

## Preface to the Second Edition

The term had not come into general usage when the first edition of this book was published in 1999, but what occurred in Guatemala in 1954 would nowadays be referred to as an example of “regime change.” Since 2001, the United States has made clear that it would resort to this measure in response to threats from terrorism or mass-destruction weapons and to deal with recalcitrant or “failed” states. The unspoken assumption is that governments are interchangeable components, easily detached from the societies and economies over which they preside, and just as easily replaced. The architects of Operation PBSUCCESS were equally certain of this point, and sure of their ability to remove and rebuild a regime. Readers adapt their understandings of history in light of new developments, and so, while this book once concerned a secretive episode in the cold war in Central America, today it describes an early precedent for the global “path of action” pursued in the war on terror.<sup>1</sup>

Although the administration has, at least publicly, preferred to draw analogies to the post-World War II occupations of Germany

<sup>1</sup>George Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington: The White House, September 17, 2002), p. ii.

and Japan, and critics have invoked the Viet Nam parallel, there are reasons to consider the civil wars in Central America a more direct antecedent to policies pursued in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan placed heavy emphasis on the use of surrogate armies backed by airpower, while the Iraq invasion relied on selective violence to produce psychological effects (“shock and awe”), the principal techniques of PBSUCCESS. Since 2003, the Pentagon has modeled its counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq on methods developed in “dirty wars” in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> In the 1950s, it was axiomatic that proximity justified energetic measures to secure the United States’s “backyard” in Central America. Polls show that people in many countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa now worry that our backyard has grown to include them.

As I listen to the administration’s reassurances about U.S. intentions, I hear echoes of the “facts of life” that CIA operatives tried to impress on the Guatemalan military in 1954: that “the US is the most generous and tolerate taskmaster going, that cooperation is studded with material reward, and that the US permits much more sovereignty and independence in its sphere . . .” This second edition is occasioned by events which lend the story of PBSUCCESS fresh significance for a new generation of nation builders.

Thanks to the release of additional documentation, it is also a richer story. In 2003, the State Department released a volume of declassified materials as part of its *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, a project which since 1861 has upheld a governmental commitment to open diplomacy. FRUS (rhymes with spruce), as it is called by historians, publishes a substantial assortment of the memos and cables on which U.S. foreign policy is based. In 1989, the Organization of American Historians charged that the series had lost its integrity when it issued a volume on Iran containing no CIA documents or indeed any mention of the

<sup>2</sup>On the Central American precedent to counterinsurgency policy, see Peter Maass, “The Way of the Commandos,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 1, 2005; Robert Parry, “Iraq: Quicksand and Blood,” *In These Times*, December 26, 2003, [http://www.inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=521\\_0\\_1\\_0\\_C](http://www.inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=521_0_1_0_C).

1953 covert operation that overthrew Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq. The long-delayed Guatemala volume signals an effort to return FRUS to its original purpose of permitting the public to gain accurate information on the activities of government agencies. It contains a wide sampling of documents from CIA, State, the National Security Council, and the office of the President.<sup>3</sup> The absence of Defense Department documents related to military advisers, aid, and Operation HARDROCK/BAKER still leaves a large gap in the historical record, but the new volume represents a considerable advance. Additional documentation has come to light as part of the truth and reconciliation process in Guatemala and through the efforts of scholars using the Freedom of Information Act. This new edition includes a new appendix, Appendix D, with some of the more significant new documents.

The original text has not been revised. I have been conscious of Robert Shaffer's description of this book as a "secondary source that functions also as a primary source," and so the original text and, equally important, the gaps in the text have remained untouched.<sup>4</sup> I have received more compliments on the eloquence of the gaps than on any of the legible passages. Readers have found they can check their speculations for fit, and search the blank spaces for clues on the aspects of the operation that the agency, even after 50 years, prefers to cloak in "plausible deniability."

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<sup>3</sup>Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Guatemala* (Washington: USGPO, 2003).

<sup>4</sup>Robert Shaffer, "The 1954 Coup in Guatemala and the Teaching of U.S. Foreign Relations," *Passport* 35 (December 2004) 3: 5-13.