolution. By contrast, the Salvadoran military – limited by the Christian Democrats and entirely dependent on US aid – presented a far more fragile prospect. This, in combination with Chile's historic role in training the Salvadoran armed forces, ensured a greater Chilean commitment to providing counterinsurgent support.

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[109] See, for example, EmbaGuatemala, 31 October 1981, Oficios, RES. 340-672/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.

Second, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala continued to maintain close tabs on its neighbours' activity there and were thus well aware that Argentine aid was capable of meeting the Guatemalan military's vital needs. Where Chilean involvement in Guatemala plateaued over the course of 1981, the same cannot be said for the Argentine presence in the country. In fact, the Chilean embassy recognised that Argentina, alongside Israel, remained among the most important countries providing aid to the Guatemalan counterinsurgency and, by extension, making it possible for Guatemala to continue to cope without human-rights conditioned US military aid.[110]

Argentina and Guatemala: a crucial relationship

Although it has long been supposed that both Argentine and Israeli support to Guatemala took place with the unofficial endorsement of elements of the US government, there is very little evidence to suggest direct collaboration with the Reagan administration as Argentine involvement in Guatemala increased from late 1980.[111] Rather, from January 1981 Argentine-Guatemalan relations continued strengthening along the trajectory set the previous year. In the weeks after Reagan's election in November 1980, two Guatemalan delegations visited Buenos Aires in quick succession. These were followed by a third visit in March 1981, and a reciprocal Argentine delegation to Guatemala, led by army chief General Vaquero, in April 1981 (see Table 3). This last delegation met with various governmental and military authorities and the Chilean embassy – keeping a watchful eye as ever – placed these discussions within the context of a $30 million credit offered to Guatemala by the Argentine government in late 1980.[112] These high-level exchanges between the two military dictatorships produced results, and, building on a July 1980 visit to Guatemala by the Argentine state arms manufacturer, AFNE (*Astilleros Fábricas Navales del Estado*), resulted in a $30 million credit for Argentine arms sales to Guatemala, approved by the BCRA in January 1982.[113] To put this figure in perspective, total recorded military sales from the United States to Guatemala in 1981 were just $5,000 (in cash, not on credit), versus almost $50 million to El Salvador (a mixture of cash, credit and the military

[110] EmbaGuatemala, 22 February 1982, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.
[111] On collaboration, see Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino*, 292.
[112] EmbaGuatemala, 11 April 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES. 1-336/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
[113] Cable secreto, No. 243-245, 14 August 1981, CF; also see Table 3, row 8.

assistance program).[114] After Reagan's inauguration, then, the Argentine dictatorship continued to fill a some of the void left by the ongoing suspension of the majority of US military aid.

Table 3: Argentine assistance to Guatemala, 1980-82

Date	Event
July 1980	Delegation from Argentine state arms manufacturer, AFNE (*Astilleros y Fábricas Navales del Estado*) visits Guatemala.[115]
10 November 1980	Guatemalan Vice President Colonel Oscar Mendoza Azurdia visits Buenos Aires, meets with President Videla.[116]
22 November 1980	Guatemalan military delegation led by Commander in Chief of the Guatemalan Army General Luis Rene Mendoza Palomo arrives in Buenos Aires.[117]
March 1981	Guatemalan military delegation led by Colonel Manuel Callejas (G2 army intelligence) visits Buenos Aires.[118]
6 April 1981	Argentine military delegation to Guatemala, headed by General Jose Antonio Vaquero, Commander in Chief of the Argentine Army and accompanied by three other officers.[119]
26-30 April 1981	A second Argentine military delegation recorded in Guatemala.[120]
August 1981	Argentine and Guatemalan delegates meet at WACL conference in Taiwan; Guatemalan delegation led by Mario Sandoval Alarcón.[121]
14 January 1982	*Banco Central de la República Argentina* approves a $30 million credit for military sales to Guatemala.[122]

[114] United States Southern Command 1981 Historical Report, August 1982, UWCHR El Salvador Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Documents [accessed online: https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/45382, 21 December 2020].
[115] Cable secreto, 7 July 1980, No. 154, AH/0979 vol. 129, DC, MREC.
[116] Oficio, Guatemalan Embassy in Buenos Aires to Foreign Minister, 29 October 1980, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC.
[117] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 23 November 1980, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC.
[118] Telex, EmbaChile Guatemala, 12 March 1981, Aerogramas, Telex/Guatemala/1981/AMRE.
[119] Cable secreto, No. 88, 16 March 1981, CF, MREC.
[120] Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 115.
[121] Agenda and Program of Activities, 14th Conference of the World Anti-Communist League, 3-7 August 1981, Folder 4 – WACL Conference File, 1981, Box 61, KDP, HILA.
[122] Acta No. "S" 1, 14 January 1982, *Actas Secretas del BCRA 1981-1983*, Banco Central de la República Argentina, published March 2015, http://www.bcra.gob.ar/Pdfs/BCRA/ddhh/BCRA%20Acta%20S%201%2014%20de%20Enero%201982.pdf, accessed 29 July 2020.

While significant, Argentine military aid to Guatemala in this period was not limited to arms sales. Although largely absent from Argentine foreign ministry documents, the presence of Argentine officers on the ground providing counterinsurgency training in Guatemala also increased over the course of 1981. In her 2016 article on Argentine-Guatemalan relations (1978-83), Julieta Rostica used records from the archives of Guatemala's National Police to show that mere weeks after Vaquero's delegation had left Guatemala, another Argentine military delegation was recorded departing Guatemala on 30 April, on the same flight as a US military delegation.[123] The US presence here is mysterious, and likewise absent from Reagan administration records, which show only a visit to Guatemala by Vernon Walters two weeks later.[124]

Chilean records and contemporary press reports, however, shed light on what this second, secretive Argentine mission may have pertained to. On 29 April, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala met with Colonel Carlos Morales Villatoro, Commander in Chief of the Guatemalan Air Force. During the conversation, Morales brought up an article published in Mexican newspaper *Excelsior* two days earlier, entitled '100 Argentines join the 3,000 US military trainers in Central America'. Morales went on to indicate that the report was likely based on the arrival, on 26 April, of an Argentine C-130 plane carrying two Argentine commodores and a vice-commodore, and suggested that their presence was linked to planned agreements regarding 'mutual support in cases of disaster' at the upcoming CONJEFAMER (the Conference of Commanders in Chief of American Air Forces) to take place in Miami in the following month.[125] The Chilean ambassador concluded that the *Excelsior* report likely had a great deal of truth to it, given General Vaquero's recent presence in Guatemala and the size of the plane (capable of carrying 92 ground troops).[126]

This evidence accords with the Guatemalan armed Left's understanding of the Argentine role in Guatemala in this period. The Guatemalan guerrilla repeatedly targeted the Argentine embassy in Guatemala City in response to perceived Argentine complicity in the Civil War, while in 1982, EGP guerrilla and K'iche Maya organiser Emeterio Toj Medrano, testified before the

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123 Rostica, 'La política exterior de la dictadura cívico-militar argentina hacia Guatemala (1976-1983)', 115.
124 Cable, Subj: Initiative on Guatemala: Talking Points for General Walters', 13 April 1981, Folder AT Guatemala [2], Box 3, Robert Lilac Files, RRPL.
125 EmbaGuatemala, 30 April 1981, Oficios, SEC.RES. 1-336/Guatemala/1981/AMRE; On CONJEFAMER see 'United States Southern Command 1981 Historical Report', August 1982, UWCHR El Salvador Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Documents, https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/45382, accessed 21 December 2020.
126 Ibid.

UN Commission on Human Rights that Argentine operatives had been present in General Justo Rufino Barrios barracks, where he had been interrogated and tortured in 1981.[127] Moreover Eduardo Duhalde claims that in October 1981 – two months after representatives of both military regimes came together at the WACL conference in Taipei, Taiwan – the two dictatorships signed a secret agreement leading to an increase in 'the participation of the Argentine armed forces in the Guatemalan *proceso*' and, as a result, Guatemalan army and police officers received further training in Buenos Aires.[128] Ariel Armony corroborates this claim, putting the number of officers sent for training at this time at an additional two hundred.[129]

While it is difficult to provide a precise figure, it is apparent that the Argentine presence in Guatemala increased substantially over the course of 1981, and that this increase was mediated by unofficial ties beyond the Foreign Ministry, like that in El Salvador in the same period. As elections in Guatemala approached in the spring of 1982, Argentine involvement in the country was reaching a new peak. Yet, as the next chapter will discuss, events in the six weeks after those elections would radically alter the political landscape in both Guatemala and Argentina, with fundamental consequences for ongoing Argentine involvement in the region.

Tacit US support for the Extreme Right

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that formal US policy toward Central America as sanctioned by Congress was not the sole form that US involvement in the region took. Rather, the transnational ties that had developed between the US New Right and the Latin American Extreme Right in the previous years remained in place. These ongoing interactions between the Extreme Right and prominent US politicians – including members of the Reagan administration – served to empower the Extreme Right, particularly in El Salvador where US military aid now flowed so freely. These ties fostered both a healthy scepticism about the depth of the Reagan administration's commitment to human rights and reform and a belief that deep down the Reagan administration shared their diagnosis of the nature of the Cold War in Latin America. Or, as Archbishop of San Salvador Arturo Rivera y Damas put it in a letter to US Vice President George Bush in April 1981, 'Both you and Judge Clark stressed that the Reagan administration

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[127] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, No. 799, 24 November 1980, AH/0042/2, DAL, MREC; Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino*, 292; Betsy Konefal, 'The Ethnic Question in Guatemala's Armed Conflict: Insights from the Detention and "Rescue" of Emeterio Toj Medrano', in *Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left*, ed. Kevin A. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 240–65.
[128] Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino*, 292.
[129] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 91.

does not support the "Right". But as I indicated to Judge Clark, the "Right" in our country believes you do support them.'[130]

The CIS Inter-American Symposium of May 1981, held in Buenos Aires, is an illustrative example of these ongoing connections. The conference drew together many of those who had been in Buenos Aires for the CAL Congress the year before, plus more representatives from the United States. Latin American attendees included Extreme Right activists Orlando de Sola and Alfredo Mena from El Salvador, MLN members Manuel Ayau and Carlos Widman from Guatemala and Hernán Larraín and Gustavo Cuevas from Chile. Arrangements in the host country were coordinated by Ricardo Zinn, and General Carlos Suárez Mason – chief of Argentine military operations in Central America – also attended.[131] Participants from the United States included the aforementioned John Carbaugh, Sante Fe contributors David Jordan and Lewis Tambs, Congressman Robert Dornan, long-time WACL attendee Stephan Possony, Francis Bouchey (the chief organiser at the CIS end), and one Colonel Samuel Dickens, a retired US air force officer (1979) and part of the Heritage Foundation, who, a few months later, would be present in El Salvador at the formal foundation of ARENA in October 1981.[132] Importantly, due to their respective roles within the Reagan administration, the symposium received messages of support from General Gordon Sumner and Jeane Kirkpatrick, with the former printed on a State Department stationery.[133] Meanwhile, despite his role in the administration, Vernon Walters addressed the conference in person.[134] On his way to the symposium, Francis Bouchey stopped in Chile, where he met with Jaime Guzmán.[135]

The extent of this interaction between members of the US New Right – including hardliners within the Reagan administration – and the Latin American Extreme Right lays bare the contradictory impulses between formal US foreign policy as publicly stated by the White

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130 Letter, Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas to Vice President George Bush, 10 April 1981, Folder El Salvador [05131981-05191981], Box 7, Roger Fontaine Files, RRPL.
131 Room Bookings, CIS 1981, Folder 13 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA; Participants and Program Details, IAS 1981, Folder 14 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA.
132 Ibid; Ferreira, *30 años trabajando por El Salvador*, 36.
133 Lt. General Gordon Sumner, Message to the Inter-American Symposium, Folder 14 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA; Room Bookings, CIS 1981, Folder 13 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA.
134 Participants and Program Details, IAS 1981, Folder 14 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA.
135 Letter, L. Francis Bouchey to Hernán Larraín, 17 April 1981, Folder 14 – Conferences, Inter-American Symposium 1981, Correspondence, Box 2, CIS, HILA.

House and State Department, and the very different treatment of the Extreme Right behind closed doors in transnational fora. On one hand, the administration publicly emphasised the importance of human rights, condemned death squad activity and proved unable to restore military aid to Guatemala, with all these factors serving to alienate Southern Cone, but particularly Chilean, dictatorship officials. On the other hand, members of the Reagan administration met with known funders of those death squads, and, of course, directly collaborated with them when it came to CIA funding and training of the Nicaraguan contras, formalised after October 1981. Flora Lewis recognised this tendency in the *New York Times* in December 1983, noting how conservative 'think tanks' – the ASC and CIS chief among them – made a point 'of having good relations with such ultras as Salvador's Roberto D'Aubuisson and Guatemala's Mario Sandoval Alarcón, who are officially shunned by the U.S. because of their murderous reputations'. Meetings between these think tanks and the Extreme Right were then 'used by the Latins to spread word that they have confirmed secret U.S. Government backing, despite public denunciations'.[136] In fact, these connections show the spurious nature of the Reagan administration's supposed commitment to human rights and democracy. Going forwards, as Southern Cone involvement in Central America declined after 1982, these connections would prove significant in facilitating US extra-official involvement in the region.

Conclusion

Between late 1980 and March 1982 both the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships continued providing direct assistance to the Guatemalan and Salvadoran militaries and wider Extreme Right. Where there were changes in this assistance – for example the shift in balance in favour of a greater Argentine role, particularly in El Salvador – these changes were not wholly driven by the inauguration of a new US president in January 1981. Rather, despite high expectations, Reagan's inauguration as US president did not bring the smooth restoration of US government collaboration with the Latin American Extreme Right which the latter had envisaged during the 1980 election campaign. Historians of US foreign relations have long contended that the final months of the Carter presidency set the precedent for Reagan's proactive El Salvador policy by restarting US military aid and establishing the US commitment to the PDC presence in government; this chapter has shown how Reagan's policy marked

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[136] Flora Lewis, 'Left Hand, Right Hand', *New York Times,* 16 December 1983, clipping in CIA FOIA reading room, RDP90-00552R000100890009-6, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00552R000100890009-6.pdf, accessed 10 December 2020.

continuity with Carter's in another way: by mid-1981 it had become clear that the Reagan administration was unable to abolish human rights restrictions in US-Latin American relations.[137]

Without congressional restrictions, the Reagan administration may hypothetically have marked a new era of unimpeded inter-American anticommunist collaboration, replicating the cooperation between the United States and Argentina in the very specific circumstances of CIA assistance to the Nicaraguan *contra* in the provision of assistance to the militaries and security services in Guatemala and El Salvador. Instead, the Reagan White House was forced to repackage its foreign policy in Central America, and the language of human rights and democracy soon became central elements in justifying the massive escalation of US military aid to El Salvador in particular. While the Reagan administration later celebrated the 'Third Wave' of democratisation taking place on its watch, its initial pivot to democracy promotion in the first year of Reagan's presidency was reactive – in response to congressional restraints and calls for democracy made by the Salvadoran PDC themselves - rather than proactive. As McCormick has argued, it was the 'ambivalent lessons' learnt in Central America that would place democracy promotion at the heart of US foreign policy rhetoric in the years to come, as the next chapter explores.[138]

Despite this lip service to the importance of human rights and democracy, in the short term, US funding and training to El Salvador justified in these terms led to increased bloodshed, contributing to the massive escalation of the Salvadoran military's counterinsurgency efforts, including multiple massacres of the civilian population, with El Mozote most famous among them. Moreover, the Reagan administration's ongoing transnational links to members of the Latin American Extreme Right (including, but not limited to collaboration with the Nicaraguan *contras*) meant that Extreme Rightists in both El Salvador and Guatemala remained convinced that, behind closed doors, they enjoyed the administration's implicit support and thus continued to unleash terror on supposed 'subversives'. Here, then, US policy echoed the 'red light green light' approaches that had characterised Henry Kissinger's approach to Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships the decade before. As John Dinges wrote in relation to Operation Condor in 2003, 'dictators will not understand a two-track moral message on human rights, however carefully crafted the message. The U.S. message will instead be grasped as a single

[137] LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*, 70.
[138] McCormick, 'Freedom Tide?: Ideology, Politics, and the Origins of Democracy Promotion in U.S. Central America Policy, 1980–1984', 64.

muddled endorsement of the brutal strategy and tactics upon which our unsubtle allies are already embarked'.[139]

While the subservience of democracy and human rights rhetoric to US military goals in El Salvador was abundantly clear to many on the moderate Right and across the rest of the political spectrum, those on the Extreme Right, and members of the Pinochet dictatorship in particular, saw it from a very different perspective. So extreme were Chilean views on Central America that, when looking at US policy from further to the Right of the Reagan administration, they perceived the administration's vocal commitment to democracy and human rights to be undermining the struggle against 'subversion' despite the concurrent escalation of US military aid. As the next and final chapter of this thesis shows, this reading of US policy fundamentally limited the options for Chilean policymaking in Central America in 1982-84.

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[139] John Dinges, 'Green Light-Red Light: Henry Kissinger's 2-Track Approach to Human Rights During the "Condor Years" in Chile and Argentina', in *Argentina-United States Bilateral Relations: An Historical Perspective and Future Challenges*, ed. Cynthia Arnson (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003), 66.

Chapter 6: Democracy Promotion and the Denouement of Southern Cone involvement in Central America, 1982-84

Introduction

On 10 December 1983, Raúl Alfonsín was sworn in as President of Argentina, marking the definitive end of the Argentine military dictatorship. In the audience that day were the Guatemalan President General Óscar Mejía Victores, and the Salvadoran Foreign Minister, Fidel Chávez Mena. On his return journey from Buenos Aires, Mejía Victores stopped in Brazil and met with President João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo, Brazil's last military president, where the two discussed the process of *abertura* and the situation in Central America.[1] Meanwhile, Chávez Mena travelled back from Buenos Aires as a guest on US Vice President George Bush's plane, giving the two dignitaries the opportunity for a 'long discussion… about the situation in Central America and in particular in El Salvador'.[2] The presence of these high-ranking representatives of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments at Alfonsín's inauguration is a striking indication of how important a visible adherence to democratic norms had become in the fast-changing international political landscape of the 1980s.

Almost exactly two years to the day after Alfonsín's inauguration, Vinicio Cerezo triumphed in the second round of Guatemala's presidential elections. With Cerezo's inauguration in January 1986, all four of these countries – Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina and Brazil - had formally transitioned to democratic civilian rule. This process – part of what Samuel Huntington dubbed the 'Third Wave of democratisation' in 1991 – forms the vital context for this final chapter.[3] Crucially, this process of 'democratisation' embodied the triumph of the narrow definitions of 'democracy' (the existence of elections) and 'human rights' (defined in terms of individual freedom to participate in those elections) that lay at the core of the Reagan administration's justifications for US aid to Central America since mid-1981. Although the 'Third Wave' was widely celebrated at the time, in neither Guatemala nor El Salvador did 'democratisation' represent a turning point in socioeconomic conditions, and indeed the internal conflicts raged on in both countries until 1996 and 1992 respectively. Yet the political transformation that both countries underwent between 1982 and 1984 – and the central role of

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[1] EmbaGuatemala, 20 December 1983, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1983/AMRE.
[2] Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 680, AH/0512, DC, MREC.
[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

US policy and aid to that transition – is, alongside the obvious factor of the collapse of the Argentine dictatorship, critically important when explaining the denouement of Southern Cone anticommunist assistance to the counterinsurgent and Extreme Right forces in this period.

The 1982 elections in Guatemala and El Salvador marked the beginning of this transformation. Here, a particular focus is placed on El Salvador, where the elections and subsequent weeks-long negotiation of the composition of the new coalition government made clear to both the Salvadoran Extreme Right and their comrades in the Southern Cone that the US government would not tolerate the emergence of an Extreme Right-dominated government in El Salvador, elected or not. In time, this fact, combined with Roberto D'Aubuisson's failure to win the 1984 presidential election on an only marginally more moderate platform than that which the new party had put forward in 1982, would lead to ARENA's political moderation under a new, younger leadership, paving the way for the party's victory in the 1989 presidential elections and domination of the post-war Salvadoran political landscape. The Guatemalan military leadership watched this process in neighbouring El Salvador and, by 1983, they too embraced 'democratisation'.

How did these events in Central American affect Southern Cone involvement? The Chilean dictatorship's perceptions of, and involvement in, the region changed between 1982 and 1984, shaped by both political changes in Central America as well as challenges to the dictatorship at home. The Falklands/Malvinas conflict and the aftershocks of Argentine defeat likewise fundamentally altered Argentine involvement in the region. The Argentine transition to democracy brought about the end to the vast majority of counterinsurgent assistance to Central America, while Argentina's experience of democratisation in turn prompted reflection among Salvadoran and Guatemalan political leaders. Argentina transformed from a model for successful anticommunist counterinsurgency to an informative example of one of the forms that a democratic transition could take. Spotlighting these connections between Extreme Right leaders' formal embrace of 'democratisation' in turn helps us to understand how they successfully limited the extent to which the new democracies that emerged marked a distinct break with the socioeconomic and political structures of authoritarian rule.

The 1982 elections as a turning point

In March 1982, both Guatemala and El Salvador went to the polls. The results of these elections profoundly shaped both the form and ideological outlook of the governments in both

countries in the years to come. In El Salvador, the constituent assembly elections of 28 March were far from representative of the entire political spectrum. The ongoing civil war and the Extreme Right's open persecution of the popular opposition movement made participation by the democratic Left 'unwise and unsafe', while the FMLN actively sabotaged the elections, denouncing them as a US imposition on Salvadoran politics.[4] As a result, the elections offered a limited choice between 'a Center in favor of containing the guerrillas but resolving the crisis through political means [the PDC], and a Right very much resolved to win the civil war and roll back the reforms of 1979-80 at any costs', represented by the joint ARENA-PCN ticket.[5] The overall turnout was 63%, and although the PDC emerged as the largest party, the parties of the Right together held a majority in the new constituent assembly.[6] This was a remarkable result for ARENA, given that the party had only officially formed five months earlier.

Two days after the elections, Roberto D'Aubuisson and Dr Jose Antonio Rodríguez Porth (ARENA founder and former foreign minister) laid out their vision for a new provisional government in a meeting with the Argentine ambassador. The government would be headed by a triumvirate composed of Rodríguez Porth, D'Aubuisson (who would also become Interior Minister) and the current Defence Minister General Jose Guillermo García, who would also retain his current role. They envisaged granting Minister of the Economy to Dr Roberto Escobar García of the PCN, and retaining Fidel Chávez Mena in the Foreign Ministry, as a consolation for the PDC. This slate allowed ARENA to present the provisional government as one of 'National Unity'.[7] After outlining this vision, D'Aubuisson described how he planned to bring the security forces under the remit of the Interior Ministry (and thus his personal control), and to use the Argentine Federal Police to reorganise El Salvador's Policía Nacional. Doing so, D'Aubuisson argued, would provide them with urban counterinsurgency and intelligence training, deemed essential to combat 'subversion'.[8] Had this vision become a reality, the role of both Southern Cone dictatorships as models and training providers for the Salvadoran may have been very different. However, the Reagan administration, vitally aware of its reliance on congressional approval for continued aid to El Salvador, had a very different vision for the new Salvadoran government.

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4 Baloyra, 'The Salvadoran Elections of 1982–1991', 9, 18.
5 Baloyra, 19.
6 Baloyra, 11.
7 Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 146/147, 31 March 1982, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC.
8 Cable secreto, El Salvador, No. 146/147, 31 March 1982, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC.

As soon as the election results became clear, the US Secretary of State Alexander Haig instructed the US ambassador to El Salvador, Deane Hinton, to make the US government's stance known to all parties involved: 'If [the] result of coalition building is a right-wing-led formation, Congress will withdraw support for security and most economic assistance, and GOES [Government of El Salvador] will have to fight on alone'.[9] Although D'Aubuisson – somewhat belatedly – had recognised that his future political ambitions would rely on US good will and accordingly toned down his anti-reformist language in the wake of the elections, this was to little avail. Throughout the month of April, the Reagan administration, in league with the Salvadoran armed forces, worked hard to push through their own vision for a 'Government of National Unity', placing pressure on the PDC to insist on greater representation in the new government, and on ARENA and the PCN to accept this greater PDC presence and relinquish their hopes of controlling the executive.[10] While the majority of US leverage came from the threat to withdraw military aid, the Reagan White House also sought to use the wider transnational anticommunist network to convince ARENA to concede to power sharing.

Fascinatingly, very early in this effort the Reagan administration reached out to the Pinochet dictatorship. On 31 March Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, approached the Chilean ambassador to the United States and requested Chilean support for the formation of a 'centrist coalition' in El Salvador made up of the PDC and the PCN (implying the exclusion of ARENA), recognising that the Chilean government held some sway in Salvadoran politics.[11] The Chilean foreign minister denied the request, citing Chile's commitment to the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states.[12] More likely, however, this response stemmed from the Pinochet dictatorship's historic warm relations with the Extreme Right. Reporting on election results on 6 April, the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador went to great pains to emphasise the 'exaggeration and injustice' of the treatment of D'Aubuisson – and ARENA more broadly – in the media. He further protested D'Aubuisson's innocence of the crimes of which he was often accused, emphasising that

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[9] Cable, Secretary of State to AmEmbassy San Salvador, Subj: Coalition Building, 30 March 1982, Folder El Salvador (01011982-12311982)[1], Box 30, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[10] Cable, Secretary of State to AmEmbassy San Salvador, Subj: Coalition Building: Breakfast with Duarte and Chávez Mena, 13 April 1982, Folder El Salvador (01011982-12311982)[1], Box 30, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[11] Cable secreto, DIBILAT to EmbaChile San Salvador, Solicitud Sr. Enders Apoyo Chile Gestión Americana El Salvador, 1 April 1982, Oficios, ORD., Telex, El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[12] Ibid.

ARENA was composed of 'respectable politicians', chief among them Rodríguez Porth, who was, above all, 'a gentleman'.[13]

It is possible that the Reagan administration made a similar request to the Argentine government with greater success. On 20 April the US ambassador to El Salvador heard that an unnamed Argentine general had visited El Salvador the previous week and had 'told the military high command that the Argentine military was directly familiar with certain operations in which D'Aubuisson was involved' and believed 'he was not a suitable candidate for a visible leadership position in the executive branch and urged the Salvadoran High Command to oppose his being given such a role'. The general apparently gave the same message directly to D'Aubuisson and to 'some other influential Salvadorans'.[14] While this Argentine approach appears to have taken US Ambassador Hinton by surprise, it is possible that it came in response to a similar request to that made to the Chilean ambassador in Washington, particularly given the degree of US-Argentine collaboration in El Salvador discussed in the previous chapter.[15]

Even if it were not incentivised by a US request, this report fits the general pattern of Argentine views on the situation in El Salvador. The Argentine military likely preferred for D'Aubuisson to remain outside of the halls of power precisely because it was in a paramilitary capacity that he had carried out such effective counterinsurgency activity since October 1979, where links forged through WACL and CAL allowed covert transnational support for that counterinsurgency to flourish, regardless of the composition of the Salvadoran government. Indeed, this preference reflected what Antony Pereira describes as the 'dualised' nature of the Argentine regime at home, divided between a public and a clandestine wing. This duality allowed the official denial of disappearances and the separation of the public, internationally-facing aspect of the regime from the reality of its actions, leaving the clandestine wing to perpetrate extrajudicial violence on an unprecedented scale.[16] As previous chapters of this thesis have shown, it was for precisely these reasons that the vast majority of Argentine aid to Guatemala and El Salvador was also conducted beyond the remit of the Foreign Ministry.

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[13] EmbaSanSalvador, 6 April 1982, Oficios, SEC., RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[14] Cable, AmEmbassy San Salvador to Secretary of State, Subj: Argentine Approach to El Salvador on New Government, 22 April 1982, Folder El Salvador (01011982-12311982)[1], Box 30, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL.
[15] I found no record of such an approach in Argentine foreign ministry files.
[16] Pereira, *Political (in)Justice: Authoritarianism and the Rule of Law in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina*, 135.

The Reagan administration also turned to the Salvadoran Extreme Right's closest allies within the United States to convince the party's most prominent backers of the necessity of a truly broad-based coalition government in El Salvador in order to secure ongoing US aid. Accordingly, the Reagan administration – in a move coordinated by Roger Fontaine and NSC Advisor Judge Clark – approached Senator Jesse Helms, perhaps the Extreme Right's most important ally in the United States. Helms appears to have dispatched two of his aides and frequent faces in CIS and other transnational Right spaces, John Carbaugh and Alberto Piedra, to act as envoys to ARENA's backers in El Salvador.[17] The Reagan administration also dispatched Vernon Walters, who reprised the role he had already played on multiple occasions in the last twelve months and sought to win around his friends in the Extreme Right – including D'Aubuisson – to US policy.[18] While it is difficult to unpick the specific impact of each of these forms of outreach, together they demonstrate the importance of the pre-existing transnational ties between the United States and the Latin American Extreme Right in the execution of US policy in El Salvador. And indeed, eventually the Reagan administration had its way: on 29 April the three main parties agreed to appoint three vice presidents – one from each party – to serve under Álvaro Magaña, the military's first choice as president, with cabinet posts likewise shared.[19]

This triumph of the US vision for the new Salvadoran government demonstrated the strength of US influence in El Salvador, and, after the massive escalation of aid in the previous two years, the dependence of the Salvadoran Armed Forces on US favour. Likewise, the Salvadoran case showed that, contrary to the expectations of many on the Extreme Right in the wake of the 1980 presidential election, a commitment to anticommunism was not sufficient to win the support of the Reagan administration, which was itself dependent on congressional good will. Despite efforts to moderate his and his party's image, D'Aubuisson remained too closely tied to the Salvadoran death squads in the eyes of both the Salvadoran public and the US Congress.

Going forwards, democracy promotion emerged as a key cornerstone of US foreign policy, exemplified in Reagan's address to both houses of the British Parliament in June 1982. By

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[17] Cable, AmEmbassy San Salvador to Secretary of State, Subj: The Powers Behind the Politicians, 14 April 1982, Folder El Salvador (01011982-12311982)[1], Box 30, Exec Sec, NSC Country File, RRPL; Cable, Honduras, 22 April 1982, No. 141-143, CF, MREC; Bell, 'Transnational Conservative Activism and the Transformation of the Salvadoran Right, 1967-1982', 339.
[18] Bell, 336–42.
[19] For a detailed description of this process, see Bell, 336–42.

defining democracy in diametrical opposition to communism, this language of democracy promotion provided a cloak of respectability to US support for both the Salvadoran armed forces (who were 'safeguarding' the democratic transition) and the 'democratic' Nicaraguan opposition movement (the *contras*).[20] As McCormick argues, the elections in El Salvador in 1982, followed by those in 1984, 'provided compelling evidence to Republicans that U.S. security objectives could be achieved in politically appealing ways by promoting democracy'.[21] Yet while democracy promotion formed the perfect paradigm through which to justify US policy in Central America, it simultaneously restrained the Reagan administration's space for manoeuvre when it came to its regional anticommunist allies who were less willing to make the necessary changes to *appear* democratic, notably those in power in Guatemala, Chile and Argentina in early 1982.

The March 1982 elections in Guatemala also transformed the political landscape, setting the country on a very different path that eventually led to the same destination: a process of 'democratisation' deemed complete following constituent assembly elections in 1984 and presidential elections in late 1985. Where El Salvador's March elections were the first step toward democracy, however, Guatemala's elections that month were the final act of *luquista* rule (the style and approach defined by outgoing Guatemalan President Romero Lucas García). Guatemalans went to the polls on 7 March, and - to nobody's surprise - Lucas García's handpicked successor, Defence Minister Ángel Aníbal Guevara, emerged as the victor amidst widespread accusations of fraud. Sixteen days later, on 23 March, young officers within the Guatemalan military staged a coup, establishing a military junta headed by General Efraín Ríos Montt yet including two close associates of President Lucas García, General Horacio Maldonado Schaad and Colonel Luis Gordillo Martínez.[22] On 9 June, in what is known as the 'Palace Coup', Ríos Montt, under direction from the military's General Staff, dissolved the junta and declared himself President of Guatemala, removing the vestiges of *luquista* influence.[23] While at first glance the establishment of another dictatorship might not appear to be the hallmark of a new era of democratisation, Jennifer Schirmer has shown how Ríos Montt's rule represented a fundamental change in the Guatemalan military's approach to governance.

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[20] On the centrality of human rights and democracy promotion to US-Nicaraguan relations in this period, see William Michael Schmidli, *Freedom on the Offensive: Human Rights, Democracy Promotion, and U.S. Interventionism in the late Cold War* (Cornell University Press, forthcoming).
[21] McCormick, 'Freedom Tide?: Ideology, Politics, and the Origins of Democracy Promotion in U.S. Central America Policy, 1980–1984', 109.
[22] Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 21.
[23] Schirmer, 26.

By 1982 – despite increasingly repressive action by the military - the guerrilla insurgency in the highlands had extended into 16 of 22 departments, with internal military intelligence estimating at least 350,000 supporters among the general population.[24] Schirmer describes how 'as it became clearer that there was no long-term military solution for the insurgency, impetus for change emerged from within the armed forces. The military believed that to be able to maintain its very existence there had to be at least the appearance of a democracy in which certain elite civilian sectors were able to function'.[25] Schirmer draws heavily on interviews with Colonel Hector Gramajo Morales, one of the three main architects of the National Plan of Security and Development that underpinned military strategy during the Ríos Montt period, christened the '*frijoles y fusiles*' (beans and bullets) policy. According to Gramajo, the military sought 'to pacify the country so that the political sectors act with legitimacy in order to make economic decisions and resolve social problems… And the strategy of pacification was 30 percent of bullets and 70 percent of beans in order to adjust the economic problems… We made an analysis about how to combat a terrorist insurgency within a democracy, and use a less costly, more humanitarian strategy, to be more compatible with the democratic system'.[26]

In essence, the plan entailed a scorched-earth campaign of complete annihilation in areas deemed 'lost' to the guerrillas (the bullets), paired with the expansion of development programmes, establishment of new 'Civil Patrols' and reconstruction of what had been 'destroyed by subversion' with the introduction of 'Poles of Development and Model Villages' (the beans).[27] In these terms, the military justified the massive and genocidal expansion of military-perpetrated repression in the Western Highlands from April 1982 onwards in terms of a 'pacification' necessary to set Guatemala on the path to a 'Re-Encuentro Institucional' (literally 'Institutional Re-Encounter' aka a 'return to constitutionality' via elections) from 1984. This approach marked a significant departure from that of the Lucas García regime which, as the last chapter explored, obstinately rejected the Reagan administration's gentle requests – usually delivered via Vernon Walters – to at least make some effort to talk the talk of democratisation and human rights protections in order to aid their efforts to win congressional approval for economic and military aid to Guatemala.

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24 Schirmer, 22.
25 Schirmer, 22.
26 Schirmer, 23.
27 Schirmer, 24.

The Ríos Montt regime implemented tight controls on access to information on the genocidal campaign in the highlands, through which it managed to obscure the worst of the violence. For example, one Amnesty International report from 1982 estimated 112 villages destroyed and 2,600 individuals killed in massacres at the hands of the Guatemalan military between March and July that year. However, we now know that at least 3,300 were killed for the month of April alone. The Guatemalan army's own post-mortem also recorded almost four times as many villages destroyed (440) in the same period as the figure given by Amnesty International.[28] Through these limits on reporting, in combination with careful lip service to the language of democracy and human rights and seemingly moderate actions such as the introduction of an Amnesty Law in May 1982, the Ríos Montt regime improved Guatemala's international standing, particularly in relation to the US government. Indeed, several of Schirmer's interviewees cited the dire need to change Guatemala's international position as a vital factor driving the new military programme, and after March 1982 the Guatemalan military had considerably greater success securing the restoration of US economic aid, weapons sales and, eventually, military aid; according to Chilean estimates, in the year between September 1982 and October 1983, US economic aid to Guatemala reached $79 million, in comparison to a total of $21.5 million in the whole three years from 1979-82.[29]

Despite these warmer relations with the United States, over the first half of 1983 Ríos Montt's shallow commitment to democratisation became apparent. In conversation with Vernon Walters in April 1983, the president openly declared his 'deep lack of sympathy with democratic governments, which he characterized as inefficient' and refused to assist the US government in its investigation into the death of a USAID employee in Guatemala.[30] Two months later, in June, Ríos Montt declared his intention to delay Guatemala's elections for at least seven years. The announcement was met with fierce resistance from the military High Command, who, having largely defeated the insurgency in the highlands by December 1982, now sought to press on with the carefully managed political *apertura*.[31] On 8 August 1983, Defence Minister General Óscar

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[28] Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 163.
[29] Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, 32–33. EmbaGuatemala, 6 September 1983, Oficios, SEC.RES., Guatemala/1983/AMRE.
[30] Cable, AmEmbassy Guatemala to SecState, Subj: Ambassador Walters' Call on President Ríos Montt, 21 April 1983, Folder Latin America NODIS IN 04151983-05131983, Box 66, Exec Sec, NSC Cable File, RRPL.
[31] Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983*, 81.

Mejía Victores staged a coup, assumed the presidency and committed the military to the existing timetable for constituent assembly elections the following July, followed by general elections, including the presidency, in December 1985.

The US government warmly welcomed the coup, and by early 1984 Guatemala had gained access to additional economic support through its inclusion in the Caribbean Basin Initiative.[32] In July 1984, the constituent assembly elections, which were boycotted by the armed Left, produced a narrow victory for the Guatemalan Christian Democrats (DCG) in the popular vote (15.57%) but a victory for the right-wing coalition of the CAN and MLN in numbers of seats (24 against the DCG's 20) owing to clustering of the DCG vote around Guatemala City. Together with the Unión del Centro Nacional (UCN) on 21 seats, the three parties entered into a power-sharing agreement with a 9-seat ruling committee and a rotating presidency.[33] Buoyed by this compelling evidence of the Guatemalan military's commitment to 'democratisation', the Reagan White House immediately rewarded the Guatemalan government with $20 million in economic aid and a further $7 million credit, and requested Congress approve $10.3 million in military aid and $90 million in economic aid for 1985.[34] With the success of the elections, despite massive ongoing violence against the civilian population, the Guatemalan military showed their commitment to cooperate with the US policy of democracy promotion, and were rewarded in return. From then on, Guatemala moved even more firmly into the US orbit, reducing the applicability of Southern-Cone style solutions to the 'subversion' the country faced. This, like parallel events in El Salvador, would play an important role in the denouement of Southern Cone involvement in the region.

The Chilean 'model' undermined at home and abroad

At first glance, the changes of government in Guatemala and El Salvador in March and April 1982 improved Chile's bilateral relations with both countries. In El Salvador, the presence of the two right-wing parties in government diluted the influence of the Christian Democrats long distrusted by the Chilean dictatorship. The Chilean embassy also welcomed the appointment of Álvaro Magaña, a businessman and University of Chicago graduate, to the presidency.[35] Likewise, the Salvadoran armed forces' pivotal role in resolving the protracted post-

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32 EmbaGuatemala, 8 January 1984, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1984/AMRE.
33 EmbaGuatemala, 9 October 1984, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1984/AMRE.
34 EmbaGuatemala, 9 October 1984, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1984/AMRE.
35 EmbaSanSalvador, 12 May 1982; EmbaSanSalvador, 7 June 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.

election negotiations had strengthened their influence, directly benefitting the Chilean dictatorship as military-military ties between the two countries remained the foundation of the bilateral relationship. Commander in Chief of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, Colonel Flores Lima confirmed as much in May 1982, when, in a written statement in the wake of the confirmation of the new Salvadoran government, he once more drew parallels between the threat of 'subversion' faced by El Salvador and that faced by the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships, and publicly acknowledged that the Chilean armed forces had provided their Salvadoran counterpart with training in 'intelligence and counterintelligence'.[36]

Once the dust had settled and the orientation of the new regime became clear, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala welcomed the 23 March coup that brought Rios Montt to power. In a meeting with the Chilean ambassador on 5 April, the new Guatemalan foreign minister, Alfonso Alonso Lima, declared that Guatemala 'needs and wants' Chilean aid, drawing similarities between the programme of the Pinochet dictatorship since September 1973 and its efforts to 'transform' the system of government and 'establish order' and the aspirations of the new Guatemalan leadership.[37] The Chilean embassy reproduced Guatemalan government propaganda on operations in the Western highlands, holding guerrilla forces responsible for the annihilation of entire villages and massacres of elders, women and children.[38] As before, the Chilean embassies continued to depict the indigenous population in racist and derogatory terms as little more than an object to control, pawns in the struggle between the military and the guerrilla with no agency of their own. In April 1982 the Chilean ambassador described the indigenous population as a 'disadvantage' in the struggle against subversion with their 'apparent resentment' toward the ladino population making them easy targets for 'international marxism'.[39]

In terms of direct aid to Guatemala and El Salvador, in March and April 1982 the Chilean dictatorship increased its arms sales to both Central American countries, reaching new levels. In the immediate wake of the Salvadoran elections – weeks before the final form of the

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[36] Cable, El Salvador, No. 229, 21 May 1982, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 7 June 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[37] EmbaGuatemala, 5 April 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.
[38] EmbaGuatemala, 25 May 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE. It is estimated that over 90% of fatalities during the conflict were perpetrated by the military.
[39] EmbaGuatemala, 23 April 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.On the ways in which Guatemalan indigenous communities were depicted as passive in this period, see Carlota McAllister, 'A Headlong Rush into the Future: Violence and Revolution in a Guatemalan Indigenous Village' in Grandin and Joseph, *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War*.

new government had been thrashed out – the Chilean embassy in Guatemala reported an approach from the Salvadoran armed forces. In the absence of a resident military attaché at the embassy, the charge d'affairs, Carlos Hafemann, had met with Luis Alberto Núñez, a retired member of the Chilean air force resident in Guatemala and representative of the Chilean arms manufacturer Cardoen.[40]

Núñez was an eminently well-connected man: a personal friend of Mario Sandoval Alarcón, the new Honduran president, Roberto Suazo Cordova and 'a series of other politicians, industrialists and businessmen' across Central America, he had also shared a military graduation class with General Fernando Matthei, Commander in Chief of the Chilean Air Force and member of Chile's ruling junta.[41] Likely as a result of these connections, Núñez had received an inquiry from Colonel Juan Rafael Bustillo – Commander of the Salvadoran Air Force and part of a military delegation that visited Chile the previous May – regarding the purchase of 10,000 rifles, new or used, intended to arm the rural paramilitary group ORDEN (theoretically disbanded in late 1979) to carry out anti-guerrilla operations.[42] Unsurprisingly, given ORDEN's dubious legal status and the Pinochet dictatorship's frosty relationship with the Christian Democrats, Bustillo made clear that if Chile were interested in the transaction, it should take place 'behind the back' of the PDC government in El Salvador.[43] The charge d'affairs concluded his report with a recommendation that the same offer of arms be extended to the Guatemalan armed forces, and – betraying a racist and paternalistic attitude typical of Chilean diplomats in the region - suggesting that any arms be easy to use 'given the ignorance' of the *campesinos* in both countries.[44]

By mid-April, Cardoen had dispatched another representative to Central America, Daniel Prieto, who worked with Núñez to negotiate with the Guatemalan High Command, resulting in a large order to Cardoen that included 27 thousand kilograms of explosives.[45] While there is no

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[40] EmbaGuatemala, 30 March 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE. Núñez's life story is described here: http://editorialmanutara.blogspot.com/2011/08/luis-alberto-pilotin-nunez-rojas-un.html, accessed 21 February 2022.
[41], EmbaGuatemala, 13 April 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.
[42] EmbaGuatemala, 30 March 1982, Oficios, SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE. It is possible that Bustillo's approach was also driven by a recent trip to Chile: the Chilean military attaché in El Salvador had offered Bustillo – along with Defence Minister General Guillermo García and another colonel to Chile and all-expenses-paid visit to Chile to attend the Chilean air force's biennial air show and sales event, FIDA. It is unclear whether this invitation was taken up. Cable reservado, No. 13, 22 February 1982, Oficios, ORD., Telex, El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] EmbaGuatemala, 20 April 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.

equivalent record of the Salvadoran military's eventual shopping list in the Chilean foreign ministry archives, the enthusiasm of Cardoen's – and the Chilean embassy's – response to the request suggests that the 10,000 rifles requested were provided. Certainly, Chilean-Salvadoran military relations remained strong: in September 1982, Salvadoran defence minister General Guillermo García and his wife travelled to Chile at Pinochet's invitation to participate in the 172nd anniversary celebrations of Chilean independence.[46]

Despite these advances, however, Chilean foreign ministry officials also privately read the outcome of the March elections in terms of what it revealed about US policy in Central America, with important implications for future Chilean involvement in the region. On 1 May the charge d'affairs at the Chilean embassy in San Salvador recognised the Salvadoran military's effective dependence on the United States. 'The future of the *patria* and its own survival depends on US good will, nobody more [than the armed forces] needs the support of the country to the North'. El Salvador's future could not be left to 'the free play of parliamentary majorities, nor to ideological struggles'.[47] In contrast to 1979-80, when Chilean diplomats diagnosed the lack of US support as the primary factor contributing to the worsening instability in El Salvador and Central America more broadly, by 1982, the pendulum had swung the other way, with US policy the defining factor in the outcome of the Salvadoran elections, if not necessarily in the direction the Chilean dictatorship wanted. This shift profoundly shaped the extent – and ultimately decline – of Chilean involvement in Central America over the next two years.

While Chilean diplomats in Central America remained critical of the ongoing (if now largely nominal) human rights-related checks on US aid to Central America, by 1982 they were nonetheless convinced that the Reagan administration – unlike its predecessor – would not allow another Central American country to fall to communism. Each year, the Chilean embassies in Central America (and indeed worldwide) provided a set of goals in their 'Action Plan' for the coming year, which were subject to approval by the Foreign Ministry in Santiago. Changes in these goals provide a useful indication of Central America's declining geopolitical importance for the Pinochet dictatorship in the early 1980s. In the reports from 1978-80, these goals invariably included mention of the need to monitor 'subversive activity' in both countries and the 'ability of

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[46] MRE to EmbaSanSalvador, 6 September 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.
[47] EmbaSanSalvador, 1 May 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.

the security forces to maintain control'.[48] By 1982, mention of 'subversion' had entirely disappeared from the top-level goals. While the Salvadoran embassy remained committed to military ties (as per the military relationship long predating the Salvadoran Civil War), there is a perceptible absence of alarm in the tone of Chilean reports on the conflicts in both countries, in sharp contrast to the 'waves of violence' and 'subversive threat' that dominated Chilean narratives of events in the late 1970s. As the Salvadoran embassy's action plan put it in 1983, 'Marxist forces will not obtain definitive victory in either political or military terms'.[49]

Rather than driven by alarm at events in Central America, in fact, Chilean engagement in the region became increasingly influenced by events at home: namely, economic crisis and resurgent political threats to the 'protected democracy' established by the 1980 constitution. The Latin American debt crisis, highlighted by Mexico's default on its international debt in August 1982, sent the already struggling Chilean economy into tailspin. The net payment of interest on Chilean national debt rose fourfold from 1978 to 1983, reaching 7 percent of GDP, while GDP itself plunged 14.5% in 1982-83.[50] Facing crisis, the Pinochet dictatorship departed from the neoliberal model established in the 1970s. In early 1983, Rolf Lüders (one of five finance ministers in barely two years) ordered the government takeover of five banks and several finance companies and that year unemployment peaked at 31.3%.[51] In foreign affairs, economic problems at home led to an even greater emphasis on facilitating trade and investment.[52] Indeed, when viewed in these terms, the aforementioned weapons sales through Cardoen can also be read as part of this broader effort to stimulate the Chilean economy. At the time, the charge d'affairs at the Chilean embassy in Guatemala recommended that Núñez be made an honorary commercial attaché as 'his link with this embassy could generate an important increase in our bilateral trade and the possibility of substantially extending' the embassy's influence.[53]

In the context of this economic decline, the mass protests that broke out in Chile from 1983 completely shattered the illusion that Chile represented 'a visible example of peace' and

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[48] See, for example, EmbaGuatemala, 18 April 1980, Oficios SEC.RES., 1-100/Guatemala/1980/AMRE. Each 'Plan de Acción' can be found under the 'secret' classification in files sent from the embassy in any given year, they were usually dispatched in March or April.

[49] EmbaSanSalvador, 15 March 1983, Oficios SEC.RES./El Salvador/1983/AMRE.

[50] Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime*, 363.

[51] Huneeus, 364–65.

[52] See, for example, the Plan of Action for Guatemala for 1983 which emphasised the need to promote Chilean exports and arrange commercial missions to Chile to incentivise foreign investment. EmbaGuatemala, 21 March 1983, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1983/AMRE.

[53] EmbaGuatemala, 13 April 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE.

'tranquillity' for other countries to follow.[54] As Steve Stern puts it, 'the bursting apart of official Chile began in May 1983' with the 'the Day of the first great National Protest' on the 11th of that month.[55] At 8pm, in both Santiago and nationwide, 'windows opened and banging pots set off a crescendo of sound', that the *cacerolazo* was joined by the honking of cars in the capital's middle-class and prosperous neighbourhoods indicated that the discontent had penetrated the dictatorship's core base. In response, the regime tightened repression and 'Pinochet appeared on television to explain that Chile once again "faced a problem of international character, guided and led by Russia."'[56] Despite mounting repression, massive street protests occurred almost monthly from May 1983 until the dictatorship imposed a state of siege in November 1984. The songs and slogans of the Popular Unity government returned to the streets and the dictatorship's claims of having crushed the supposed 'subversive threat' in Chile once and for all – widely touted in the late 1970s – appeared foolhardy.

The protests in turn prompted the dictatorship to adjust its political model. In the new civilian-military cabinet of August 1983, former National Party president Sergio Onofre Jarpa became Interior Minister and oversaw a moderate *apertura*, allowing for dialogue between the regime and the non-violent opposition, the return of exiles from abroad, elections to professional associations and the approval of more dissident media, including the magazine *Cauce* in November that year. In early 1984, elements of the *apertura* spun out of the regime's control, with *Cauce* in particular publishing a series of incendiary articles directly targeting excess and corruption committed by Pinochet and his family, destroying the regime's official narrative – constructed soon after that 1973 coup - that emphasised Pinochet's 'patriotic probity' in contrast to the image of Allende as profligate and decadent.[57]

This widespread emergence of a more critical and confrontational opposition media also offers an insight into how the newly invigorated Chilean democratic opposition connected events in Chile to those in Central America. *Análisis* interviews with recently returned exiles – particularly members or former members of the Chilean PDC - often drew parallels with the ongoing 'democratisation' in El Salvador, comparing Jarpa's *apertura* to the Salvadoran elections

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[54] These were the words used by the Chilean ambassador to describe Guatemalan perceptions of Chile in 1980, as featured in chapter 4 of this thesis. EmbaSanSalvador, 28 April 1980, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1980/AMRE.

[55] Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds : Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988*, Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 250.

[56] This summary draws on Stern's narrative, see Stern, 250–52.

[57] Stern, 304–5.

and debating the correct role the PDC should play in Chile's own democratic transition (a very different one to that played by Duarte, concluded former PDC deputy Claudio Huepe).[58] At precisely the time the Reagan administration celebrated the success of the Salvadoran process, members of the Chilean opposition brandished it as a case study in how not to proceed. In a prescient argument given how long the Salvadoran civil war would wind on, Luis Maira, a recent return from exile and member of the *Izquierda Cristiana* (Christian Left) described how the 'institutional façade' adopted by the Salvadoran regime served merely to 'present an external appearance of democratic progress', without promoting truly popular political participation nor real change to the system, driving large segments of the opposition toward *la vía armada*.[59] Just as the Pinochet dictatorship had identified ideological allies in the Central American regimes, the ascendant Chilean opposition movement placed their struggle in the context of regional events: *Análisis* ran interviews with prominent guerrilla leaders such as the FMLN's Ruben Zamora and the opposition used the pages of the same magazine to announce the formation of a solidarity committee for Nicaragua in September 1983.[60]

The return of mass protest in 1983 – and the regime's response – signalled a fundamental departure from the dictatorship's original plan for the 1980s, which Huneeus summarises as 'the gradual advance toward the building of new institutions and economic reforms that would ensure General Pinochet's re-election in the 1988 plebiscite'.[61] Instead, the events of 1983-4 created a divided Right and an increasingly unified opposition, setting Chile on the course to democratisation via Pinochet's loss in that crucial 1988 vote. In 1980, as previous chapters of this thesis have shown, the Chilean dictatorship's strength and security – affirmed in the new constitution – directly informed its foreign policy, as diplomats touted a new model for

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[58] 'Conversando con Claudio Huepe', *Análisis,* Año VI, No. 61, August 1983, 18-19, online via the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0030702.pdf, accessed 5 March 2021. Victor Figueroa Clark describes fears within the Chilean Communist Party as early as 1980 that the Chilean PDC would follow in the footsteps of their Salvadoran counterpart in this respect. Victor Figueroa Clark, 'The Forgotten History of the Chilean Transition: Armed Resistance Against Pinochet and US Policy towards Chile in the 1980s', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 3 (2015), 506.

[59] 'Luis Maira: "Chile enfrenta dos caminos"', *Análisis* Año VII, No. 88, August 1984, online via the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0030699.pdf, accessed 5 March 2021.

[60] 'Ruben Zamora, Dirigente de El Salvador: "Creemos en una solución política renovada"', *Ánalisis*, Año VII, No. 73, January 1984, 27, online via the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0030700.pdf, accessed 5 March 2021; 'Solidaridad con Nicaragua', *Análisis* Año VI, No. 65, September-October 1983, 13, online via the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0030702.pdf, accessed 5 March 2021.

[61] Huneeus, *The Pinochet Regime*, 385.

anticommunist governance. After 1983, this model no longer appeared so effective, and nor could it hope to meet the US government's requirements – made abundantly clear in the wake of the 1982 Salvadoran elections - for at least a nominal commitment to 'democratisation' in Central America.

Argentina: a rapid collapse

When Salvadorans and Guatemalans went to the polls in March 1982, Argentine involvement in both countries had reached an all-time peak. Indeed, it has been widely argued that the Argentine junta's decision to go to war in the Falklands/Malvinas in April 1982 was directly informed by their belief that Argentina had become an indispensable cog in the Central American counterinsurgency machine, and – given the central geopolitical importance of Central America to the United States - that this fact would leave the Reagan administration with no choice but to remain neutral in the forthcoming conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom.[62] This miscalculation helped cost Argentina the war and the military dictatorship its legitimacy. Less than 18 months after the Argentine surrender, Raúl Alfonsín was inaugurated as Argentina's democratically-elected president, with the all-out collapse of the dictatorship spelling the end of Argentine support for counterinsurgency in Central America. In turn, Argentina's rapid process of democratisation transformed its role in Central America, as Argentina's young democracy soon joined the Contadora group seeking a multilateral path to peace in the isthmus, while members of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments paid close attention to the democratisation process itself as a potential model for their own democratic transitions.

Very soon after its outbreak on 2 April, the Falklands/Malvinas conflict came to dominate the concerns of Argentine embassies in Central America.[63] Unsurprisingly, the Argentine junta quickly won the support of both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments. In Guatemala, military and Extreme Right figures perceived the Argentine-British dispute over the Falklands/Malvinas in the same terms as Guatemala's recent tense negotiations with Britain over Belizean independence making Guatemalan support particularly vocal and anti-imperialistic in tone.[64] Mario Sandoval Alarcón – a long-time hardliner in the Belize dispute that had featured

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[62] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade*, 69–71.
[63] See, for example, Galtieri's letter to Central American and Caribbean heads of state: telegrama ordinario, 10 April 1982, No. 91, AH/0980/5, DC, MREC.
[64] In May 1982 the Guatemalan foreign minister described British actions in the Falklands/Malvinas as proof of their commitment to 'neocolonialism', 'Estupor Expresa Canciller Ante Nuevo Ataques', *El Imparcial,* 4 May 1982, clipping held in folder Int. Guat.-Argentina 1981 1982, Serie La Morgue (recortes del periódico), Publicación Diario El Impárcial, CIRMA. The Argentine embassy had recognised this

prominently during his vice presidency (1974-78) went as far as to call for a boycott of British goods.[65] Likewise, the Salvadoran government rallied to the Argentine cause and the conflict nonetheless provoked vocal statements of support from right-wing civil society groups making up ARENA's support base, including ANEP.[66]

The Argentine junta also won support from much of the wider Latin American Extreme Right. In an update to members, Mexican *Teco* and CAL General Secretary Rafael Rodríguez described how he had had the fortune to be in Buenos Aires on 2 April, and along with local CAL leader Germán Justo, had delivered a note to the ruling junta expressing the CAL's solidarity with their actions, which, according to his account, the junta received warmly and 'asked him to send greetings to the members of the CAL'.[67] In his report, Rodríguez went on to place the conflict within the context of the CAL's primary concern – the encroachment of communism in Latin America – and expressed his deep concern about the ways in which the Latin American Left sought to 'portray themselves as champions of an anti-colonialism that they do not practice' through their support for Argentina's claim to sovereignty, while simultaneously 'attacking the governing junta with the aim of overthrowing it'.[68] More surprisingly, the Argentine dictatorship won support from Latin American governments across the entire political spectrum, with Fidel Castro's Cuba playing a key role in rallying non-aligned support for Argentina.[69]

In contrast – and almost alone in Latin America - the Chilean dictatorship officially remained neutral on the conflict, while providing clandestine support to the British military effort (largely intelligence and surveillance) in exchange for access to Hawker Hunter jets and other aircraft.[70] Both Southern Cone dictatorships conceived of the Argentine campaign in the Falklands/Malvinas as intimately linked to the still-recent Chilean-Argentine confrontation over

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shared antipathy for the British as a factor in Argentine-Guatemalan relations long before the conflict. See cable secreto, Guatemala, 8 August 1980, No. 529-35, AH/0042/1, DAL, MREC. Krepp also recognises this as a factor in both Guatemalan and Venezuelan support for Argentina, Stella Krepp, 'A View from the South: The Falklands/Malvinas and Latin America', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 15, no. 4 (2017), 353.

[65] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 4 May 1982, No. 111, CF, MREC.

[66] Telegrama ordinario, El Salvador, 12 May 1982, No. 214, AH/0982/2, DC, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 29 June 1982, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1982/AMRE.

[67] CAL Circular No. 3/82, 13 May 1982, R076F1897-99, CDyA, Paraguay.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Krepp, 'A View from the South', 353.

[70] On the nature of Chilean assistance, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, vol. 2 (Routledge, 2004) chapter 27.

the Beagle Channel in 1978. For General Galtieri, the Falklands/Malvinas and the Beagle represented Argentina's two most important foreign policy priorities, while the Pinochet dictatorship feared that an Argentine victory in the former might lead to the opening of hostilities in the case of the latter.[71] At the time of the conflict, this Chilean-British collaboration remained clandestine: the Pinochet dictatorship sought to avoid regional isolation given the overwhelming Latin American support for Argentina, while the British government did not wish to be openly associated with the Chilean dictatorship's human rights abuses. As a result, Chile's role in the conflict does not appear to have affected Chilean relations with either Guatemala or El Salvador.

Despite the widespread regional support that the Argentine dictatorship received, the conflict completely undermined the Argentine dictatorship's commitment to the counterinsurgency in Central America. At a diplomatic level, the Reagan administration's decision to back the United Kingdom over Argentina in the conflict destroyed Argentine-US cooperation in Central America, confirming the worst fears of those – such as Jeane Kirkpatrick – who had strenuously opposed the decision to support the United Kingdom on these grounds.[72] Here too, the Reagan administration turned to the wider anticommunist network in an effort to hold the alliance in Central America together. On their aforementioned trip to Central America in April 1982, Jesse Helms' aides Alberto Piedra and John Carbaugh stated Helms' full support for Argentina in the conflict and begged the Argentine ambassador to Honduras not to cut Argentine military assistance to the isthmus.[73] Carbaugh returned two months later to deliver a similar message, to little avail.[74] This damage wrought to US-Argentine cooperation brought about an immediate and absolute halt to the more ambitious plans for the Central American counterinsurgency, including the possibility – discussed in late 1981- of assembling an Inter-American military force to combat the guerrilla under the aegis of the TIAR.[75] The failure to

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[71] Heraldo Muñoz, 'Efectos y Lecciones Del Conflicto de Las Malvinas', *Estudios Internacionales* 15, no. 60 (1982), 510; Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*, 2:336.
[72] Peter Scott cites divisions over the response to the conflict as central to Alexander Haig's resignation as Secretary of State in 1982, claiming that Kirkpatrick and Michael Deaver – long-time ally of the Latin American Extreme Right – had sought to go behind his back on the matter. Peter Dale Scott, 'Contragate: Reagan, Foreign Money, and the Contra Deal', *Crime and Social Justice*, No. 27/28 (1987), 122.
[73] Cable, Honduras, 22 April 1982, No. 141-143, CF, MREC.
[74] Cable, Honduras, 18 June 1982, No. 213-217, CF, MREC.
[75] 'Más armas, receta de Washington ante el fracaso de la ofensiva antiguerrillera en El Salvador' *El País*, 13 November 1981, https://elpais.com/diario/1981/11/13/internacional/374454020_850215.html, accessed 11 March 2021.

invoke the TIAR in response to the Falklands/Malvinas conflict further sealed the fate of this initiative, much to the relief of the FMLN.[76]

In material terms, the conflict in the South Atlantic required a massive diversion of resources on the part of the Argentine armed forces. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this affected the number of Argentines on the ground in Central America. At least one of the known Argentine operatives in Central America at the turn of the 1980s – Carlos Alberto Durich – resurfaced in the Falklands/Malvinas during the ten-week conflict, suggesting that the war led to a redirection of resources. In testimony given after the return to democracy, Víctor Basterra, a graphic designer held captive in the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) between 1979 and 1983, described the work he did as a prisoner, including the manufacturing of a false press correspondent's ID for Durich to use on the islands, who he claimed (quite rightly) was working with the intelligence services.[77] As earlier chapters described, many of the agents involved in Argentine covert counterinsurgency operations in Central America held close links to ESMA, so it follows that if Durich was re-assigned, others were too.[78] In a further indication of how the conflict directly impacted on the number of Argentines on the ground in Central America, on 1 June, two weeks before the end of the war, the Chilean embassy in Guatemala – still keeping close tabs on its neighbour's activities – reported the departure of all Argentine military trainers, leaving only those working with antisandinista forces in Honduras.[79]

Following Argentina's defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas in June 1982, the Argentine dictatorship rapidly unravelled. In this period the dictatorship's focus was largely engaged in negotiating a return to democracy complete with a military amnesty, declared on 22 September 1983, one month ahead of the presidential elections (and annulled within a week of Alfonsín's inauguration). In this same period, with its international legitimacy thoroughly destroyed by the

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[76] 'Detener la intervención', *Frente Mundial de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Salvadoreño*, August-September 1982, Folder 4, Box 1, Salvadoran Subject Collection, HILA. The FMLN were keenly aware of the threat that a force convened under TIAR posed to the armed struggle. See FMLN 'Memorandum on Negotiations' (State Department Translation), in appendix to chapter 5 of Charters and Tugwell, 'Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Central America' ORAE Extra-Mural Paper No. 23, June 1983, Department of National Defense (Canada), online via the US Defense Technical Information Center https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a135743.pdf, accessed 11 March 2021.
[77] Testimonio, Basterra, Víctor Melchor, Juicio a las Juntas, 22 July 1985, http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/testimon/basterra.htm, accessed 13 December 2018.
[78] For example, Basterra's testimony makes frequent mention of a 'Raúl' working alongside Durich, who fits the profile of Argentine civil intelligence operative Raúl Guglielmetti.
[79] Cable, EmbaGuatemala, 1 June 1982, No. 40, Oficios, ORD., Telex/Guatemala/1982/AMRE.

military defeat, the dictatorship faced severe economic crisis (with Mexico's debt default just six weeks after the war's end) and an explosion of domestic popular opposition.

Argentine policy toward Central America in these months reflected this transformation at home. At first, elements of counterinsurgency assistance continued. Ten Salvadorans travelled to Argentina for a five-week course in intelligence and counter-insurgency in August 1983, and the Salvadoran *Policía Nacional* received a shipment of small arms from Argentina in early 1983.[80] Likewise, the Argentine press reported the possibility of Argentine sales of Pucara fighter jets to Guatemala in December 1982, and in March 1983 the Argentine foreign ministry wrote to the embassy in Guatemala informing them of the upcoming arrival of an Argentine arms sales representative in the country, raising the possibility of further sales to Guatemala.[81] Although as late as November 1983 the Argentine press reported on planned arms sales from Argentina to the Salvadoran military (an allegation denied by both governments), three months earlier the junta had ordered the removal of all military personnel appointed to non-military posts after the March 1976 coup, indicating the demilitarisation of the Argentine government ahead of the October 1983 elections.[82] While there remained doubts over the extent to which these orders resulted in the return of all Argentine operatives from Central America – it appears that some, at least, stayed on – the fall of the dictatorship nonetheless marked the end of the Argentine armed forces direct, formal participation in counterinsurgency operations.[83]

Indeed, these arms sales – like those pursued by the Chilean dictatorship in the same period – also reflected a shift in Argentine policy toward focusing on increasing commercial ties and exports to Central America in light of the economic crisis. In October 1982, the Chilean ambassador to Guatemala – keeping as close an eye as ever on Argentine activity – reported the signing of a trade agreement between Argentina and Guatemala that month, paving the way for

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[80] Cable, El Salvador, 31 August 1983, No. 455, CF, MREC; EmbaSanSalvador, 15 March 1983, Oficios, SEC.RES./El Salvador/1983/AMRE.

[81] Cable secreto, Guatemala, 28 December 1982, No. 386, CF, MREC; cable secreto, SURRE to Guatemala, 25 March 1983, No. 95, AH/0764, DC, MREC.

[82] Telegrama ordinario, El Salvador, 28 November 1983, No. 642, AH/0512, DC, MREC; Circular telegráfica, 25 September 1983, No. 186, CF, MREC.

[83] The FMLN expressed doubts about whether all operatives would depart, and the Argentine branch of the Internacional de las resistentes contra la guerra later published research claiming that Carlos Alberto Durich, at the very least,was present once more in Honduras until his disappearance in 1988. 'Guerra sucia en El Salvador: ¿dónde están ahora los asesores argentinos?' *Centroamérica en la mira*, No. 6, mayo-junio 1984, 24, Folder 3, Box 1, Salvadoran Subject Collection, HILA; 'Honduras: la CIA y los militares argentines responables de la represión' electronic edition, 1 November 1996, http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/honduras/doc/cia1.html, accessed 19 March 2021.

mutual market access and the establishment of a new regular maritime freight service between the two countries following the opening of Guatemala's new pacific port in March 1983 and the arrival of an Argentine trade delegation (also destined for other Central American counties and Venezuela) in May that year.[84] Later in 1983 the Argentine ambassador engaged in a concerted effort to promote Argentine exports to El Salvador, courting the private sector and cabinet.[85]

With Alfonsín's inauguration the formal return to democracy in December 1983, Argentina's international role swiftly transformed. Where the dictatorship had been a vital source of support for the counterinsurgency, the fledgling Argentine democracy soon engaged in the incipient Central American peace process, at this stage led by the Contadora group (Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela).[86] In January 1984, in meetings with both government officials and the US ambassador, the Argentine ambassador to El Salvador expressed the Alfonsín government's support for Contadora and intention to meaningfully engage with the peace process.[87] The coincidence of Argentine democratisation with the parallel process in Guatemala and El Salvador also shaped bilateral relations. The Alfonsín government greeted Napoleon Duarte's victory in the second round of the Salvadoran presidential elections in May 1984; Argentine Vice President Victor Martinez attended the inauguration, drawing gratitude from the Salvadoran government for this show of Argentine support for El Salvador's 'institutionalisation'.[88]

Transnational Democratisation

The reception of Argentina's democratisation process in Guatemala points to the hemispheric context in which this so-called 'wave' of democratisation took place; just as members of the Latin American Extreme Right drew on one another's expertise, knowledge and ideas as they carried out untold violence in the name of anticommunism, so they closely

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84 EmbaGuatemala, 14 October 1982, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1982/AMRE; EmbaGuatemala, 28 March 1983, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1983/AMRE; Telegrama ordinario, SREI to Guatemala, 26 April 1983, AH/0764, DC, MREC.
85 Cable secreto, El Salvador, 22 November 1983, No. 626 and cable secreto, El Salvador, 29 November 1983, No. 647, AH/0512, DC, MREC.
86 Mateo Jarquín, 'The Nicaraguan Question: Contadora and the Latin American Response to US Intervention Against the Sandinistas, 1982–86', *The Americas* 78, no. 4 (2021), 61.
87 Cable secretos, El Salvador, 26 January 1984, no. 39-22 and no. 43-44, both in AH/0327/1, DC, MREC.
88 Cable secreto, El Salvador, 24 May 1984, No. 349 and cable secreto, El Salvador, 5 June 1984, No. 373, both in AH/0327/1, DC, MREC.

observed how fellow anticommunist regimes met their end, drawing lessons for their own domestic contexts.

Argentina's democratisation – the presidential elections of October 1983 and subsequent inauguration in December – coincided precisely with the Guatemalan military's first steps towards their own 'democratic opening' following the coup against Ríos Montt in August that year. With constituent assembly and presidential elections already scheduled for 1984 and 1985 respectively, the Guatemalan military carefully observed events in Argentina as a case study in what was to come at home. Within days of Alfonsín's electoral triumph the Argentine ambassador to Guatemala received in-person congratulations from both President General Mejía Victores and the Guatemalan foreign minister Andrade Díaz Duran.[89] As alluded to at the opening of this chapter, both men, alongside Colonel Marroquín Siliezar, the president's chief of staff, and their respective wives, made the trip to Buenos Aires for the inauguration the following month, indicating the high-level of importance placed on the event.[90]

Ahead of this trip to Buenos Aires, the Argentine ambassador hosted a traditional Argentine *asado*, complete with imported wine, for the Guatemalan delegation. At that event, Mejía Victores declared that he was 'convinced that the triumph of democracy in Argentina [would] facilitate its triumph in Guatemala', a sentiment which he repeated in comments to the Guatemalan media ahead of his departure for Argentina the following month.[91] Throughout the trip Mejía Victores extolled the virtues of Argentine democracy and Guatemalan intentions to follow in Argentina's footsteps, using the press conference upon his return to Guatemala to announce that campaigns for elections to Guatemala's constituent assembly would begin on 1 January 1984.[92]

The inauguration – and Alfonsín's overturning of the military amnesty soon after – received widespread press coverage in Guatemala, with Argentina treated as a useful case study on how Guatemala's institutionalisation might play out, particularly with regard to the military's

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89 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 2 November 1983, No. 425, AH/0577 vol. 38, DC, MREC.
90 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 16 November 1983, No. 458, AH/0577 vol. 38, DC, MREC.
91 Cable secreto, Guatemala, 21 November 1983, No. 463 and cable secreto, Guatemala, 6 December 1983, No. 502, both AH/0577 vol. 38, DC, MREC.
92 EmbaGuatemala, 20 December 1983, Oficios SEC.RES./Guatemala/1983/AMRE; Cable secreto, Guatemala, 15 December 1983, No. 518, AH/0577 vol. 38, DC, MREC.

ongoing role in politics.[93] While the Guatemalan president's vocal support for Argentine democratisation served a very useful purpose in improving Guatemala's international image, particularly with the United States, the manner in which events unfolded in Argentina, namely, the obliteration (if temporary) of military prestige and political influence involved in the transition, proved didactic insofar as it was precisely what the Guatemalan military sought – and managed – to avoid. Over the next two years, the Guatemalan military was careful to embrace the outer appearance of a democracy akin to Argentina's, while carefully negotiating a transition more in line with that which had taken place in El Salvador – via a pact with the Guatemalan Christian Democrats and their leader, Vinicio Cerezo.[94]

In January 1986, Vinicio Cerezo took office as Guatemala's first civilian president since the 1954 coup. A little over two and a half years later, in October 1988, Chile's turn came at last. Although the dictatorship had expected to win the referendum which asked Chileans to answer 'yes' or 'no' to another eight years of Pinochet's rule, the transition to democracy that followed their defeat was nonetheless closely controlled by the military and preserved many elements of the dictatorship. The Salvadoran and Guatemalan militaries had played a similar role in their own transitions half a decade earlier.

While political scientists have long used the term 'pacted transition' to describe this process whereby elites within authoritarian structures guided the transition from dictatorship to democracy, there has been very little historical research which examines precisely why and how these leaders came to embrace democratisation.[95] The transnational ties between Central America and the Southern Cone outlined above point to the interconnectedness of the transitions to democracy across Latin America in this period. Ruling elites across the region carefully observed the outcome of 'democratisation' elsewhere and drew lessons for themselves. By the mid-1980s, many on the Latin American Extreme Right recognised that embracing a strictly limited form of democracy – like that promoted by the Reagan administration - could in fact function to perpetuate the Right's dominance in the long term.

[93] Telegrama ordinario, Guatemala, 12 December 1983, No. 510, AH/0577 vol. 38, DC, MREC; Cable secreto, Guatemala, 23 March 1984, No. 94/95, AH/0512, DC, MREC.
[94] On this 'pacted transition' see Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*, chapter 8.
[95] See, for example, Manuel A. Garretón Merino, *Incomplete Democracy: Political Democratization in Chile and Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Just as they had adopted the language of human rights to defend their repressive regimes in the late 1970s, so in the 1980s these Extreme Rightists used an adherence to a very narrow definition of human rights to establish 'new' and 'democratic' regimes which, in the long run, have proved more effective at protecting the neoliberal systems established by the authoritarian regimes than at addressing the social, economic, racial or gender inequalities embedded within them. Thus, while 'democratisation' marks the end of the story of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' involvement in the counterinsurgency in Central America, it has also served to preserve much of the anticommunist dictatorships' legacies. From this perspective, the repressive violence of the 1970s and early 1980s and these 'pacted transitions' had the same fundamental aim: to ward off the revolutionary threat and protect the socioeconomic and political structures of right-wing rule. In the long run, 'democratisation' served to shift the political conflict from the literal battleground to the ballot box; efforts to 'deepen' these democracies has been a central element of Latin American politics in the decades since.[96]

Conclusion

While 1984 did not mark a definitive end to either Chilean or Argentine interest in Central America, by that point the isthmus simply did not hold the same geopolitical significance it had done at the beginning of the decade and domestic developments drastically limited and transformed the foreign policy ambitions of the two Southern Cone dictatorships. For the Chilean dictatorship, crisis at home brought the very model that Chilean diplomats had so triumphantly touted in 1980-81 into question. Deepening economic crisis forced a departure from the neoliberal project while an explosion of popular opposition from 1983 prompted a limited political opening followed by a repressive crackdown. In Argentina, the ill-fated decision to go to war in the Malvinas/Falklands directly triggered the dictatorship's downfall, bringing with it a swift withdrawal from Central America.

Perhaps more importantly, as early as 1982 the Reagan administration had proved its commitment to Central America, assuring those on the Latin American Extreme Right that there would be no repeat of the Nicaraguan Revolution, for which they had squarely laid the blame at Carter's door. Yet the Salvadoran elections of 1982 and the Reagan administration's response also solidified the lines and limits of formal US policy toward Central America: one of democracy promotion and a far greater adherence to the language of human rights – however

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[96] Kenneth M. Roberts, *Deepening Democracy?: The Modern Left and Social Movements in Chile and Peru* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1998).

narrowly defined – than many would have expected in the wake of Reagan's election in November 1980. By confirming that any future Salvadoran government – and eventually the Guatemalan government, too – would need to meet US-stipulated standards of 'democratisation', the US response to the Salvadoran elections made clear that a Chilean-style regime of 'protected democracy' would not be tolerated in the US 'backyard'. This in turn helped convince Extreme Right forces in Central America – both within and outside of the military – that they would need to embrace 'democratisation' as a means to maintain control, and, crucially, meet the conditions for US aid.

From one perspective, the impact of this shift in US policy in limiting the options for the Latin American Extreme Right points to the enduring power of the United States over events in the Western Hemisphere. Nonetheless, it is equally important to emphasise that the impetus for this shift to democracy promotion came not from the Reagan administration, but from the congressional restraints that it encountered in its policymaking, which themselves are a testament to the strength and legacy of the international human rights movement that came to the fore in the second half of the 1970s. Yet it was the Right's response to these changes in the international context that had the most long-term and profound impact on the type of democracy that emerged from the 'Third Wave of democratisation'.

Both the Reagan administration's adoption of democracy promotion and much of the Latin American Extreme Right's embrace of 'democratic' elections in 1983-84 were born of a tactical decision to embrace 'democratisation' and seek to shape – and limit – that process from above in order to continue to contain the perceived communist threat. This chapter has shown how this decision-making process was shaped by the regional context and existing transnational ties. Argentina's rapid democratisation served as a useful example for the Central American militaries – and in particular the Guatemalan military. It showed what to avoid and how to manage the process to ensure continued power. This reveals the important connections between different countries' experiences of the 'Third Wave of democratisation'.

In the longer term, while this shift would spell the demise of those right-wing political projects that initially resisted democratisation – US support for the 'No' vote in the 1988 Chilean plebiscite is a key example – the political and economic systems that emerged from the democratic transitions across Latin America in the 1980s by and large retained much of the social, economic and political power dynamics of the dictatorships, securing the dominance of

neoliberal economics and limiting the possibilities – until this day – for meaningful radical social and economic reforms for which many had fought for so long during the conflicts in Central America.

Conclusion

Elections in October 1983 and May 1984 marked the official transition to democracy in Argentina and El Salvador respectively. Guatemala followed suit in 1985-86. By the time Patricio Aylwin was inaugurated as Chilean President in March 1990, the 'Third Wave of democratisation' had swept across Latin America, with the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua defeated at the ballot box a month later. At the surface, then, Latin American politics in 1990 appeared very different to a decade earlier, and this democratic wave was soon followed by the signing of peace accords in El Salvador (1992) and Guatemala (1996) bringing the conflicts of Central America's revolutionary decade to a final close. However, this transition – and the particular way that it occurred - was not a forgone conclusion.

This thesis has told a Latin American history of the final, most violent, chapter in Latin America's Cold War. In 1979-81, those on the Extreme Right in Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and Argentina believed that there existed a genuine threat that the Central American republics could fall like dominos in Nicaragua's wake. In mid-1980, the Latin American Anticommunist International which had assembled in support of the counterinsurgencies in Central America faced up to the prospect of what might happen were Jimmy Carter to win another term as US president, openly discussing the possibility of a coordinated response to compensate for the United States' ongoing dereliction of duty as leader of the anticommunist bloc. From the Southern Cone perspective, the possibilities for the future of Central America – and the region – remained wide open.

This is the first time that the extent of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador in this tumultuous period has been explored in one place. The escalation of the internal conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador took place at precisely the time that the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina were at their strongest, having used violence, repression, and cross-border cooperation across the Southern Cone to effectively destroy all remaining opposition at home and in the neighbouring countries.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Carter's inauguration as President of the United States in January 1977 and the subsequent introduction of the human rights policy opened a rift between the United States and the Latin American Extreme Right as to how best to wage the Cold War in the Western Hemisphere. This rift created an opening for the unprecedented tightening of relations between Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships in the Southern Cone and Central

America, as these regimes sought to increase levels of intra-Latin American mutual support to compensate for the loss of US support and their own rejection of US aid conditioned on human rights observations.

The leaders of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships and their ambassadors in Central America perceived the escalating violence in Guatemala and El Salvador in the late 1970s through the lens of their own experiences 'defeating communism' at home. Their binary worldview skewed their perceptions: rather than born of local factors – entrenched inequality, corruption, and authoritarian rule - the Southern Cone dictatorships understood the insurgencies in Central America as the fruit of Soviet-Cuban incursions into mainland Latin America and were deemed part-and-parcel of the same threat that the Southern Cone had faced earlier in the decade. The presence of Chilean and Argentine exiles in Central America only served to substantiate this belief. In response, both dictatorships began providing direct support to Guatemala and El Salvador.

For the Chilean dictatorship, this support was primarily military. Officers from Guatemala and El Salvador travelled to Chile for military training, and a Chilean instructor continued to serve in El Salvador's *Academia de Guerra*. Throughout, but particularly from 1979 onwards, civilian Extreme Right supporters of the dictatorship cultivated transnational ties with the Extreme Right in both Central American countries while senior members of the dictatorship – including members of the ruling junta – offered support to Central American Extreme Right leaders on various visits to the Southern Cone at the turn of the decade, with Mario Sandoval Alarcón and Roberto D'Aubuisson chief among them. Both these Extreme Right leaders shared the Chilean dictatorship's conception of itself as a potential model of anticommunist government for other Latin American states. In this same period Chilean military assistance expanded, with more scholarships and some limited arms sales.

Argentine assistance to Central America was similar in motivation but involved a greater physical presence on the isthmus. As well as providing scholarships for Central Americans to train in Argentina, Argentine officers worked with the Guatemalan and Salvadoran militaries on the ground in Central America under the direction of the hardliner faction of the Argentine military leadership. This same faction directed Argentine participation in the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) and the organisation of the fourth Confederación Anticomunista Latinoamericana (CAL) conference in Buenos Aires in September 1980; the Argentine military

drew heavily on this organisation to direct support to the Central American counterinsurgencies through clandestine channels. Where Argentine assistance initially focused more on Guatemala than El Salvador, by 1980 Argentina had become the dominant Southern Cone partner in both Central American countries in terms of the provision of material support, even if the Chilean dictatorship remained the clearest political model inspiring Extreme Right visions for a solution to the civil wars.

Throughout the rise and fall of Chilean and Argentine assistance to Guatemala and El Salvador, the figure of the United States loomed large. While the focus is on the Latin American Anticommunist International which rallied around Central America, this story is also one of how the Latin American Extreme Right navigated US power in the Western Hemisphere. Although on the 'same side' in the Cold War, the points of disagreement between the United States and the leadership of the Southern Cone dictatorships and the Guatemalan and Salvadoran militaries were many and significant. These disagreements point to the multiplicity of viewpoints and tensions that existed within the so-called Western 'bloc' in the Cold War.

During the Carter administration, both Chilean and Argentine diplomats in Central America attributed rising instability as much to the ills of US foreign policy as they did to the Leftist revolutionaries. Contrary to expectations in late 1980, even Ronald Reagan proved incapable of bringing about the full re-alignment of US and Latin American Extreme Right aims in Central America. Where US-Chilean relations remained relatively fraught and disagreement over Central America – and El Salvador in particular – very apparent, the early 1980s did bring some US-Argentine collaboration, with the Argentine military aiding the Salvadoran military as well as working with US operatives in training contra fighters in Honduras. This collaboration had its greatest impact not on the ground in Central America but on the decision-making at the very top of the Argentine dictatorship: the ruling junta disastrously misjudged the value that the Reagan administration placed on their presence in Central America and went to war in the Falklands-Malvinas in the belief that these operations in Central America would guarantee US neutrality in the event of a conflict with the United Kingdom. This misjudgement came at a heavy cost, and subsequent defeat in the war led to the swift denouement of Argentine involvement in Central America and the collapse of the regime itself.

The rapid pace at which 'democratisation' swept across Latin America in the 1980s is indicative of the rapidly changing international context in which Southern Cone involvement in

Central America developed. The international environment of 1977 was radically different to that of 1984. The Nicaraguan Revolution of July 1979 which forms a focal point in the chronology of this thesis was one of several events that year – the Grenadian and Iranian Revolutions and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan among them - which appeared to signal the decline of US global power, the end of détente and what some scholars have described as the 'Second Cold War'. These events also had wider repercussions: the Iranian Revolution triggered the 1979 oil shock and plunged the global economy into crisis; in 1982, conditions worsened further when the weight of the debt that Latin American nations had accrued over the course of the 1970s became crippling. Chilean and Argentine concern for and involvement in Central America peaked, and then declined, in this global context.

And yet, in this same period Jimmy Carter and Democrats in Congress successfully institutionalised human rights in US foreign policy apparatus and in turn threw the weight of the United States behind efforts to establish the United Nations and other organisations such as the Organisation of American States as international arbiters of human rights scrutiny. In these actions, the US government was responding to a much larger international human rights movement beyond its control. Crucially, this institutionalisation of human rights proved irreversible and come 1981 both the newly inaugurated Ronald Reagan and the Latin American Extreme Right alike were forced to reckon with this new international landscape.

In the first months after his inauguration in January 1981, Reagan encountered strong and ultimately insurmountable opposition from Congress and the US public to his efforts to deprioritise human rights in US foreign policy. Unable to follow through on the campaign promise to restore the United States' traditional support for Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships, the Reagan White House drew on the anticommunist language of human rights which the US New Right had developed in concert with the Latin American Extreme Right over the last four years to frame the new US Central America policy as a defence of human rights against communism. By 1982, this policy had matured into one of democracy promotion, whereby the Reagan White House used the existence of nominally democratic elections in El Salvador from March 1982 as a cover for the ongoing brutal counterinsurgency. While Argentine involvement in Central America would enter terminal decline upon the outbreak of war in the Falklands-Malvinas the following month, the US shift to democracy promotion also contributed to the winding down of Chilean assistance to Central America: the rise of democracy promotion ended any possibility of a Chile-style 'protected democracy' emerging in either El Salvador or

Guatemala. Crucially, while this anticommunist rhetoric of 'democracy' and 'human rights' served to satisfy congressional restrictions, it did little to bring about any tangible reduction in state-perpetrated violence in Central America: throughout the rest of the 1980s US aid continued to flow to the Central American militaries, and US-trained troops continued to commit widespread human rights abuses.

While the way in which the US commitment to democracy promotion precluded any other outcomes for the conflict in El Salvador (and, not much later, Guatemala) is in itself a testament to the extent of US hegemony in Central America, the void left by the absence of a tangible proactive anticommunist US foreign policy in Central America in the years before 1981-2 had created an unprecedented set of conditions in which the two Southern Cone dictatorships assumed an outsized importance. By zeroing in on this period, the story told by this thesis offers another example of the vast range of possibilities for the future that appeared, and then soon disappeared, amidst the global tumult of the late 1970s. And although by 1990 the 'Third Wave of democratisation' had swept away Latin America's anticommunist dictatorships, as it did so the Latin American Extreme Right successfully limited the extent to which 'democratisation' led to genuine structural change. The limits of the new democracies of the 1980s and 1990s are keenly felt in both Central America and the Southern Cone today.

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This thesis began by stating four research questions and emphasising the importance of combining international and transnational approaches to history in order to answer them. First, I asked what the nature of the Chilean and Argentine dictatorships' involvement in Guatemala and El Salvador was in the late 1970s and early 1980s and what answering this question could teach us about the international history of the conflicts in Central America and of the two Southern Cone dictatorships. This thesis has revealed that the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador were of enormous significance to the dictatorships to the south and detailed the nature of Chilean and Argentine involvement. In doing so, it has shed much light on the two dictatorships themselves, and their foreign policy.

In terms of approach, the inclusion of both Chile and Argentina has provided insight on how the bilateral relation between the two Southern Cone neighbours shaped their wider foreign policy. Despite their shared Extreme Right ideology, tensions between Chile and Argentina over

their southern border in the Beagle Channel precluded any meaningful collaboration in Central America in this period. Instead, particularly at the peak of these tensions in 1978, Chilean and Argentine diplomats competed for Guatemalan and Salvadoran favour in relation to the dispute. Indeed, the fact that the Chilean ambassador to El Salvador even raised the possibility of future collaboration with Argentina in July 1980 is a testament to the depth of Chilean concern about the situation in Central America at that critical juncture.

At a national level, my examination of the expansion of Argentine counterinsurgency into Central America helps us to understand how the Extreme Right ideology at the core of the dictatorship fuelled its destructive political programme. Specifically, the identification of a foreign 'enemy within' threatening the Argentine nation powered an endless 'war' against subversion which, without the Falklands-Malvinas conflict, would likely have driven the Argentine military's pursuit of its enemies beyond its borders for years to come.

This analysis of the Argentine military's transnational counterinsurgency also helps us understand the two-sided structure of the Argentine dictatorship. Hardliners within the regime, and most importantly General Carlos Suárez Mason, directed the bulk of Argentine involvement in Central America using predominantly military channels. Operatives were drawn from similarly hard-line factions within the Argentine military, including recently incorporated members of the Extreme Right paramilitaries responsible for much of the violence during the two years of Isabel Perón's presidency. All the while, the Argentine foreign ministry engaged in a separate venture against the supposed 'smear campaign' of human rights abuse allegations as it sought to present a moderate public image of the dictatorship to the world. The contrast between this public moderation and the private transnational counterinsurgency went beyond appearances: Argentine diplomats in Central America were often deliberately kept in the dark about the extent of the Argentine military presence on the isthmus. In exploring how this two-track nature of the Argentine dictatorship's international engagement, this thesis has shed light on the specific dynamics and structure of the dictatorship itself.

On the Chilean side, my analysis of Chilean diplomats' perceptions of the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador has shown how deeply the dictatorship's own official narrative of Chile's recent history shaped regime officials' understanding of events elsewhere in the region. This narrative – wherein Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei's presidency (1964-70) paved the way for the triumph of Marxist subversion in Chile with Allende's election in 1970 and the country

was only saved from the Marxists' 'Plan Z' of total domination by the military's 'heroic' actions of September 1973 – deeply permeated Chilean readings of the situation in both Guatemala and El Salvador. To take one example, the Chilean identification of Christian Democracy with communism utterly skewed Chilean judgements of the Salvadoran PDC and led to friction between the Pinochet dictatorship and the (PDC) civilians at the heart of the Salvadoran government from January 1980; it likewise generated Chilean distrust in the Reagan administration's policy in El Salvador (supporting the PDC) and Central America more widely. Despite the enormous gulf between Chilean perceptions and reality, this official narrative of the 1960s and 1970s also informed the Chilean Right's rejection of liberal democracy, meaning that the US commitment to democratisation in 1982 played a critical role in the decline in Chilean involvement in Central America.

My analysis of Chilean foreign policy also points to the intersection of the domestic and the international in understanding historical change. The Pinochet dictatorship advocated its own model of 'protected democracy' as a potential solution to the conflicts in Central America, revealing the valuable and underappreciated connection between the process of institutionalisation in Chile from 1977-80 and the dictatorship's foreign policy. The subsequent decline of Chilean involvement in Central America can also only be explained through attention to both the international and the domestic. The global economic crisis in the early 1980s spurred the eruption of domestic protests which shook the regime from below; the inability of Chile's 'protected democracy' to quell these protests in turn undermined its potential as a 'model' for others overseas.

My analysis of Chilean institutionalisation in turn relates to the second research question posed in the introduction to this thesis: what can an analysis of the Chilean and Argentine response to events in Guatemala and El Salvador tell us about the Latin American Extreme Right and its conception of the Cold War? And how can a transnational lens help us to understand the nature of Latin American anticommunism in this period? By exploring this phenomenon in relation to Central America, this thesis has shown the multitude of very different political projects that existed under the banner of the 'Right' during the Cold War, demolishing any notion of a homogenous anticommunist 'bloc' either in Latin America or worldwide. In doing so, it rejects traditional notions of the Right as a reactive force and contributes to new interpretations which acknowledge the creative and constructive nature of many right-wing political projects. More broadly, in exploring the concrete connections between

events in the Southern Cone and those in Central America, I have demonstrated the value in analysing Latin America's Cold War from a regional perspective over isolated analysis of sub-regions and 'flashpoints'.

The third research question that this thesis set out to answer related to what this episode in Latin American transnational anticommunist collaboration can teach us about US power in the Americas in the 1970s and 1980s. Certainly, the United States and US power were central to Latin American anticommunists' conception of the regional Cold War. Regardless of the occupant of the White House, US foreign policy played a fundamental role in framing Chilean and Argentine decision-making regarding Central America. Yet the Latin American Extreme Right did not consider US power unassailable. Rather, they contested US foreign policy at every turn, and, in the late 1970s in particular, sought to work with members of the US New Right outside of government to shape the future of US policy. With this in mind, this thesis has made the case for understanding anticommunism in the Americas as a hemispheric enterprise, subject to multidirectional flows of interest from both north and south.

In this respect, the United States' relationship with Latin America is (and was) distinct from the way in which US power has been exercised in other parts of the world. It was not only the Latin American protagonists at the heart of this story who positioned their politics in hemispheric terms: contrary to its popular usage, many of the members of the US New Right used the term 'American' to refer to the United States' common security interests with Latin America in this period. As I have argued here, and others have argued elsewhere, US interactions with Latin America fundamentally shaped the development of US domestic politics.[1] Kyle Burke has argued that we must understand the anticommunist international that emerged during the Cold Was as akin to the international human rights movement in its linkage of the local, national and the international and its modes of activism; this thesis has argued that the Latin America arm of this sprawling web – what I term the 'Latin American Anticommunist International' profoundly influenced not only events in Central America but ideas and discourses around the Cold War, human rights, and democracy across the Americas and beyond.[2]

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[1] See Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy:The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[2] Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War*, 8.

And indeed, human rights and democracy lie at the heart of the fourth and final research question addressed in this thesis: namely, how does this story of the Latin American Anticommunist International help us understand the wider upheaval in the international political system in the late 1970s and early 1980s? I have shown how anticommunists across the Americas sought to limit and indeed co-opt the very concepts of human rights and democracy to their own ends, in turn influencing the normative definitions of each that emerged in the post-Cold War period. Over the course of the 1980s, the Reagan administration, Central American military leaders and – more belatedly – the Pinochet dictatorship – recognised that embracing the language of human rights and democracy provided a veil of legitimacy behind which, in the Central American case, violent counterinsurgency would continue to rage. Where Argentina is an outlier, the pacted transitions in Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile all point to the ways in which the Right ensured that the democracies which emerged from the 'Third Wave of democratisation' adhered to incredibly narrow definitions of human rights and political participation.

All of this is to say that the form of democracy that emerged from the 'Third Wave' in El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile was a very different beast to the conceptualisation of democracy which the popular opposition had called for in the years leading up to these transitions. To take the Chilean case, for example, Alison Bruey has described how during the national protests of the mid-1980s, 'pobladores protested for an end to dictatorship and the neoliberal economic model and in favor of democracy and a more equitable economic system'.[3] Yet instead, *Concertación* rule after 1990 was characterised by 'the continuance of the neoliberal model' and a 'narrow working definition of human rights' which 'clashed with understandings of rights and visions of society constructed in grassroots opposition circles' in the 1970s and 1980s.[4] While the Right's embrace of the 'Third Wave of democratisation' spelled the end for the sort of transnational anticommunist collaboration detailed in this thesis, it also had a fundamental impact on the political systems that emerged from the Cold War.

Viewed from this perspective, the assumed links that are often made between democratisation, peace, and the end of the Cold War appear weak. For those who lived through the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, the commonly accepted 'end of the Cold War' in

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[3] Alison Bruey, *Bread, Justice, and Liberty: Grassroots Activism and Human Rights in Pinochet's Chile* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 13.
[4] Bruey, 19.

1989-91 (the fall of the Berlin Wall through the collapse of the Soviet Union) did not represent the watershed moment that it did in other arenas of the Cold War, perhaps most notably in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union itself. Rather, in both Central American countries the civil wars trailed behind the 'transitions' to democracy and the end of the Cold War. And with the benefit of three decades hindsight, it is even more apparent that the peace accords in both Guatemala (1996) and El Salvador (1992) effectively represented a victory for the Right, and the struggle for meaningful structural reform remains in both countries today. In a testament to the Extreme Right's ability to adapt to the new rules of the democratic game, ARENA remains a central political force in El Salvador today.

This question of how and when the Cold War ended in Latin America is just one avenue for further research opened by this thesis. What of the wider international history of the conflicts in Central America? While Argentina's role has long been established, this thesis has provided the first insight into the Pinochet dictatorship's involvement in Central America. However, very little is known of other Southern Cone countries' perspectives on the conflicts. In particular, the Brazilian perspective would be fascinating and there is much potential in exploring the parallels between the process of democratisation traced in the final chapter of this thesis and Brazil's military-managed transition to democracy in 1985. Likewise, the other Central American republics are largely absent from the narrative presented here. It would be valuable to explore how far Honduras featured in Chilean diplomats' understanding of the regional landscape in Central America and whether the Chilean military was involved in the training of the Nicaraguan contra forces.

This thesis has also opened the door for further research on the Latin American Anticommunist International, particularly in relation to its trans-regional ties. In particular, mentions of both Taiwan and Israel recur in contemporary and historical accounts of external involvement in the conflicts in Central America. We know, for example, that Roberto D'Aubuisson received counterinsurgency training in Taiwan in the late 1970s and that Israel played a crucial role in supplying arms and technology to the Guatemalan military in the same period. Yet, to date, there have been no major studies of either country's role.

Likewise, while the study of the transnational Right is rapidly catching up on the voluminous output that addresses the transnational Left, more remains to be done. In particular, further research is needed regarding the political culture of the Latin American Extreme Right

and the people who comprised it. Even with the integration of records on non-state organisations and personal papers, the story told here is one dominated by men, and particularly lighter-skinned, wealthy men. Having provided an overview of the nature and scope of the Latin American Anticommunist International in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this thesis lays the ground to ask further questions. We know that women were involved in right-wing movements across Latin America in the 1970s; what role did they play here?[5] What cultural outputs did the Extreme Right produce? What role did race, class and gender play in articulations of Extreme Right ideology at local, national and regional levels?

Finally, it will be exciting to see further research on the legacy of the Latin American Anticommunist International in the post-Cold War period. Kyle Burke has shown the significance of ties to the World Anti-Communist League for the evolution of extra-official US involvement overseas yet it remains to be seen what role the transnational connections forged between the US and Latin American Rights played in these developments.[6] It would also be interesting to explore how the Latin American Extreme Right actors at the core of this thesis adapted to the new politics of the post-Cold War world, the extent to which the transnational ties between them survived and thrived into the 1990s and beyond, and how this might help us understand the Latin American transnational Right today. In prompting all these lines for further inquiry and more, the story of unprecedented Latin American transnational anticommunist collaboration told in this thesis makes a major contribution to our understanding of the international history of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the Latin American Extreme Right's place within it.

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[5] Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle against Allende, 1964-1973.*

[6] Burke, *Revolutionaries for the Right: Anticommunist Internationalism and Paramilitary Warfare in the Cold War.*

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Appendix – Key Individuals

Arranged alphabetically by surname within nationality. Names in *italics* indicate other entries on this list. nd – no date(s).

Argentina

Juan Martín Ciga Correa (nd-2002), former Tacuara member deployed to the Universidad de Buenos Aires following the March 1976 coup. Later present in Nicaragua providing training to Somoza's National Guard. Known associate of *Alfredo Zarattini.*

General Ramón Genaro Díaz Bessone (1925-2017), career military officer. Prominent hard-liner within Argentine military leadership. Minister for Planning, 1976-77. Participant in the 1979 CIS symposium.

Carlos Alberto Durich Fernández (nd), Extreme-Right Peronist and former Triple-A member. Served as an advisor to Anastasio Somoza's secret police (1978) and also present in Guatemala. Known associate of Guatemalans *Mario Sandoval Alarcón* and *Carlos Midence*. Other aliases included Roberto Alfieri González and Francisco Díaz.

General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri Castelli (1926-2003), military officer and politician. Commander-in-Chief of the Argentine Army (1980-82). President of Argentina (December 1981-June 1982). Led Argentina into the Malvinas/Falklands War.

Colonel Santiago Hoya (nd), army intelligence officer and member of Battalion 601. Commander of Argentine forces in Central America. Directed activities of *Alfredo Zarattini* and *Juan Martín Ciga Correa*. Other aliases include Santiago Villegas, José Ollas.

Germán Adolfo Justo (nd), Argentine fascist, active in the ALN (Alianza Libertadora Nacional) in the 1940s. Founding member of the CAL and director of Argentine participation until 1979. Served as president of the organising committee for the IV CAL Congress (September 1980).

General Carlos Guillermo Suárez Mason (1924-2005), career military officer. Director of military intelligence from 1972, prominent hard-liner in military dictatorships from 1976. Appointed Commander of the First Army Corps (Buenos Aires) following the March 1976 coup and also supervised Army Intelligence Battalion 601. Made Chairman of Joint Military Chiefs in January 1980. Member of Italian fascist organisation P-2 and directed Argentine military operations in Central America. Led Argentine participation in WACL and CAL from 1979 and presided over the IV CAL Congress in Buenos Aires in September 1980.

General Jorge Rafael Videla (1925-2013), Argentine military officer and dictator. Commander in Chief of the Argentine Army, member of the Military Junta, and de facto President of Argentina, March 1976- March 1981.
General Roberto Eduardo Viola (1924-1994), military officer and President and Dictator of Argentina (March-December 1981).
Luis Alfredo Zarattini (nd), Extreme Right paramilitary member turned intelligence agent. Former *Tacuara* militant absorbed into Battalion 601 following the March 1976 military coup. Acted as a civil advisor to the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua (1978-79), representing Argentina at the WYACL (World Youth Anti-Communist League) conference in Managua in May 1979. Active in Guatemala and El Salvador following the Nicaraguan Revolution and helped organise the IV CAL conference in Buenos Aires, September 1980.
Raúl Zardini (nd), fascist intellectual. Deployed to the Universidad de Buenos Aires following the March 1976 coup. Attendee at III CAL congress in March 1977. Associate of *Alfredo Zarattini* and *Juan Martín Ciga Correa*.
Ricardo Zinn (1926-1995), economist and intellectual. Worked in various advisory roles during the 'Argentine Revolution' (1966-70) and subsequent administrations. Advisor within the Ministry of the Economy during the last military dictatorship. Founder of multiple right-wing neoliberal think tanks, among them the Centro de Estudios Macroeconómicos de Argentina (CEMA). Active in CIS.

Chile

Gustavo Alessandri Valdés (1929-2017), right-wing politician. National Party deputy prior to the military dictatorship (1961-65, 1969-71). Involved in Chilean participation in WACL/CAL from the latter's foundation; leader of the Chilean chapter from 1974 onwards. Later military-appointed Mayor of Santiago (1987-89) and founder and congressman for National Renewal (1998-2002).
Hernán Cubillos Sallato (1936-2001), Chilean businessman and politician. Son of former Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean navy Hernán Cubillos Leiva. Served in the Chilean navy (1953-61). Senior figure in Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* (1963-74). Chilean Foreign Minister (1978-80).
Gustavo Cuevas Farren (1936-2022), academic and lawyer. Involved in the drafting of the 1980 constitution. Attendee at CIS conferences (1979 and 1981).
Pedro Ibáñez Ojeda (1913-1999), right-wing politician and businessman. National Party senator (1961-77), member of the Chilean State Council (1976) and involved in the writing of the

1980 Chilean constitution. Member of the Mont Pelerin Society and involved in the American-Chilean Council. Speaker at the 12th WACL conference in Asunción, Paraguay, 1979. Son of Chilean businessman Adolfo Ibáñez Boggiano and father of *Gonzalo Ibáñez Santa María*.

Gonzalo Ibáñez Santa María (1945-), academic, lawyer and politician. Supportive of the Pinochet dictatorship. Closely involved CIS and the American-Chilean Council. Son of *Pedro Ibáñez Ojeda*.

Eduardo Frei Montalva (1911-1982), Christian Democrat politician. President of Chile (1964-70). Came out in opposition to the military dictatorship in the late 1970s. His death in hospital in January 1982 has been treated as suspicious.

General Gustavo Leigh Guzmán (1920-1999), Commander-in-chief of the Chilean Air Force and member of the ruling junta (1973-78). Forced out of junta by *Augusto Pinochet* in July 1978. Speaker at the 1977 CAL conference in Asunción, Paraguay.

Jaime Guzmán Errázurriz (1946-1991), right-wing politician and lawyer. Founder of the student *gremialista* movement. Close advisor to *Augusto Pinochet.* Architect of the 1980 Chilean constitution. Founder of the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI, 1983) and elected Senator following Chile's return to democracy (1990). Assassinated by the far-Left Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez in April 1991.

Luis Alberto Núñez (c. 1925-1983), retired member of the Chilean air force resident in Guatemala. Representative of the Chilean arms manufacturer Cardoen. Personal friend of *Mario Sandoval Alarcón*.

Sergio Onofre Jarpa Reyes (1921-2020), Chilean politician and diplomat. National Party Senator (1973). Ambassador to Colombia (1976-78) and Argentina (1978-83). Interior Minister (1983-85). Leader of Chilean delegation to the CAL (1973-74).

General Cesár Mendoza Durán (1918-1996), Director of the Carabineros (armed police) and member of the Chilean Junta (1973-85).

General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte (1915-2006), Chilean dictator (1973-90). General and Commander-in-chief of the Chilean Army (1973-98), Senator for Life (1998-2002).

Admiral José Toribio Merino (1915-1996), Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Navy and member of the Chilean Junta (1973-1990).

El Salvador

Major Roberto D'Aubuisson Arrieta (1943-1992), Extreme Right military officer, politician and death squad leader. Middle-class background. Active service in the Salvadoran military until October 1979, underwent training in military intelligence and counterinsurgency at the School of

the Americas (1972) and in Taiwan (1978). Led attempted Extreme Right coup in May 1980. Co-founder and first leader of ARENA (1981) and President of El Salvador's Constituent Assembly (1982-83). ARENA presidential candidate in the 1984 elections.

Fidel Ángel Chávez Mena (c. 1940-), Christian Democrat politician. Salvadoran foreign minister (1980-84) and PDC candidate in the 1989 presidential elections. Personal acquaintance of *Eduardo Frei Montalva*, with whom he lived as a student at Chile's Universidad Católica in the early 1960s.

Adolfo Cuellar (nd-1980), Extreme Right politician. Founding member of CAL and coordinator of Salvadoran participation in WACL and CAL. PCN deputy; later involved in FAN (precursor to ARENA). Assassinated by guerrillas in January 1980.

Orlando de Sola (nd-), Member of the wealthy de Sola family of coffee growers/exporters. Co-founder and funder of ARENA. Active participant in CIS.

José Napoleón Duarte Fuentes (1925-1990), Christian Democrat politician. Mayor of San Salvador (1964-70), President of the Junta (1980-82) and President of El Salvador (1984-89).

General Rafael Flores Lima (c. 1935-2020), military officer. Chief of Armed Forces General Staff (1980-83), Deputy Minister of Defence (1983-c. 89). Undergoing trial for responsibility for the El Mozote massacre of 1981 at the time of his death.

Ricardo Fuentes Castellanos (nd), right-wing journalist. Close associate of *Manuel Ayau*. Active participant in CIS symposia. Involved in FAN and ARENA.

General José Guillermo García (1933-), military officer. Salvadoran Defence Minister 1979-83. Currently undergoing trial for responsibility for the El Mozote massacre (1981) among other crimes.

General Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez Avendaño (1936-2012), military officer and politician. Co-leader of the October 1979 coup. Military member of the Revolutionary Government Junta, 1979-82. Vice President of the Junta and Commander-in-Chief of the Salvadoran Armed Forces, 1980-82. Played a key role in the escalation of the Salvadoran conflict into fully-fledged civil war.

Colonel José Eduardo Iraheta (nd-), military officer and Extreme Right politician. Received military training in Chile (1969). Salvadoran Sub-Secretary of Defence and Public Security (1979); retired from military and government in October 1979 coup. Involved in the attempted Extreme Right coup of May 1980.

Luis Ángel Lagos (nd), Extreme Right politician. Co-founder of ARENA. Regular attendee at WACL and CAL conferences, 1977-83.

David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval (1950-), Extreme Right politician. Founder of the MNS (Movimiento Nacionalista Salvadoreño), the FAN (Frente Amplio Nacionalista) and co-founder

of ARENA. Nephew of *Mario Sandoval Alarcón*. Attendee at the IV CAL Congress in Buenos Aires (September 1980).

Ana María Rodríguez Porth (nd), Salvadoran political activist. Member of the right-wing women's group Frente Feminino Salvadoreño (FFS). Wife of *Dr José Antonio Rodríguez Porth*.

Dr José Antonio Rodríguez Porth (1915-1989), Salvadoran lawyer, businessman, and Extreme Right politician. Salvadoran foreign minister April 1978 – October 1979. Former advisor to ANEP and founding member of ARENA. Involved in May 1980 attempted coup in El Salvador. Husband of *Ana María Rodríguez Porth*. Assassinated in June 1989 shortly after his appointment as chief of staff to ARENA president Alfredo Cristiani.

Oscár Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez (1917-80), Archbishop of San Salvador (1977-80). Vocal critic of the Salvadoran military government. Assassinated in March 1980 by Extreme Right death squads.

General Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova (1937-), military officer. Head of the Salvadoran National Guard (1979-83) and Salvadoran Defence Minister (1983-89). Later found guilty of torture for Civil War-era crimes in a US civil court case.

Guatemala

Manuel Francisco Ayau Cordón (1925-2010), Extreme Right academic, politician and businessman. Founder of the right-wing think tank Centro de Estudios Económico-Sociales (CEES) in 1959 and the Universidad Francisco Marroquín (1972). Member of the Mont Pelerin Society and its president 1978-80. Member of the MLN and MLN congressman 1970-74. Regular participant in CIS symposia in late 1970s and early 1980s. Left the MLN in 1990 to run as vice president with the UCN (Unión del Centro Nacional).

Carlos Midence (1950-2011), Extreme Right politician and member of the MLN. Nephew of *Mario Sandoval Alarcón*. Attendee at WACL and CAL conferences. Intermediary for Argentine operatives in Central America, including *Alfredo Zarattini* and *Carlos Alberto Durich*. Advisor to Salvadoran Extreme Rightists, including *David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval*. Agricultural attaché (ad honorem) to the Guatemalan embassy in Buenos Aires (1979).

General Fernando Romero Lucas García (1924-2006), Army General. President of Guatemala (1978-82).

General Efraín Ríos Montt (1926-2018), military officer and politician. Presidential candidate in 1974 elections. President of Guatemala following the 1982 military coup (March 1982-August 1983; oversaw most violent period of the Guatemalan Civil War and genocide. Evangelical

Christian. Later returned to politics as an elected congressman and leader of the Frente Republicano Guatemalteco.

Mario Sandoval Alarcón (1923-2003), Extreme Right politician and member of Guatemalan elite. Founder and leader of the Guatemalan MLN and the Guatemalan WACL/CAL chapter. President of the Guatemalan National Congress (1970-74) and Vice President of Guatemala (1974-78). MLN presidential candidate in the 1982 elections. Uncle of *Carlos Midence* and *David Ernesto Panamá Sandoval*.

Carlos Simmons (nd), MLN stalwart, involved in 1954 coup and 1950s Conferences on Soviet Intervention in Latin America. Later participated in both WACL/CAL and CIS.

Mexico

Rafael Rodríguez (nd), Mexican Extreme Right journalist and academic at the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara. Member of FEMACO (Los Tecos) and founding member and long-time General Secretary of the CAL.

Paraguay

General Alfredo Stroessner (1912-2006), military officer and politician. Dictator and President of Paraguay (1954-89).

United States

Lynn Francis Bouchey (1942-2017), right-wing political activist. Co-founder and President of CIS. Co-author of the Santa Fe report.

John Carbaugh (1945-2012), right-wing political aide and businessman. Most notably foreign policy advisor to Senator *Jesse Helms* (1974-82). Closely tied to members of the Latin American Extreme Right in both Central and South America and attendee at both CAL and CIS events.

Jimmy Carter (1924-), 39th President of the United States, 1977-81.

Roger Fontaine (1941-2020), academic specialising in Latin American politics. Member of the CIS advisory board and co-author of the Santa Fe report. Director of Latin American Affairs, NSC (1981-83).

Lieutenant General Daniel Graham (1925-95), army intelligence officer. Deputy director of the CIA (1973-74) and Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (1974-76). Served as military advisor to the Reagan campaign team 1976-80. Co-author of the Santa Fe report and closely involved in CIS. Attendee at multiple WACL conferences.

Jesse Helms (1921-2008), Republican Party politician. Senator from North Carolina, 1973-2003. Prominent advocate for the Latin American Right and the region's anticommunist dictatorships.
David C. Jordan (1935-), right-wing academic and diplomat. Co-author of the Santa Fe report and involved in CIS. Later US ambassador to Peru (1984-86).
Jeane Kirkpatrick (1926-2006), US diplomat and political scientist. US ambassador to the United Nations, 1981-85.
Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), 40th President of the United States, 1981-89.
Major General John K. Singlaub (1921-2022), military officer (OSS) and founding member of the CIA. Relieved of his position as Chief-of-Staff of US forces in South Korea in 1977 after openly criticising Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. Forced into retirement less than a year later. Subsequently became an active voice in the opposition to Carter. Founded new US WACL chapter in 1982 and became WACL chairman. Implicated in Iran-Contra and coordinated a host of other private US military engagements in Central America and worldwide.
Lieutenant General Gordon Sumner (1924-2012), military officer and political activist. Long military career ended with his resignation from the Inter-American Defense Board in 1978 in protest at Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. Co-author of the Santa Fe report and member of the CIS advisory board. Later served in the State Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs during the Reagan administration.
Lewis Tambs (1927-2017), right-wing academic and diplomat. Speaker at the 1979 CIS symposium and co-author of the Santa Fe report. Member of Reagan's National Security Council and later US ambassador to Colombia (1983-85) and Costa Rica (1985-87).
Vernon A. Walters (1917-2002), army officer and diplomat. Deputy Director of the CIA (1972-76), advisor to numerous US presidents. Extensive experience in Latin America, including at the time of the Brazilian (1964) and Chilean (1973) military coups. Reagan's ambassador-at-large and frequent envoy to Central and South America during the first term of the administration. Later US ambassador to the United Nations (1985-89) and West/united Germany (1989-90, 1990-91).
Robert White (1926-2015), career diplomat. Ambassador to Paraguay (1977-80) and El Salvador (1980-81).