

When Do Democracies Prefer Coups to Peace?

The Cost of Domestic-Accountability in Interdemocratic Policy Disputes

by

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B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2016

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Political Science)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

June 2017

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Abstract

Democratic Peace theorists argue a democracy's elected-leader will not impose the costs of war upon their citizens out of fear those citizens will retaliate by voting them out of office. This domestic-accountability mechanism (DAM) promotes peace by imposing constraints on elected leaders. However, I argue Democratic Peace theorists have paid insufficient attention to a major implication of the DAM, namely, that for the very same reason an elected leader will not declare war, an elected leader cannot accept domestically-unpopular demands imposed by a more powerful democracy when important policy disputes arise within democratic dyads. In such cases, the DAM which prevents war also facilitates lower-cost conflict such as coups. I examine declassified records from the National Security Archives and the U.S. Department of State Archives pertaining to the British and American coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) – two cases Democratic Peace Theory has ill prepared us to understand. I show how the coups were conducted to nullify the DAM in Iran and Guatemala (by replacing elected leaders with dictators), thus paving the way for a dispute settlement more favorable to British and American interests. This study implies that the benefits of democratization are not as significant at lower levels of conflict.

Lay Summary

Democracy is not perfect. Elected leaders are accountable to their citizens (through the ballot box). This can be problematic when policy disputes arise between democracies. Due to a rational fear of being voted out of office, elected leaders cannot accept domestically unpopular demands imposed by a more powerful democracy. Domestic-accountability can make negotiations long and costly, and can escalate to lower-level conflict such as coups. Coups can be less costly than stalled negotiations. I examine the innerworkings of what I call the “domestic-accountability mechanism” (DAM) through two case studies where democracies conducted coups against other democracies: Britain and the United States against Iran (1953) and the United States against Guatemala (1954). These coups were conducted to replace elected leaders with dictators (to nullify the DAM) thus paving the way for a favorable dispute settlement. This thesis implies that we should not assume the proliferation of democracy is unproblematic.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work done by the author, Graeme Bant.

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Acknowledgements

I must sincerely thank Professor Arjun Chowdhury for agreeing to be my thesis supervisor. Thank you for helping me think through my ideas, for sharing your constructive (and deeply insightful) criticisms, and for giving me your time. I must also thank Professor Richard Price for agreeing to be my second-reader. Fittingly, the initial ideas for this thesis struck me during the graduate seminars I took with these fantastic professors.

Dedication

To Margot and Andrew.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1795 Immanuel Kant published *Eternal Peace*, a polemical essay that prompted scholars to develop, centuries later, the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT). In *Eternal Peace*, Kant laid out a liberal framework with three “definitive articles” which, he believed, would incentivize self-interested individuals to achieve a lasting peace. One of Kant’s three definitive articles pertained to a republican constitution. Republican constitutions, Kant suggested, promote peace for the following reason:

If, as is necessarily the case under the constitution, the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide whether there should be war or not, nothing is more natural than that those who would have to decide to undergo all the deprivations of war will very much hesitate to start such an evil game. For the deprivations are many, such as fighting oneself, paying for the cost of the war out of one’s own possessions, and repairing the devastation which it costs, and to top all the evils there remains a burden of debts which embitters the peace and can never be paid off on account of approaching new wars.¹

The idea here is simple: if those who are directly impacted by war get a say in its occurrence, war will be less likely. A natural derivative of this, Jack Levy argued, is that an elected leader will not impose the costs of war onto her citizens out of fear she will lose the next election if angry, war-torn voters head to the polls.² This is what I call the “domestic accountability mechanism” (DAM). This mechanism, as currently theorized, promotes peace by imposing constraints on democratically-elected leaders.

However, democratic mechanisms can be problematic in international relations. If democratic mechanisms promote peace, why do democracies organize, fund, and conduct coups

¹ Immanuel Kant, “Eternal Peace,” in *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant’s Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl Friedrich (New York: Random House, 1949 [1795]), 438.

² Jack Levy, “Domestic Politics and War,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1998): 653-673.

against other democracies? The answer, I contend, has to do with an underappreciated and undertheorized implication of the DAM; namely, that domestic accountability can prevent an elected leader from reaching a settlement with another democracy (whose leader is also susceptible to the DAM) when policy disputes arise. Thus domestic-accountability can hinder peaceful dispute resolution and set the stage for lower-level conflict such as coups.

I build my argument on two cases: the British and American coup of democratically-elected Mohammad Mosaddeq³ in Iran (1953), and the American coup of democratically-elected Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala (1954). Both Arbenz and Mosaddeq rose to power on populist platforms, promising to take back control of their nations' most valuable resources from British and American governments and corporations. Once in office, with the overwhelming support of their voters behind them, Mosaddeq and Arbenz acted; one nationalized oil from the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), the other expropriated land from the American-owned United Fruit Company (UFC). Once enacted, the benefits of their policies (both psychological and material) immediately started flowing to local publics; Mosaddeq and Arbenz knew backing down from such policies would be political suicide. Once the British and the Americans figured that out, Mosaddeq's and Arbenz's demise was imminent. For the same reason that Mosaddeq would not declare war against the British, he could not step down from his nationalization platform. For the same reason Arbenz would not declare war against the United States, he could not rescind his expropriation. It was the democratic *institutions* in Iran and Guatemala that led to Mosaddeq's and Arbenz's downfall. DPT has ill prepared us to understand these two cases. The goal of this essay is to revise one of the main causal mechanisms of DPT –

³ There appears to be no consensus on how to spell the Iranian Prime Minister's name. When I use his name I will spell it as it appears in his memoir: Mohammad Mosaddeq. When quoting a source, I will maintain their spelling.

the DAM – in light of new evidence gleaned from historical case studies of the coups in Iran and Guatemala.

My argument has troubling implications for the present push for global democratization. In his 1994 State of the Union Address President Bill Clinton “invoked the absence of war between democracies as a justification for promoting democratization around the globe,”⁴ stating that “democracies don’t attack each other,” and that “the best strategy to insure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere.”⁵ Worryingly, the emergence of incipient democracies may actually increase the potential for lower-level conflict between these new democracies and established democracies because the leaders of new democracies will be accountable to their publics who, generally speaking, are quite poor and who, understandably, want to control and benefit from their own resources. Simply put, we should not assume that the proliferation of democracy is unproblematic.

⁴ Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War,” in *Debating the Democratic Peace: An International Security Reader*, ed. Michael Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven Miller (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 301.

⁵ John Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” *International Security* 19 (1994): 87. Quoting President Bill Clinton’s State of the Union Address, January 1994.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Despite the brilliance and parsimony of Kant's essay, it received relatively little attention for some two-hundred years. Upon rereading Kant's essay, Michael Doyle ran a statistical analysis in which he discovered that democracies did not go to war with other democracies, essentially putting some empirical weight behind Kant's theoretical assertions.⁶ While one can trace the idea back to Kant, it was Doyle's seminal contribution which sparked the decades-long debate on the Democratic Peace Theory. It is not possible nor necessary to provide a comprehensive literature review of the DPT here; instead, I will review the mechanisms that are germane to my argument.

International Relations scholars in the 1980s and 1990s claimed that the absence of wars between democracies was a fact of international relations.⁷ Indeed, Jack Levy famously argued "the absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."⁸ More quantifiably, Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa conducted a statistical analysis of 284,602 dyad years from 1816-1980 and concluded "the probability of war between democracies is 0.02%."⁹

Over the decades, DPT scholars have put forth a myriad of causal mechanisms to explain the steadfast statistical association between democratic dyads and peace. The "electoral-accountability"¹⁰ of leaders and "audience costs,"¹¹ shared democratic identity,¹² shared "liberal

⁶ Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs (Part 1)," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (1983): 205-235; "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs (Part 2)," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (1983): 323-352.

⁷ Rein Mullerson, "Democratic Peace Theories and Regime Change," in *Regime Change: From Democratic Peace Theories to Forcible Regime Change* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013), 161-62.

⁸ Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," 662.

⁹ Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Common Interests or Common Polities: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace," *The Journal of Politics* 59 (1997): 405.

¹⁰ Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," 659.

¹¹ James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *The American Political Science Review* 88 (1994): 577-592.

¹² Mullerson, "Democratic Peace Theories," 163.

ideas,”¹³ and “contracting advantages”¹⁴ are some of the most prominent mechanisms that “prod democracies toward peace.”¹⁵

This essay is concerned with uncovering undertheorized implications of the first two mechanisms – what I call the “domestic accountability mechanism” (DAM). By using the term DAM I simply mean to make explicit the institutional significance of the mechanism which “electoral accountability” and “audience costs” leave largely implicit. I will argue that while the DAM deters war, it facilitates coups. I uncover the workings of this mechanism by analyzing two acknowledged but understudied cases for DPT: the British and American coup in Iran (1953) and the American coup in Guatemala (1954). While scholars have (quite rightly) argued these cases are problematic for DPT, Iran and Guatemala are simply listed in tables of democratic interventions and are not examined in any meaningful detail.¹⁶ My contribution is to uncover the innerworkings of the DAM by conducting in-depth case studies of these two coups.

The DAM and other domestically-constraining mechanisms support the notion of the monadic democratic peace – the claim that democracies are more peaceful *in general*. Scholars have found evidence which supports¹⁷ and rejects¹⁸ the monadic view. However, even the most ardent critic of the monadic view of DPT does not suggest democracy makes war more likely, just that democracies are no more peaceful than other regimes.

¹³ Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” 88.

¹⁴ Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” 93.

¹⁶ Sebastian Rosato, “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory,” *The American Political Science Review* 97 (2003): 590.

¹⁷ John O’Neal and Bruce Russett, “The Kantian Peace: The Pacific Benefits of Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations, 1885-1992,” *World Politics* 52 (1999): 1-37.

¹⁸ Christopher Layne, “Kant or Cant: the Myth of the Democratic Peace,” in *Debating the Democratic Peace: An International Security Reader*, ed. Michael Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven Miller (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Accordingly, one of the main implications of the Democratic Peace Theory is that democracies should support the unconditional proliferation of democracy. Democracies have mutual identities, similar interests, and similar institutional constraints which promote dyadic peace. Monadically (domestically), democracies promote peace by increasing the accountability of the state's elected leader: the leader will not wage war, and impose the enormous costs of war on their citizens, out of fear those citizens will retaliate by voting them out of office come the next election.

However, under certain conditions, I argue the DAM can make peaceful dispute resolution between democracies less likely. Put differently, while the DAM may prevent democratic leaders from plunging their state into all-out war, the DAM can make lower-level conflict more likely (by making peaceful dispute resolution less likely). Indeed, some democratic regimes are problematic for other democracies; in some cases, democracies would prefer to deal with autocracies, and in extreme cases, some democracies conduct coups against other democracies to install autocracies.

Democracies should prefer to let negotiations on a policy dispute stall rather than resort to war, because the costs of war far outweigh the benefits of a settlement.¹⁹ However, I suggest the cost of conducting a coup can be less than the cost of stalled negotiations. In such circumstances, by the same rationalist logic, democracies should prefer coups to peace. That is, under certain conditions coups are less costly than continued negotiation.

What conditions make dispute resolution harder between democracies and therefore coups more likely? When do democracies prefer dealing with autocracies?

¹⁹ James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49 (1995): 380-81.

- When disputes emerge over policy issues which the developed democracy (DD) has limited leverage over the undeveloped democracy (UD).²⁰ Resource disputes are an example.
- When the DD has a strong policy preference.
- When the citizens of the UD have a strong, and opposing, policy preference.
- When the UD's leader comprehends the preferences of their citizens (that is, when the leader knows that going against the public's position on the policy issue will mean certain loss in the next election).
- When the DD realizes that the political institutions (the DAM) of the UD is preventing an agreement. That is, when the DD realizes that the leader of the UD is not capitulating because of domestic political pressures.
- If the policy issue is fundamentally important to the DD, then the DD, after comprehending the DAM in the UD, will:
 - Seek to corrupt the institutions of the UD (to nullify the DAM)
 - Forcibly remove the UD's elected leader and install an unaccountable leader who is willing and able to capitulate to the DD's position on the policy dispute.

Under such conditions, the same DAM that constrains democratic leaders from declaring war also hinders peaceful dispute resolution. On the other hand, a dictator, who is unaccountable, opaque, and hard to replace, can easily accept the developed democracy's unpopular demands. Just as a dictator "who loses none of his banquets, hunting parties, pleasure castles [and]

²⁰ These are crass terms that I do not like, but nonetheless for explanatory purposes create a desirable dichotomy. I use the terms "developed" and "undeveloped" simply as a sign of military and economic power, nothing else.

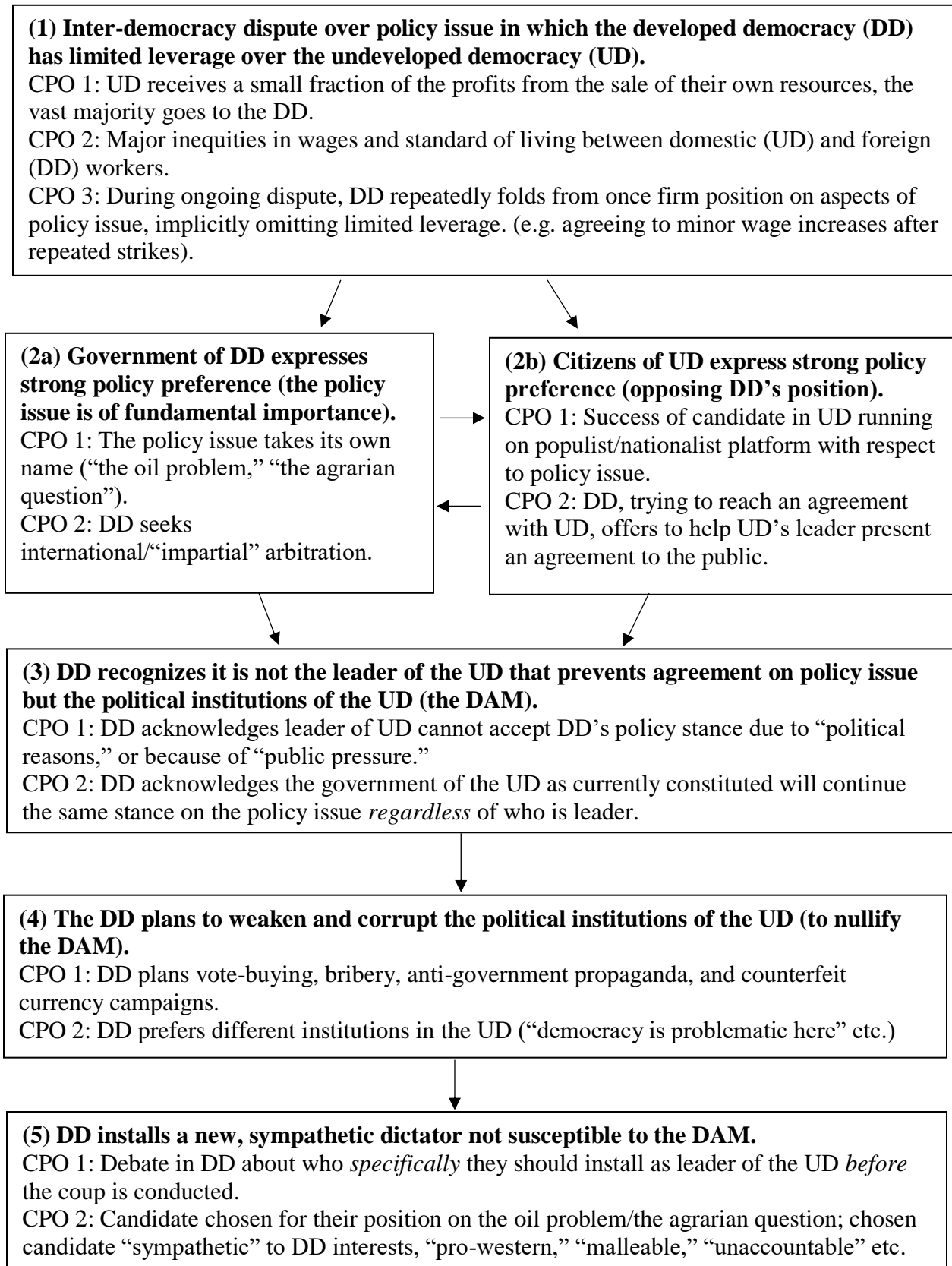
festivities” during war can flippantly declare one,²¹ so to can a dictator who does not need votes glibly accept unpopular demands.

Developed democracies sometimes prefer autocracies because the mechanisms of democracy (here the DAM) fail to serve the interests of the developed democracy. If the policy dispute is of fundamental importance, then the developed democracy may violently overthrow the democratically-elected leader of the “stubborn” undeveloped democracy and replace that leader with a dictator (thus removing the DAM and paving the way for a favorable settlement).

Below is Figure 3.1, the Process Tracing chart with corresponding Casual Process Observations (CPOs). CPOs are observable implications, or clues, which support theoretical assertions. For example, in Box 4, I suggest that once the DD realizes the obstacle to dispute settlement is not necessarily the *leader* of the UD but the democratic *institutions* of the UD (the DAM) then the DD will try to weaken and corrupt the democratic intuitions of the UD. Accordingly, we should observe in the historical record evidence of the DD: bribing elected officials in the UD, conducting propaganda campaigns designed to discredit the democratic process, destabilizing the UD’s economy, and stating how they would prefer different institutions in the UD. The CPOs are meant to be comprehensive; that is, I list all possible clues one would hope to find – I do not expect to find all of them. However, the more of these clues I observe, the “tighter” the fit between theory and observation, and thus the more plausible my explanation becomes. I argue this chart presents the most plausible temporal sequence of events leading up to the coups. Each case study is structured according to this chart (beginning in Box 1, and proceeding to Box 5).

²¹ Kant, “Eternal Peace,” 438.

Figure 3.1 Process-tracing chart with Causal Process Observations



Chapter 4: Methodology

I conduct two case studies in order to render certain theoretical claims plausible or implausible.²² Harry Eckstein argues case studies “are valuable at all stages of the theory-building process,” including the “plausibility probing” phase.²³ I do not claim here to present a grand theory, backed by decades of research. As I have mentioned, my goal here is simply to demonstrate that my explanation of the coups in 1953 and 1954 is plausible, and therefore the role of the DAM in the DPT warrants further study and revision. To borrow Eckstein’s terminology, the theory I put forth in the preceding section is meant to be a “candidate-theory.” Eckstein argues:

A stage of inquiry preliminary to testing sometimes intervenes and ought to do so far more often than it actually does in political study (or in other social sciences). It involves probing the ‘plausibility’ of candidate-theories. Plausibility here means something more than a belief in potential validity plain and simple, for hypotheses are unlikely ever to be formulated unless considered potentially valid...In essence, plausibility probes involve attempts to determine whether potential validity may reasonably be considered great enough to warrant the pains and costs of testing, which are almost always considerable, but especially so if broad, painstaking comparative studies are undertaken.²⁴

To be sure, plausibility probes are valuable. Eckstein praises Robert Dahl’s (1961) plausibility probe into political power in New Haven as a “successful,” “influential study” (141).²⁵ The point here being: do not confuse a humble project with a trivial one.

²² Theda Skocpol, “Doubly Engaged Social Science: The Promise of Comparative Historical Analysis,” in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 416.

²³ Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts* ed. Roger Gomm, Martyn Hammersley, and Peter Foster (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000[1975]), 119.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 141. Eckstein cites Robert Dahl’s *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

Case studies more specifically, Alexander George and Andrew Bennett argue, can be utilized to “refine the concepts and logic of democratic peace theories.”²⁶ Given the aim of this essay, case studies present four main advantages over traditional quantitative methods. Namely, the potential to: achieve high conceptual validity, foster new hypotheses, closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms, and address causal complexity.²⁷

My aim here is to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms. I take issue with the main implication of DPT – that democracies should support the unconditional proliferation of other democracies – and I do so by re-examining the hypothesized role of DPT’s domestic-accountability mechanism (DAM). I hypothesize that, under certain conditions, the DAM *prevents* democratic leaders from negotiating a peaceful settlement when fundamental policy disputes arise. To elucidate this effect, I conduct two case studies: one to examine the American and British coup in Iran in 1953, and the other to examine the American coup in Guatemala in 1954.

The bulk of my evidence comes from recently declassified CIA and State Department documents. For the Iranian case, I rely on documents compiled in the National Security Archives (some documents declassified as recently as 2011). For the Guatemalan case, I rely on the U.S. Department of State Archives. My argument is centered in both cases from these primary sources. Of course, no source is perfect. These documents are undoubtedly biased in that they overreport the communist threat to legitimate their use of force (discussed in *Alternative Explanations*).

²⁶ Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

My case studies are structured following the logic presented in Figure 3.1. I read through the archives and sorted relevant documents into their concomitant theory sections. Here, of course, I have committed selection bias. I have omitted many documents and passages which lament the spread of communism. However, I have included some, some which I believe are representative of the sample, and I attempt to discredit them in the Alternative Explanations section. In the Case Studies section I am concerned with presenting my own argument, and thus focus on the documents which pertain to my causal process observations (CPOs). I looked for evidence in the historical record which is consistent with my CPOs.

My dependent variable is coups. Usually it is unwise to select cases based on the dependent variable.²⁸ However, given that I am interested in revising DPT based on the presence of coups, (rather than putting forward a grand theory of my own) this selection bias is necessary. My independent variables are democratic states, separated into developed and undeveloped. I allow for significant variation in my independent variables.²⁹ The developed states are the United Kingdom and the United States, the undeveloped states are Iran and Guatemala. I allow for variation in developed states to avoid charges that coups were simply the result of one aggressive hegemon. I allow for variation in the undeveloped states to demonstrate that coups were not just endemic to one region, nor one type of policy dispute.

I want to make it clear from the outset that I have more confidence in the Iranian case. Declassified records pertaining to the Guatemalan case are lacking, thus I am forced to rely heavily (though by no means exclusively) on secondary sources. My aim then, is to utilize process-tracing to assiduously layout the role of the DAM in the Iranian case, and then simply to

²⁸ Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

²⁹ Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 140.

show, following the same causal logic, that the DAM operated in a similar manner in Guatemala (that is, the Guatemalan case is used to increase the plausibility of the argument I develop fully in the Iranian case).

I begin first by addressing alternative explanations. I believe this must be done before presenting my argument, for if I fail to demonstrate why my argument has the potential to be the better explanation, then there is no need to read it. Clearly, what I must do is cast doubt in the mind of the reader that British and American fears of communist contagion led to the coups, which is the generally accepted story. Such a belief is an egregious oversimplification which belies a far more nuanced historical record.

Chapter 5: Alternative Explanations

To be clear, my task here is not to prove that communism was irrelevant to U.S. and U.K. decisions to conduct coups in Iran and Guatemala. Instead, I must only prove that communism does not provide the most credible explanation, and that the DAM does. To attribute western military action during the Cold War to fears of communist contagion is misguided. Communism played a role, certainly, but D.A.M. offers a more fruitful explanation.

This section is organized as follows. First, I make a general argument about how communism does not necessarily imply non-democratic outcomes; that is, communist governments can be within the domain of DPT. I then make a simple temporal observation which further lessens communism's explanatory weight. I also raise the issue of bias in declassified documents which overreports the significance of communism. I then examine the Iranian case specifically, and show how prominent figures in the American administration thought Mosaddeq could be a bulwark *against* communism, that the Tudeh (communist) party in Iran was weak and unthreatening, and that the impetus for the coup came from the Iranian parliament's unanimous decision to nationalize the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. I then briefly examine the Guatemalan case. I show how the CIA believed Arbenz wanted to create a modern "capitalist" democracy in Guatemala, that Arbenz admired Franklin Delano Roosevelt not communist leaders, and that the Communist party in Guatemala was small and unable to influence Arbenz. While I raise and briefly discuss these arguments here, my goal is simply to cast doubt in the reader's mind that these coups were solely due to communism and to introduce the plausibility of my explanation. I develop my argument fully in the Case Studies section which, I hope, will bolster the arguments I introduce here more forcefully.

Communist governments can come to power democratically.³⁰ There is nothing inherently anti-democratic about communism. Therefore, communist governments can be subject to the same DAM as non-communist democracies. CIA documents frequently lament that the Tudeh party in Iran was “gaining popularity” or was “demanding representation”³¹ in the Iranian Majlis (Parliament) – this is how a healthy democracy functions. Indeed, Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz, leader of the Partido de Integridad Nacional (Party of National Integrity, or PIN) which competed *against* the Communist Party for votes, believed “that any legal curbing of communists was undemocratic.”³² To the extent that communism was a fear in Iran and Guatemala, it was so *because* it was democratic – democracy can lead to communism. This is all to say that, even if one believes communism to be the sole explanation for the coups, my argument regarding domestic accountability still holds.

The timing of the coups is also important. Here I suggest communism was a constant and thus cannot (alone) explain variation in outcomes (from no-coups to coups). The Tudeh party in Iran was established in 1941.³³ The Communist party in Guatemala was established in 1922.³⁴ The world had been bipolar since 1945. Why were coups conducted in 1953 and 1954? That is, if there had been a constant communist presence in Iran for twelve years and Guatemala for thirty-two years before the coup, how can communism explain the coup? A more convincing argument, I suggest, is to consider that Mosaddeq nationalized the AIOC on the 20th of March, 1951, and by August of 1953 the CIA had overthrown Mosaddeq; Arbenz expropriated UFC land on the 17th of June, 1952, and by June 1954 Arbenz had been overthrown. Communism was always in

³⁰ Tarak Barkawi, “Scientific Decay,” *International Studies Quarterly* 59 (2015): 827-29.

³¹ “Memorandum,” (CIA, August 10th, 1953), 3. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran530810.pdf>

³² Max Gordon, “A Case History of U.S. Subversion: Guatemala, 1954,” *Science & Society* 35 (1971): 146.

³³ Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers, 1990), 48.

³⁴ Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 10.

the background, but for many years had been tolerated; it was only when American and British interests were threatened, and when British and American officials realized that the DAM was going to prevent a favorable settlement, were coups planned and executed.

Communism is mentioned ubiquitously throughout the declassified CIA documents. However, the communist fear is almost certainly overreported in the documents in an attempt to legitimize their use of force. The CIA recognized their coups would be perceived as more legitimate if they were “needed” in order to prevent the spread of communism, rather than if they were perceived as simply the preferred method to get a more favorable settlement on a costly, prolonged policy dispute. For example, the CIA published a document in March 1953, five months *before* the Iranian coup, in which they advise the American and British governments how to respond publicly after the coup. The CIA suggests:

The U.K. Government should give no indication that it considers a successor to Mossadeq to be ready to serve U.K. interests...the U.S. Government should avoid any statement that the oil question is involved in a change of government in Iran. It is important that neither the U.S. nor U.K. Governments should rejoice publicly over expectations of a more reasonable Iranian attitude towards [the] solution of the oil problem...[instead] an official comment could be made that we are, as always, interested in helping any free country to build its strength against communist subversion...³⁵

Clearly, the British government did consider Mosaddeq’s successor ready to serve their interests (otherwise there would be no need for the CIA to caution the British government against indicating so); clearly “the oil question” was involved in a change of government in Iran (otherwise there would be no need for the CIA to caution the American government against

³⁵ “Measures Which the United States Government Might Take to Support a Successor Government to Mosadeq,” (CIA, March 1953), 1. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran530300.pdf>

indicating so); and clearly the expectation post-coup was a “more reasonable Iranian attitude” towards solving “the oil problem” (otherwise there would be no need for the CIA to caution both governments against rejoicing publicly). What American and British governments should do, rather disingenuously, is release an official statement that the coup was conducted to save Iran from “communist subversion.”

5.1. Iran

The majority opinion of the coup in Iran is expressed by Maziar Behrooz who argues: ...fears that the Tudeh Party [the Communist Party] might push Iran into the Soviet camp...were of prime concern to the perpetrators of the plot and the main justification for Operation TPAJAX [the coup]. The new CIA documents argue that with the deterioration of Iran’s economy under the nationalist, chaos and collapse were probable and would ultimately lead to the loss of Iran to the West. The oil issue is deemed to be of secondary importance in the new documents and is explained away by pointing to an oversupply of petroleum on the international market.³⁶

That is one interpretation. I argue, frankly, that a better interpretation places “the oil issue” and the inability to come to a mutually-agreeable settlement (due to the DAM) at the centre and communism at the periphery. For instance, “Mosaddeq was not a communist,”³⁷ he led the National Front and competed *against* the Tudeh party. There was certainly no agreement in the United States that communism posed a threat in Iran. Indeed, quite the opposite.

According to CIA historian Scott Koch, Secretary of State Dean Acheson:

³⁶ Maziar Behrooz, “The 1953 Coup in Iran and the Legacy of the Tudeh,” in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 102.

³⁷ Roger Louis, “Britain and the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Government,” in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 128.

...saw Mossadeq as a potentially important part of the solution to the problem of Soviet influence in the Middle East. In Acheson's view, the Iranian Prime Minister would in time become an effective bulwark against Soviet penetration into Iran. To that end, Washington consistently urged London to reach an equitable [oil] settlement with Tehran. Acheson apparently was convinced that an agreement would strengthen the Iranian government and promote regional stability.³⁸

The Secretary of State under President Truman believed Mosaddeq could be an effective bulwark *against* communist subversion. The British held similar beliefs. The “principal planner”³⁹ of the coup, Donald Wilber, reported that “the British regarded Iran as basically a conservative country that would not seek Soviet help nor collapse internally if London held out for the kind of oil settlement it wanted.”⁴⁰ Indeed, the National Security Council released a “Top Secret” report on November 20th, 1952, regarding “The Present Situation in Iran,” in which the Council stated that although the political situation was uncertain, “it is now estimated that communist forces will probably not gain control of the Iranian government during 1953.”⁴¹ Indeed, nine months later, and just nine days before the coup, the CIA confirmed that the Tudeh party was not a significant threat in Iran:

It is unlikely that a coup d’etat by Mosadeq’s opponents among the former governing groups or by the Tudeh Party would be attempted because neither is sufficiently strong or well-organized to

³⁸ Scott Koch, “Zendeabad, Shah!” *The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq, August 1953* (CIA, 1998), 9-10.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran980600.pdf>

³⁹ Mark Gasiorowski, “The 1953 Coup d’Etat Against Mosaddeq,” in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 234.

⁴⁰ Donald Wilber, “Mounting Pressure Against the Shah,” in *Overthrow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran, November 1952-August 1953* (CIA Clandestine Service History, 1954), 14. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/5-Orig.pdf>

⁴¹ The Executive Secretary, “A Report to the National Security Council: on United States Policy Regarding the Present Situation in Iran,” (National Security Council, November 20th, 1952), 2. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran521120.pdf>

attempt a coup. Furthermore, the Iranian Government is itself sufficiently alert and strong to anticipate and stamp out an attempted coup.⁴²

There was no consensus in Britain or in the United States that communists posed a threat in Iran or that violent intervention was necessary to stamp-out the communist presence. Indeed, the United States artificially *enhanced* the “communist presence” in Iran. Three days before the coup, on August 16th, 1953, a CIA officer “handed \$50,000 to the [Tehran] station’s Iranian agents and told them to produce a crowd posing as communist goons.”⁴³ If the communist threat in Iran was truly worrying, why would the CIA pay a group of Iranians \$50,000 to “pose” as communist goons? Moreover, in the months leading up to the coup British and American agencies “fabricated” documents “proving” Mosaddeq had a “secret alliance” with the Tudeh⁴⁴ – suggesting, rather unequivocally, that both Western powers knew there was no such alliance in reality.

My argument implies that the CIA would go to the trouble of overthrowing another regime for the “benefit” of another country; the reader may find it hard to see why the CIA would heed Britain’s request to overthrow Mosaddeq for the sake of British oil interests. However, there are several reasons why the CIA would acquiesce. Most generally, Britain was a crucially ally and a founding partner of (the newly created) NATO. Second, coups are relatively low-stakes and cheap (no American “boots on the ground”). Third, U.S. oil companies were worried about the precedent nationalization of domestic oil resources would set, especially in Latin America.⁴⁵ Fourth, “both John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, and his brother Allen

⁴² “Memorandum,” 2.

⁴³ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 101-2.

⁴⁴ Wilber, “Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX,” (June 1st, 1953) <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/appendix%20A.pdf>; Wilber, “London Draft of the TPAJAX Operational Plan,” <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/appendix%20B.pdf>

⁴⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, “The 1953 Coup in Iran,” *Science & Society* 65 (2001): 192.

Dulles, Director of the CIA, were long-time partners in a law firm representing the AIOC in the United States.”⁴⁶ And fifth, Churchill claimed that “the price for British military support in the Korean War was American political support for his position in Iran.”⁴⁷ Indeed, getting American support for the coup “did not require much effort” on the British side.⁴⁸

Tim Weiner sums up the explanation for the coup quite succinctly: “Prime Minister Winston Churchill wanted the CIA to help overthrow Iran. Iran’s oil had propelled Churchill to power and glory forty years before. Now Sir Winston wanted it back.”⁴⁹ Unfortunately for Churchill, Mosaddeq was elected on a platform dedicated to nationalizing the oil industry and he knew that capitulation to Britain’s demands would be political suicide. In effect, Mosaddeq “chose to gamble on total victory over Britain, the United States, and the international oil industry—and he lost.”⁵⁰

5.2. Guatemala

A similar pattern emerged in Guatemala. For one, Arbenz, like Mosaddeq, “was not a communist,”⁵¹ he was the leader of the Partido de Integridad Nacional.⁵² Indeed, in an address to the Guatemalan Congress shortly after winning the election in 1950, Arbenz stated that one of the key aims of his new administration would be to “convert Guatemala from a backward

⁴⁶ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁷ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 94.

⁴⁸ Abrahamian, “The 1953 Coup in Iran,” 191.

⁴⁹ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 92.

⁵⁰ “Whose Oil? An Abbreviated History of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute, 1943-53,” (CIA, c.1970), B-3. [http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/docs/Doc%203a%20\(3\)%20-%20CIA%20-%20Battle%20for%20Iran%20-%20Appendixes%20-%202013%20release.pdf](http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/docs/Doc%203a%20(3)%20-%20CIA%20-%20Battle%20for%20Iran%20-%20Appendixes%20-%202013%20release.pdf).

⁵¹ Richard Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 106.

⁵² Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 73.

country with a predominately feudal economy into a modern *capitalist* state.”⁵³ Moreover, a CIA report from October 1952 (three months *after* Arbenz expropriated UFC land) on the “Personal Political Orientation of President Arbenz,” concluded that Arbenz was not a communist, that he was not sympathetic to communists, and that communists in Guatemala did not have the strength to influence him. This is an incredible report so I will quote it at some length. The author states:

I am quite certain that he [Arbenz] does not agree with the economic and political ideas of the Guatemalan or Soviet Communists, and I am equally certain that he is not now in a position where they can force him to make decisions in their favor. The reasons for my opinion are as follows...The President's social reform ideas stem from the US New Deal rather than from Soviet Communism...Rather than setting up a Communist state, Arbenz desires to establish a ‘modern democracy’ which would improve the lot of its people through paternalistic social reforms. Arbenz's personal idol is FDR and his reforms are patterned after New Deal reforms and adjusted to the backward economy and social structure of Guatemala. None of the reforms is substantially extreme as compared to many of those in the US, Europe, and even in other Latin American countries. The extremities are relative and seem radical in Guatemala only because of the backward feudal situation they are meant to remedy...Satisfying his ambition to become president himself, and also with a sincere desire to fulfill his promises to his people, Arbenz went to work immediately and impatiently to implement his reforms and, as he put it, ‘to jar Guatemala out of the Middle Ages.’⁵⁴

Agents within the CIA believed Arbenz modeled his Agrarian Reform policy after FDR’s New Deal, not Soviet redistribution schemes. Arbenz had a “sincere desire to fulfill his promises to his people,” and through his land reform (which the CIA acknowledged was not extreme)

⁵³ Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 52. Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ “Personal Political Orientation of President Arbenz,” (CIA, October 10th, 1952), doc. 27. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/ike/guat/20195.htm>

Arbenz wanted to establish a modern democracy in Guatemala. This CIA memo discredits alleged fears of communist subversion in Guatemala.

On the 17th of June 1952, Arbenz enacted the Agrarian Reform Law.⁵⁵ About three weeks later, on the 10th of July, the Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, met with Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Mann, “to solicit State Department approval for a plan to overthrow Arbenz.”⁵⁶ Some CIA historians like Gerald Haines suggest U.S. policymakers decided to overthrow Arbenz because they were under the impression that “the Guatemalan leader had moved even closer to the Communists” because Arbenz: expropriated UFC land, legalized the Communist party, and suppressed anti-communist protests following the abortive Salama uprising.⁵⁷ However, more nuanced and chronologically-sensitive historical accounts like the one provided by Nicholas Cullather reveal that Allen Dulles planned to overthrow Arbenz shortly after Arbenz expropriated UFC land, but months *before* Arbenz legalized the communist party (11 December 1952) and nearly a year before anti-communist suppression at Salama (29 March 1953).⁵⁸ In Cullather’s “Timeline” of the coup, disputes between UFC and Guatemalan officials over land and profits, and subsequent plans between UFC and American officials to overthrow President Arbenz are listed seven times before communism is even mentioned.⁵⁹ Communism was an afterthought. Arbenz “had” to be overthrown because he was elected on an immensely popular platform of land reform and redistribution, and therefore could not accept American demands to undo the reform.

⁵⁵ Nicholas Cullather, “Operation PBSUCCESS: The United States and Guatemala, 1952-1954” (Washington: CIA, 1994), 98. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/docs/doc05.pdf>

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁵⁷ Gerald Haines, “CIA and Guatemalan Assassination Proposals, 1952-1954,” (CIA, 1995), 4. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/docs/doc01.pdf>

⁵⁸ Cullather, “Operation PBSUCCESS,” 99.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-104.

I conclude this section by asking the reader to consider a counterfactual: would Britain and the United States have overthrown Mosaddeq if he had not nationalized Iranian oil? Would the United States have overthrown Arbenz if he had not expropriated UFC land? I have tried to show in this section that the answer to both questions is a resounding “no.” Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer suggest “without United Fruit’s troubles [the expropriation], it seems probable that the Dulles brothers [one Secretary of State, the other Director of the CIA] might not have paid such attention to the few Communists in Guatemala, since larger numbers had taken part in political activity on a greater scale during the postwar years in Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica without causing excessive concern in the U.S. government.”⁶⁰ I would ask the reader to keep these counterfactuals in mind as I develop my argument more extensively in the pages that follow.

⁶⁰ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 106.

Chapter 6: Case Studies

I begin with the Iranian case. Stage 1 presents a detailed history of the dispute between Iran and Britain. Stages 2a and 2b briefly demonstrate how important, and opposing, their interests were on the policy issue. Stage 3 is the most important; this is where I introduce the undertheorized effect of the DAM. Stage 4 reveals systematic efforts to corrupt Iranian democracy, and Stage 5 uncovers the debate in Britain and the U.S. over who they should replace Mosaddeq with, and why. I begin, as one should, with some historical context.

6.1. Iran

6.1.1: Inter-democracy dispute over policy issue in which the developed democracy (DD) has limited leverage over the undeveloped democracy (UD)

British interest in Iranian oil was “sharply stimulated” in 1904 “by the efforts of Admiral Sir John Fisher, First Lord of the Admiralty, to convert the Royal Navy from burning coal to oil.”⁶¹ In May 1908, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) was founded after British entrepreneur William Knox D’Arcy struck oil in Iran’s southern provinces.⁶² Winston Churchill became First Lord of Admiralty in 1911, and his “persistent prodding” completed the Royal Navy’s transition from coal to oil:

To ensure a source of cheap oil, the British government became a major (51%) shareholder in the APOC in 1914, adding 2 million pounds in capitalization and signing a 30-year contract for fuel oil at cut rates (Churchill wrote in 1923 that this contract had saved Britain no less than £7.5 million on its wartime oil purchases).⁶³

⁶¹ “Whose Oil?,” A-1.

⁶² Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: the Fall of Mosaddeq Revisited* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 12.

⁶³ Whose Oil?,” A-2.

Disputes as to “how profits were to be shared between the Persian government and the APOC began after World War I.”⁶⁴ Indeed, “while British oil executives and technicians played in private clubs and swimming pools, Iranian oil workers lived in shanties without running water, electricity, or sewers.”⁶⁵ The Iranian government argued “it was entitled to a share of the profits from all operations, including extracting, producing, refining, and marketing its oil, wherever these operations might take place.”⁶⁶ The first round of negotiations between Iran and Britain “fell through” in 1920.⁶⁷

In 1925, Reza Khan, “a colonel commanding the Iranian Cossacks division,” visited the APOC’s Abadan oil field “and his account of the trip gave warnings of things to come.”⁶⁸ Khan observed:

...that of the 29,000 employees in the oilfields and refinery, 6,000 were foreigners...[Khan] expressed concern that so few Persians were being trained for higher level posts. He also saw that the British staff enjoyed an obviously higher standard of living than the others, and that while the refinery area appeared prosperous, the surrounding districts had not felt any positive impact from this major industry in their area.⁶⁹

Iranian dissatisfaction with the status-quo continued until November 1932, when the Iranian government annulled a previous agreement and announced that “a new concession would be granted on the basis of equity and justice.”⁷⁰ However, “this new concession was not easily arrived at – the British government referred the annulment to the League of Nations, whose Council sent Dr. Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia to reconcile the two sides.”⁷¹

⁶⁴ Ibid., A-2.

⁶⁵ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 93.

⁶⁶ “Who’s Oil?,” A-2.

⁶⁷ Ibid., A-2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., A-3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., A-3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., A-3.

⁷¹ Ibid., A-3.

During reconciliation, two legal principles were established that would impact the dispute in 1951: first, “the right to annul the concession was recognized,” and second, “the League accepted the viewpoint of the British that such a case could be brought to the Council under Article 15 of the Covenant (which provided for a hearing on disputes...for the solution of which no legal recourse existed).”⁷² Iran and Britain finally reached an agreement which was ratified in the Majlis on May 23rd, 1933.⁷³ Under the terms of the new agreement:

Persia would receive 4 shillings on every ton of oil sold in Persia or exported, plus 20% of the dividends over £671,250 distributed to shareholders, with a minimum dividend of £750,000 per year. To avoid Persian taxation, the company agreed to pay a small additional royalty on tonnage, and it would continue to pay British taxes out of gross profits.⁷⁴

This agreement held until Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.⁷⁵ Geographically, Iran “was the best route for Allied supplies going to the beleaguered Soviets,” and was thus occupied by the Allies until 1946.⁷⁶ The Soviets attempted to get an oil concession for themselves in 1944; at which point “the Majlis passed a bill introduced by Dr. Mohammad Mosadeq forbidding any discussion of or signing agreements for an oil concession with any foreign representatives.”⁷⁷ Premier Qavam tried to grant the Soviets an oil concession in 1946, but the “Majlis refused to ratify the concession...the legislators declared that [they were] forbidden to grant any concession to export oil to foreigners; further, they instructed the government to look into possible violation of the rights of the people in connection with the

⁷² Ibid., A-3.

⁷³ Ibid., A-4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., A-4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., A-4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., A-4.

⁷⁷ Ibid., A-4.

southern oil concession held by the AIOC.”⁷⁸ (The Shah officially renamed Persia in 1935; hence the APOC became the AIOC).⁷⁹

When the wartime occupation (formally) ended, “British oil managers began to have labor troubles.”⁸⁰ Iranian AIOC workers went on a general strike in 1946 (eventually settled with minor pay increases); in addition, a delegation from the Iranian Ministry of Finance was sent to London in 1947 to discuss “money due the Iranian government, various employee grievances, reduction of foreign staff, expansion of local distribution facilities, and the AIOC policy of concentrating refining activities outside Iran.”⁸¹ The AIOC, “obviously feeling secure in the legality of its concession, was relatively unresponsive.”⁸²

A law ratified in the Majlis in 1947 “instructed the Iranian government to open [further] discussions with the AIOC to secure the nation’s rights to its oil resources.”⁸³ In 1948 Iran presented a fifty-page memorandum listing twenty-five outstanding issues with the AIOC.⁸⁴ Chief among them, Iran wanted a higher share of the profits from the sale of their own resources, and they wanted the AIOC to hire more Iranians. For example, “Iran’s oil royalties for 1947 were just over £7 million, whereas the AIOC had paid some £15 million in British income taxes.”⁸⁵ Iran wanted a “50-50 split of the net profits.”⁸⁶ AIOC officials came to Tehran in May 1949 with a draft of the “Supplemental Agreement” which was signed by both parties in July.⁸⁷ The Agreement increased royalty payments from four to six shillings per ton, and Iran was entitled to

⁷⁸ Ibid., A-5. Notice, Iran *refused* to grant an oil concession to the Soviets, hardly how one would expect a sympathetic communist regime to behave.

⁷⁹ Ibid., A-4.

⁸⁰ Ibid., A-4.

⁸¹ Ibid., A-5.

⁸² Ibid., A-5.

⁸³ Ibid., A-5.

⁸⁴ Ibid., A-5.

⁸⁵ Ibid., A-5.

⁸⁶ Ibid., A-6.

⁸⁷ Ibid., A-6.

20% of the distributed profits – an improvement but still “well short of the 50-50 sharing Iran wanted.”⁸⁸ The Agreement was then sent to the Majlis for formal ratification on the 19th of July, however debate continued until the scheduled dissolution of the 15th Majlis, so “the oil agreement bill” was “left over to the next Majlis.”⁸⁹

Elections for the 16th Majlis began in 1949, and Mohammad Mosaddeq, along with eight other National Front members won seats.⁹⁰ Ali Mansur, the Premier, appointed an 18-man “special oil commission” to study the proposed Supplemental Agreement; Mosaddeq was one of the eighteen.⁹¹ The commission reported “that the agreement was not adequate to secure the rights of Iran and that it was opposed to its ratification.”⁹² The Iranian Minister of Finance, upon receiving the commission’s report, withdrew from the Supplemental Agreement, and announced “that negotiations for increased royalties would be reopened with the AIOC.”⁹³ Iran had significant leverage over the British; by 1950 the AIOC:

...had in Iran the world’s largest refinery, the second largest exporter of crude petroleum, and the third largest oil reserves. It provided the British Treasury with 24 million pounds sterling in taxes and 92 million pounds in foreign exchange [and] supplied 85% of the fuel needs of the British navy.⁹⁴

In February 1951, the AIOC, recognizing their limited leverage, proposed an agreement that included 50-50 profit sharing; however, by then “it was too late.”⁹⁵ The National Front and to a lesser extent the oil commission (only six of the eighteen were NF party members) were

⁸⁸ Ibid., A-6.

⁸⁹ Ibid., A-6.

⁹⁰ Ibid., A-6.

⁹¹ Ibid., A-6.

⁹² Ibid., A-7.

⁹³ Ibid., A-7.

⁹⁴ Abrahamian, “The 1953 Coup in Iran,” 185.

⁹⁵ “Who’s Oil?,” A-7.

“intent on nationalizing oil.”⁹⁶ When the Majlis “unanimously accepted the principle of nationalization, the British Foreign Office notified the Premier that an act of nationalization would not legally terminate the oil company’s operations.”⁹⁷ Nonetheless, “the National Front’s bill for nationalization of Iranian oil, north and south, was passed on 20 March 1951 – the Persian New Year’s Eve – unanimously by the Majlis and the Senate amid public jubilation.”⁹⁸ At the request of the Majlis, the Shah appointed Mosaddeq Prime Minister on the 29th of April, 1951, amid a “rising tide” of popular support.⁹⁹ Two days later Mosaddeq “signed the nine-point law that in broad terms ordered the government takeover [of] the AIOC.”¹⁰⁰

Of course, the British were furious. Indeed, “Britain was unhappy with [the] Mosaddeq government from the start.”¹⁰¹ Britain withheld payment of £2 million, brought the nationalization to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and dispatched an Army brigade to Cyprus (Royal Navy cruisers and frigates were already in the Persian Gulf).¹⁰² As far as British appeals to the ICJ, “Iran did not recognize the competence of the court to deal with the matter, which concerned Iran’s internal affairs.”¹⁰³

The United States became involved in mid-May 1951.¹⁰⁴ A State Department memo from May 18th “urged both sides to try to find an agreeable compromise,” while acknowledging “the sovereign right of Iran to control its resources and industries.”¹⁰⁵ Talks between Britain and Iran

⁹⁶ Ibid., A-7.

⁹⁷ Ibid., A-7.

⁹⁸ Katouzian, *Mosaddeq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, 92.

⁹⁹ Mark Gasiorowski, “The 1953 Coup D’Etat in Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 261.

¹⁰⁰ “Who’s Oil?,” A-8.

¹⁰¹ Homa Katouzian, “Mosaddeq’s Government in Iranian History: Arbitrary Rule, Democracy, and the 1953 Coup,” in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 6.

¹⁰² “Who’s Oil?,” A-8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., A-8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., A-8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., A-8.

began (again) on the 14th of June at the behest of President Truman.¹⁰⁶ The Iranians demanded 75% of net oil revenues while Britain was only prepared to offer a 50-50 split; “no compromise between these two points of view appeared possible.”¹⁰⁷ Shortly after, the ICJ issued an order to “maintain the status quo as of 1 May 1951.”¹⁰⁸ However, Iran “had already refused to recognize the court’s jurisdiction” and thus ignored the order.¹⁰⁹ After further negotiations also failed, the “British government asked that the case be considered by the U.N. Security Council as a potential threat to world peace,” which the Council agreed to hear.¹¹⁰ Mosaddeq flew to New York to present his case; after hearing both sides the Council adjourned “until after the ICJ had ruled on its own jurisdiction.”¹¹¹ On June 9th, 1952, the ICJ ruled that it did not have jurisdiction since the oil concession was not a formal treaty; thus, the British “lost their ICJ case and with it their chance to have the Security Council pass on their resolution.”¹¹² After these rulings, relations between Iran and Britain “deteriorated steadily.”¹¹³ Mosaddeq made one final offer to the British, which they deemed “unreasonable and unacceptable,” to which Mosaddeq responded, in October 1952, by breaking off all diplomatic relations.¹¹⁴

Throughout this entire history, it is abundantly clear that Britain did not have significant leverage over Iran. The oil fields from which AIOC drew its profits, Abadan for example, were located within Iran’s borders. As previously mentioned, “no legal recourse existed” if Iran decided to annul an oil agreement with the British. Iran withdrew from the “Supplemental Agreement” in 1949, to which the British could do nothing but offer to renegotiate terms more

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., A-9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., A-9.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., A-9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., A-9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., A-11.

¹¹¹ Ibid., A-11.

¹¹² Ibid., A-12.

¹¹³ Ibid., A-13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., A-13.

favorable to Iran (which they did). Even when the international community got involved – when Britain took Iran to the ICJ in 1951 – Iran did not recognize the ICJ’s jurisdiction, and as a sovereign nation it claimed the right to do so (a right acknowledged by the United States). Iran was in the driver’s seat, they were negotiating from a position of strength and the British could do nothing but reduce their own position again and again.

6.1.2a: Government of DD expresses strong policy preference (the policy issue is of fundamental importance)

It is safe to infer from the previous section that this oil dispute was of fundamental importance to the British. Iranian oil provided 85% of the energy needs of the British Navy and millions of pounds of revenue to the British government. In this section I want to expand on another observable implication of how important Iranian oil was to the British government by showing that the issue was of such importance that it took its own name. The importance of the nationalization of Iranian oil was so ubiquitous in agency documents, that it was taken-for-granted that the reader would know precisely what the author was referring to when they wrote of “the oil situation.” In Iran, the policy that led to the coup in 1953 took on several names: “the oil issue,” “the oil situation,” “the oil question,” “the oil controversy,” “the oil dispute,” and “the oil problem.”

Referring to events in 1951, Wilber wrote that public demonstrations in Tehran took place when the government made an effort to settle “the oil issue.”¹¹⁵ The CIA history cited at length in the previous section, describes Mosaddeq’s “enormous gamble” on “the oil issue.”¹¹⁶ The same source describes Mosaddeq’s main platform as being opposed to the British over “the

¹¹⁵ Wilber, “Mounting Pressure Against the Shah,” 26.

¹¹⁶ “Who’s Oil?,” B-2.

oil question.”¹¹⁷ A “Top Secret” CIA Memo published in March 1953 cautions the U.S. government to avoid any statement that “the oil question” was involved in a change of government in Iran.¹¹⁸ A brief for the Cabinet published by the British Foreign Office in 1953 also refers to “the oil question.”¹¹⁹ A National Security Council Report from 1952 suggests American policymakers should do all they can to assuage “the oil controversy.”¹²⁰ Another “Top Secret” CIA Memo released just nine days before the coup, on August 10th, 1953, attributes “the oil controversy” as the source of tension between Iran and Britain.¹²¹ The same document puts forth several ideas for how to settle “the oil dispute.”¹²² The CIA Memo released in March 1953 advises the American and British governments to not insist that “the oil dispute” be settled immediately by the new Iranian government.¹²³ The same document advises the governments not to let their expectations of a more favorable settlement to “the oil problem” go public.¹²⁴

This is all to say that the issue between the Iranian and British governments became known as “the oil issue,” the situation between the two “the oil situation,” the question between the two “the oil question,” the controversy between the two “the oil controversy,” the dispute between the two “the oil dispute,” and the problem between the two simply “the oil problem.” These observable implications should be added to the empirical evidence which revealed the British government’s policy preference (Iran supplied 85% of the oil required by the British

¹¹⁷ Ibid., B-2.

¹¹⁸ “Top Secret Security Information,” (CIA, March 1953), 1.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran530300.pdf>

¹¹⁹ “Brief for the Cabinet,” (British Foreign Office, 1953), 11.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB477/docs/Doc%204%20--%201953-08-25%20Brief%20for%20the%20Cabinet%20on%20Persia.pdf>

¹²⁰ “United States Policy on the Present Situation in Iran,” (National Security Council, November 20th, 1952), 2.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran521120.pdf>

¹²¹ “Memorandum,” 5.

¹²² Ibid., 9, 14, 15.

¹²³ “Top Secret Security Information,” 4-5.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1.

Navy and millions of pounds of revenue to the British government; the British government also went through the trouble of taking the oil issue to the ICJ and the U.N. Security Council).

6.1.2b: Citizens of UD express strong policy preference (opposing DD's position)

It is also safe to infer that after years of failed bilateral negotiations and formal disputes in the ICJ and the U.N. Security Council, that both Iran and Britain/United States recognized their opposing positions on the oil issue. Wilber argues “by the end of 1952, it had become clear that the Mossadeq government in Iran was incapable of reaching an oil settlement with interested Western countries.”¹²⁵ That is, by 1952 Britain and the United States had realized that their preference on the oil issue was antithetical to the Mossadeq government’s position which was one of nationalization geared towards improving the standard of living for poverty-stricken Iranians. After all, the CIA knew that “as a member of the oil commission, [Mosaddeq] gained in influence not only in the Majlis but among the people.”¹²⁶ A British Foreign Office Memo acknowledges “Musaddiq rose to power on a platform of nationalism and opposition to dictatorship.”¹²⁷ Indeed, “Mosadeq’s power rose from his consummate ability to appeal to national aspirations and emotions.”¹²⁸ British Ambassador Roger Makins wrote to Assistant Under Secretary of State Walter Smith on July 23rd, 1953, that the British Government was willing to do “the utmost to help” Mosaddeq “with the problem of presenting an agreement to the public locally.”¹²⁹ The British government knew that if any agreement was made, Mosaddeq would need help presenting it to the Iranian public – a clear indication that the British

¹²⁵ Wilber, “Summary,” iii. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/summary.pdf>

¹²⁶ “Who’s Oil?,” B-1.

¹²⁷ “Brief for the Cabinet: Persia,” (British Foreign Office, August 25th, 1953), 10-11.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB477/docs/Doc%204%20--%201953-08-25%20Brief%20for%20the%20Cabinet%20on%20Persia.pdf>

¹²⁸ “Who’s Oil?,” B-2.

¹²⁹ Wilber, “British Ambassador Makins to Assistant Under Secretary of State Smith,” 1.

government recognized the Iranian public's position on the oil issue was in total opposition to the British position.

6.1.3: DD recognizes it is not the leader of the UD that prevents agreement on policy issue but the political institutions of the UD (the DAM)

Eventually it became clear to the “interested Western powers” that the failure to reach an agreement was not due to irrational behavior on the part of Mosaddeq, but domestic-accountability, accountability which Western leaders were familiar with. For instance, Koch states both Truman and Acheson believed “neither the British nor Mossadeq appeared willing to back off from their publicly stated positions, which each by this time held with something approaching religious fervor.”¹³⁰ Why was Mosaddeq unwilling to back off from his *publicly* stated position? Because he knew that “if he began making concessions he would destroy the foundation of his own power” – the Iranian people.¹³¹ This is precisely the same logic that prevented British leaders from granting further concessions to Mosaddeq: both leaders were domestically-accountable to their publics and thus could not back down from popular, publicly-stated positions.

Indeed, just nine days before the coup, on August 10th, 1953, a “Top Secret” State Department Memo published on the subject of “Proposed Course of Action with Respect to Iran,” stated:

It was with great difficulty that the United Kingdom was persuaded to agree in all details of these proposals [to solve the oil issue]. Both in the past and in the future the lengths to which the United Kingdom may go in agreeing to an oil settlement are limited by relations in England and in the Middle East. If the terms of an oil agreement with Iran appeared to be too liberal, the Conservative

¹³⁰ Koch, *Zendebad Shah*, 16.

¹³¹ Louis, “Britain and the Overthrow of the Mosaddeq Government,” 137.

Government in London would subject itself to strong political opposition...The Iranian Government [also] rejected the February proposals largely for political reasons. Mosadeq and nationalization of British oil, including the question of compensation, have become synonymous to such an extent that, unless the settlement were clearly favorable to Iran, Mosadeq would not be able to come to an agreement. Furthermore, the non-settlement of the dispute provides Mosadeq with a means whereby he can appeal to Iranians on political grounds and continue to count on their support.¹³²

This is the crux of my argument. The State Department realized that Mosaddeq rejected British proposals “for political reasons.” That is, just like British politicians, Mosaddeq simply would not come to an agreement with the British “unless the settlement were clearly favorable to Iran,” which, if the British government accepted, would open themselves up to “strong political opposition.” This is the DAM: democratic pressures prevented politicians on both sides from coming to a mutually-acceptable agreement.

Moreover, the State Department knew that “the same political reasons which motivated Mosadeq in rejecting the February proposals would also apply to future United States proposals.”¹³³ That is, the same democratic pressures will always apply, so long as there are democratic institutions. The memo concludes in part by stating “Iran will be governed for the foreseeable future by Mosadeq or a successor who will pursue generally similar policies.”¹³⁴ Indeed, “if, for some reason such as death or normal parliamentary procedure, Mosadeq should be replaced as Prime Minister, it is more than likely a successor would be selected who would be in sympathy with Mosadeq’s basic objectives.”¹³⁵ Why? Because Mosaddeq’s basic objectives

¹³² “Proposed Course of Action With Respect to Iran,” (State Department, August 10th, 1953), 7-8.
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB126/iran530810.pdf>

¹³³ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 2.

were immensely popular, and any other elected leader would be subject to the same DAM. Thus, the State Department realized that it was not Mosaddeq that prevented a settlement, but democratic pressures. The Department realized that democratic pressures would incentivize Mosaddeq's successor to pursue similar – domestically popular – policies. Thus, a logical (though dastardly) solution became obvious: corrupt Iranian democracy, and replace Mosaddeq not with a Prime Minister but with a dictator (someone who could accept an agreement with the British without worrying about pesky public opinion).

6.1.4: The DD plans to weaken and corrupt the political institutions of the UD (to nullify the DAM)

“Quasi-legal”¹³⁶ plans to oust Mosaddeq began after the first few failed oil negotiations; action followed only after the CIA acknowledged the DAM. The “quasi-legal” plans to corrupt Iranian democracy took three main forms: vote-buying, propaganda campaigns, and economic warfare. The basic aim of the vote-buying program was to secure a vote of no confidence against Mosaddeq and to install General Zahedi as his replacement who would serve as a figurehead under the Shah. In order for that to happen Britain and the United States realized they would have to bribe Iranian parliamentarians. Indeed, the British Secret Intelligence Service estimated that “20 deputies not now controlled must be purchased” in order to secure such an aim.¹³⁷ The “London Draft” of Operation TPAJAX stated that “a list of deputies with the amounts required for the purchase of each one” will be provided to the CIA.¹³⁸ The CIA, for their part, “will provide part of the funds.”¹³⁹ Indeed, the CIA was “authorized to spend one million rials a week (rate of 90 rials to the US dollar) in purchasing the cooperation of members of the Iranian

¹³⁶ Wilber, “Initial Operational Plan,” 4.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁸ Wilber, “London Draft,” 19.

¹³⁹ Wilber, “Initial Operational Plan,” 4.

Majlis.”¹⁴⁰ Just over one month before the coup Kermit Roosevelt, a senior CIA officer stationed in Iran, wrote a Memo in which he recognized that it “will be necessary expend money [for the] purpose” of buying votes in the Majlis.¹⁴¹

Coinciding with the vote-buying program Britain and the United States conducted “a massive propaganda campaign against Mosaddeq and his government.”¹⁴² The program was “designed to weaken the Mossadeq government in any way possible.”¹⁴³ For instance, just before the coup, the “CIA would give widest publicity to all fabricated documents proving [a] secret agreement between Mossadeq and Tudeh.”¹⁴⁴ The London Draft suggested “the fullest publicity will be given to the US [station’s] fabricated documents which prove and record in detail a secret agreement between Mossadeq and the Tudeh.”¹⁴⁵ The CIA had to fabricate documents “proving” an alliance between Mosaddeq and the Tudeh because real documents did not exist (because there was no alliance).

The third-prong of attack would be monetary. Just prior to the coup, the “CIA would give widest publicity to the evidence of illegally issued paper money. [The] CIA might have [the] capability to print masses [of] excellent imitation currency which would be over-printed by this message.”¹⁴⁶ The intent here was twofold: foment anger against Mosaddeq for illegally printing money, and to cause hyperinflation leading to revolt against his rule. Clearly, the goal here was not just to ruin Mosaddeq’s popularity, but to cast doubt on Iran’s democratic institutions such

¹⁴⁰ Wilber, “The Decisions are Made: Activity Begins,” 19. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/4-Orig.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Kermit Roosevelt, Untitled Memorandum, (CIA, July 15th, 1953). <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/docs/Doc%206%20-%201953-07-15%20Roosevelt%20Majles%20plan.pdf>

¹⁴² Wilber, “London Draft,” 15.

¹⁴³ Wilber, “Summary,” vii.

¹⁴⁴ Wilber, “Initial Operation Plan,” 7.

¹⁴⁵ Wilber, “London Draft,” 24.

¹⁴⁶ Wilber, “Initial Operation Plan,” 7.

that the chosen replacement would not inherit solid institutions and would thus not be expected to adhere to the democratic norms and rules which Mosaddeq adhered to (namely the DAM which prevented an oil agreement in the first place).

6.1.5: DD installs a new, sympathetic dictator not susceptible to the DAM

Britain and the United States expected another *Prime Minister* to pursue policies similar to Mosaddeq's (I argued because of DAM). Therefore, the CIA's goal was to corrupt Iran's institutions and replace an accountable leader with one sympathetic to mainly British but also American interests. Most importantly, the CIA sought a replacement who could accept domestically-unpopular demands (thus nullifying the effect of the DAM). Indeed:

It was the aim of the TPAJAX project to cause the fall of the Mossadeq government; to re-establish the prestige and power of the Shah; and to replace the Mossadeq government with one which would govern Iran according to constructive policies. Specifically, the aim was to bring to power a government which would reach an equitable oil settlement...¹⁴⁷

Clearly, "constructive" policies meant policies favorable to the British. And indeed, the primary aim of the TPAJAX project "was to bring to power a government which would reach an equitable oil settlement" *not* a government which would stop the spread of communism. The goal was to reinstall a dictator who would toe the line.

The British chose General Zahedi to succeed Mosaddeq. Zahedi would serve under the ultimate authority of the Shah. The CIA, for their part, also "favored Zahedi because he was courageous, well respected, pro-American, and the only person openly vying for the premiership."¹⁴⁸ In an undated, highly redacted CIA Memo, titled "Campaign to Install Pro-Western Government in Iran," the author states that the objectives of the coup were to "effect the

¹⁴⁷ Wilber, "Summary," iii-iv.

¹⁴⁸ Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup," 233.

fall of the Mossadeq government; and to replace it with a pro-Western government under the Shah's leadership."¹⁴⁹ Another CIA Memo which provided counsel to the United States government regarding relations with the new Iranian government suggested:

Both the Shah and the new premier should be informed through private non-American channels that the U.S. and U.K. realize that for the new government to raise the question of an oil settlement before it is firmly established is far too dangerous a matter to be considered. Naturally, private assurances that the oil dispute will be settled on reasonable terms may be sought, but it would be disastrous for a new government to be forced immediately and publicly to attend to the oil dispute which engenders such fanatic emotions in Iran.¹⁵⁰

Naturally, the Memo stated, "private assurances" regarding an equitable oil dispute with the Shah can be made, but do not let those assurances leak to the public. The Memo continues:

Any British statements welcoming a successor to Mosadeq or otherwise indicating that the successor will serve U.K. interests, will probably serve as death warrants for the new premier. If the U.K. restricts U.S. action vis-a-vis a new Iranian Government on the plea that the oil dispute must first be settled on terms satisfactory to the British, the problem of supporting a new government will become almost insurmountable.¹⁵¹

Mosaddeq's successor will serve U.K. interests, just be prepared for disaster if Britain admits it publicly, the Memo cautions. Indeed, the Memo warns, the American government should be prepared for Britain to insist that the oil dispute be the first issue on the agenda. The Shah and his generals (most prominently Zahedi) would not be susceptible to the "fanatic emotions" the oil issue engendered among the Iranian public, as Mosaddeq was.

¹⁴⁹ "Campaign to Install Pro-Western Government in Iran," (CIA), 1.
<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/docs/Doc%202%20-%201954-00-00%20Summary%20of%20Wilber%20history.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ "Measures Which the United States Government," 2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

If Britain and the United States planned to hold a new national election in Iran to find Mosaddeq's replacement then my argument would collapse because the new leader would also be subject to the DAM (suggesting the U.S. and U.K. must not have considered the DAM an obstacle to settlement). However, precisely the opposite occurred. The explicit intent of the coup was to replace a democratic leader with a dictator who had a fervently "antidemocratic posture."¹⁵²

6.1.6 Conclusion

Roughly three hundred people were killed during the coup, and roughly one hundred injured.¹⁵³ The coup "inaugurated an era of political repression," by removing an elected-leader and installing "a dictatorship that became increasingly unpopular and corrupt."¹⁵⁴ Britain got cheaper oil, though.

Iran held a resource vital to British interests. Britain had secured rights to that resource by "negotiating" with unaccountable monarchs; over time, the Iranian people resented the inequities those agreements facilitated. A courageous leader – Mohammad Mosaddeq – decided Iranian oil should benefit Iranian people, not the British Empire. Predictably, his platform was immensely popular in Iran. He ran, and won the election on a platform of nationalizing the nation's most lucrative resource. (Once in power, Mosaddeq knew he could not back down from his promises; the British also knew that for "political reasons" Mosaddeq could not back away from nationalization. This, I have argued, is an underappreciated consequence of domestic-accountability). Accordingly, Britain and the United States went about corrupting Iran's

¹⁵² Fakhreddin Azimi, "Unseating Mosaddeq: The Configuration and the Role of Domestic Forces," in *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, ed. Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 27.

¹⁵³ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 210.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 211-13.

democratic institutions while searching for a dictator to replace Mosaddeq – one who would not need votes. Perhaps most troubling is that Iran is not a one-off, an eerily similar pattern of events occurred in Guatemala.

6.2. Guatemala

6.2.1: Inter-democracy dispute over policy issue in which the developed democracy (DD) has limited leverage over the undeveloped democracy (UD)

The United Fruit Company (UFC) was founded in 1899, and two years later secured exclusive land rights in Guatemala, flippantly granted by Guatemala’s dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera.¹⁵⁵ These exclusive rights “began over fifty years of unbroken and prodigious profit making.”¹⁵⁶ UFC’s managing director, Samuel Zemurray, secured an even more favorable contract in 1936, granted by yet another dictator, General Jorge Ubico. Indeed, “represented by the prestigious law firm Sullivan and Cromwell (whose executive partner was [at the time] John Foster Dulles), United Fruit extracted concessions so beneficial that no further negotiations were required – until the 1944 revolution.”¹⁵⁷ The 1936 concession brought UFC’s total property holdings in Guatemala “to more than the combined holdings of half of Guatemala’s landholding population.”¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the concession “exempted United Fruit from virtually all taxes and duties...which meant that practically none of the profits found their way into the official

¹⁵⁵ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 69.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

coffers.”¹⁵⁹ In short, the UFC operated in Guatemala virtually unregulated, and managed to “evade almost the entire Guatemalan tax burden.”¹⁶⁰

To add insult to injury, “United Fruit’s contract promised nothing that would substantially benefit Guatemala’s development.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, by the 1930s UFC’s annual profit – roughly \$65 million – was “more than twice the ordinary revenues of the entire Guatemalan government.”¹⁶² The UFC developed such a stranglehold on the country that by the 1940s Guatemalans stopped referring to it as “La Frutera” (the fruit) and started calling the company “El Pulpo” (the octopus).¹⁶³ Just like the AIOC in Iran, “United Fruit came under attack by Guatemalan nationalist and labor organizers.”¹⁶⁴ Despite the company running an unregulated monopoly, its executives routinely claimed the company was barely profitable (in an attempt to secure even more favorable contracts); however, UFC’s complaints were “unacceptable to Guatemala’s revolutionary leaders who pledged themselves to the country’s comprehensive development. To them, and to all Latin American nationalists, El Pulpo was the very symbol of Yankee imperialism.”¹⁶⁵

While the UFC provided its workers living quarters, they resembled the wretched conditions of the AIOC’s town in Abadan:

...the natives merely had to peer over the high wire fences separating their dwellings from those of their employers. To poor Guatemalans, ‘Yankee imperialism’ meant the workers’ three to five-family buildings juxtaposed with the splendid single-family houses, theaters, swimming pools, and golf courses ‘next door’ – the exclusive preserve of the managerial command...It meant knowing

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶² Ibid., 73.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 73.

that, should they somehow acquire a white-collar job, they could be assured a much lower salary than their North American counterpart with a dozen years' less experience.¹⁶⁶

To be sure, the fact that the UFC “paid so few taxes on its huge holdings was well known throughout Guatemala, as was its fiefdomlike power over its properties.”¹⁶⁷ Crucially, Guatemalan nationalists “perceived the company as a major roadblock to their objective of establishing democracy and enacting social and economic reforms.”¹⁶⁸ While the UFC blatantly supported unpopular governments, and practiced overt racism, “at its most fundamental level, the resentment toward La Frutera stemmed from the harsh economic realities of its workers,” often earning “an intermittent salary of \$1.36 per day.”¹⁶⁹

Grievances with the UFC came to a head during the 1944 revolution. To be sure, the 1944 revolution was a “democratic revolution” which put an end to the thirteen-year dictatorship of Ubico,¹⁷⁰ and which ushered in Guatemala’s decade-long “democratic spring.”¹⁷¹ Guatemalan workers, fortified by the revolution, demanded more equitable compensation from El Pulpo.

Guatemalan workers went on strike in 1946, 1948, and 1949, demanding better working conditions in general and a \$0.14 increase in their daily wage in particular.¹⁷² UFC refused to engage with the first strike, but eventually, accepting their limited leverage in this situation – their employees were Guatemalan, the land and the bananas were in Guatemala – accepted arbitration in 1949.¹⁷³ Jacobo Arbenz (a hero from the 1944 revolution)¹⁷⁴ ran on a platform of

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 74-5.

¹⁷⁰ Gordon, “A Case History,” 132.

¹⁷¹ Christa Little-Siebold, “The Politics of Land, Identity, and Silencing: A Case Study from El Oriente of Guatemala, 1944-1954,” in *After the Coup: An Ethnographic Reframing of Guatemala*, ed. Timothy Smith and Abigail Adams (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 99.

¹⁷² Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 76.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 77.

¹⁷⁴ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 72.

“agrarian reform” (i.e. land redistribution) and was popularly elected in November 1950, winning 65% of the nearly 400,000 votes cast (discussed below).¹⁷⁵ That same year, the UFC threatened it would simply shut down all operations if “labor conditions did not improve,” that is, if Guatemalans would not accept starvation wages. These threats were empty, of course, and in early 1952 the UFC reached another agreement with Guatemalan workers.¹⁷⁶

The UFC’s concerns took a “quantum leap” in June 1952, “with Arbenz’s enactment of the agrarian reform law.”¹⁷⁷ The intent of the law was to redistribute idle land among property-less Guatemalans – since only 15% of UFC’s 550,000 acres of land in Guatemala was under cultivation, it was a logical target.¹⁷⁸ To be sure, Arbenz did not “steal” land from large Guatemalan landholders or from the UFC – as one might imagine a communist regime would do – indeed Arbenz compensated the owners of expropriated land with “3 percent agrarian bonds maturing in twenty-five years” with the face value of the bond determined by the owner’s own declared valuation of their property “on their tax returns prior to May 10, 1952.”¹⁷⁹ By 1954, the Arbenz government had expropriated roughly 400,000 acres of UFC land.¹⁸⁰ Based on the UFC’s “own declared valuation for tax purposes the [Arbenz] government offered \$600,000 as compensation for the expropriation.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Schlesinger and Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit*, 46.

¹⁷⁶ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 78.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷⁹ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 151. This happened to be the *exact* method by which the United States directed agrarian reforms in Formosa and Japan (Glejeses, *Shattered Hope*, 164).

¹⁸⁰ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 81.

¹⁸¹ Gordon, “A Case History,” 142.

6.2.2a: Government of DD expresses strong policy preference (the policy issue is of fundamental importance)

Unfortunately, the UFC decided that land was now, somehow, worth \$15,000,000.¹⁸² President Eisenhower’s foreign policy staff had several “key members [who] had been personally in the legal, financial, or political orbit of the United Fruit Company.”¹⁸³ Thomas Cabot, the brother of John Cabot (the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs) had been the President of UFC.¹⁸⁴ John Cabot, as the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, “held a substantial amount of stock in United Fruit,”¹⁸⁵ as did Senators, including Henry Cabot Lodge, the Senator for Massachusetts where UFC was headquartered.¹⁸⁶ Allen Dulles, the Director of the CIA, did legal work for Schroeder Bank, one of the UFC’s main financiers, in the 1930s.¹⁸⁷ A director of Schroeder Bank, Sinclair Weeks, also happened to be the Secretary of Commerce.¹⁸⁸ But perhaps most brazenly, the former executive partner of Sullivan and Cromwell – the law firm which negotiated on the UFC’s behalf with the Ubico government throughout 1936 – John Foster Dulles, had become, by 1954, the Secretary of State.¹⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, the UFC succeeded in obtaining “State Department intervention on behalf of its claim” against the Arbenz government.¹⁹⁰ The State Department “formally demanded \$15,854,849 compensation for United Fruit Company.”¹⁹¹ Indeed, upon hearing news of the expropriation of UFC land, John Moors Cabot “sent the Guatemalan government a

¹⁸² Ibid., 142.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 144.

¹⁸⁴ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 82.

¹⁸⁵ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 124.

¹⁸⁶ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 83.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹⁸⁸ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 124.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon, “A Case History,” 141.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 144.

blistering diplomatic note condemning its seizure of United Fruit land and demanding ‘just’ compensation.”¹⁹²

The agrarian reform became known as “the Guatemalan matter” between U.S. and UFC officials.¹⁹³ The Senate Foreign Relations Committee referred to the reform as “the Guatemalan situation.”¹⁹⁴ Arbenz referred explicitly to America’s unreasonable stance on “the agrarian question” as the leading source of tension between the two countries and how “the agrarian question” would be the key reason for “foreign intervention.”¹⁹⁵ Arbenz was correct. His administration “never paid this [nearly \$16 million] bill.”¹⁹⁶ Tensions rose between the two sides as neither showed a willingness to compromise; meanwhile, “as the countries were still disputing the issue, the CIA completed its plan to overthrow Arbenz.”¹⁹⁷

6.2.2b: Citizens of UD express strong policy preference (opposing DD’s position)

During the presidential campaign of 1950, “Arbenz won the backing of a broad coalition of younger officers...along with labor and peasant leaders who saw Arbenz as the instrument by which they could finally realize their ambition to transform Guatemala” from a feudal, aristocratic society to an egalitarian democracy.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, Arbenz had the support of almost everyone, except, predictably, Guatemala’s “great landholders.”¹⁹⁹ Like Mosaddeq, Arbenz was a nationalist “determined to carry through the reform program on which he had been elected.”²⁰⁰ His main policy proposal – agrarian reform including the expropriation of idle UFC land – was unanimously approved in the National Assembly and enacted on June 17th, 1952.

¹⁹² Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 103.

¹⁹³ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 228.

¹⁹⁴ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 128.

¹⁹⁵ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 77.

¹⁹⁶ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 81.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁹⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 45.

¹⁹⁹ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 61.

²⁰⁰ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 49.

Arbenz's reform program ran in the face of America's interests in Guatemala "as a region to be kept 'safe' for American corporations."²⁰¹ Arbenz's Minister of Labor and Economy, Alfonso Bauer Paiz, "expressed the bitterness felt by many of his countrymen toward the giant multinational" when he stated: "The United Fruit Company is the principal enemy of the progress of Guatemala, of its democracy, and of every effort directed at its economic liberation."²⁰² Arbenz himself was acutely aware of how important "the agrarian question" was to the U.S., and how their interests naturally conflicted.²⁰³ During his annual address to Congress in March 1954 (three months before the coup) Arbenz announced:

The essential character of the international situation with relation to Guatemala is that, as a consequence of the agrarian reform and the economic and social development of the country, we face a growing threat of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Guatemala, placing in danger the stability of our constitutional life and the integrity of our national independence...The source of the political controversies and struggles, especially during 1953, was the agrarian question...For some time our measures have conflicted with the policies of great gorging consortiums which form the dominant circles in some countries, principally the United States of America...The explanation is in the progressive measures and in the application of the Labor Code of all companies, including the United Fruit Company...as long as we do not conform to the United Fruit Company and some others affected by the agrarian reform, they will continue to try to recoup the lands which popular sovereignty had legitimately expropriated for the benefit of the nation and the peasants.²⁰⁴

Literally while Arbenz delivered this speech, the UFC was "working quietly but effectively to convince the American government that Arbenz was a threat to freedom and must

²⁰¹ Ibid., 72.

²⁰² Ibid., 72-3.

²⁰³ Ibid., 77.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 77.

be deposed.”²⁰⁵ The company hired lobbyists and publicists who successfully “influenced and reshaped the attitudes of the American public toward Guatemala.”²⁰⁶ The UFC persuaded the American government and the American public that Arbenz had to be removed due to his stance on “the agrarian question,” while in Guatemala, Arbenz was a hero for carrying out a tremendously popular campaign promise to reform the agrarian sector in a manner which benefitted “the nation and the peasants” at the expense of the UFC. Both sides recognized that their publics had opposing interests. Arbenz acknowledged that “as long as we do not conform” to the UFC’s demands, it will keep dominating the country. Due to the popularity of the agrarian reform (the strength of the DAM) Arbenz could not kowtow to the UFC.

6.2.3: DD recognizes it is not the leader of the UD that prevents agreement on policy issue but the political institutions of the UD (the DAM)

The expropriation of UFC’s property in June 1952 “opened a new phase in the United States-Guatemalan relations, for it brought to the public’s attention the irreconcilability of their respective policies.”²⁰⁷ Why were their policy differences irreconcilable? Because Arbenz, like Truman and Eisenhower, was acutely aware of the “public’s attention” on the policy issue, and was thus hamstrung by the DAM which prevented further compromise.

Ambassador Toriello “tried to explain [to State Department officials] the rationale for his nation’s agrarian reform act, but each time his explanations were rejected.”²⁰⁸ Toriello argued the reforms were within Guatemala’s sovereign rights, that the proposed compensation was fair

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 77.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 77.

²⁰⁷ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 68.

²⁰⁸ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 104.

(since it was based off of UFC's own valuation for tax purposes), and that reforms "benefited a large number of landless peasants who lived in terrible poverty."²⁰⁹

A CIA memo published months after Arbenz's agrarian reform law explains why Arbenz was unable to come to an agreement with the UFC:

An integral part of [Arbenz's] program is the removal of Guatemala from the category of a 'subsidiary of United Fruit'. [Arbenz] is a stubborn idealist who is willing to risk his own wealth and who is able to enlist the support of others to risk their wealth on the gamble of getting national control of Guatemala's fruit, coffee and chicle industries and its mineral and petroleum potential. Sacrifices are to be expected under this program and Arbenz is willing to make them. He feels that any hardships on his people resulting from defiance of US imperialism would be politically offset by its nationalistic appeal so as not to effect the perpetuity of the regime.²¹⁰

The CIA knew Arbenz would not capitulate to the UFC's demands because the "nationalistic appeal" gained from such defiance would "politically offset" any material losses Guatemalans suffered from ongoing disputes with the UFC. This is the crux of my argument: the CIA acknowledged that Arbenz knew obstinate defiance of the UFC ensured victory in the next election; therefore, negotiations were futile, and plans for Arbenz's replacement, inevitable.

After all, Arbenz could do the math. He won a "landslide" election with only 260,000 votes (65% of 400,000). One reform policy – the agrarian reform – gave 138,000 Guatemalan families land they desperately needed,²¹¹ and was said to benefit half a million Guatemalans²¹² (as new farmers decreased the supply of labor which pushed up wages for those who did not receive land). It is hard to fathom a more politically popular policy, *nor one harder to back away*

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 104.

²¹⁰ "Personal Political Orientation of President Arbenz."

²¹¹ Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 156.

²¹² Richard Adams, "Democracy Delayed: The Evolution of Ethnicity in Guatemalan Society, 1944-1996," in *After the Coup: An Ethnographic Reframing of Guatemala*, ed. Timothy Smith and Abigail Adams (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 137.

from once implemented. While “United States commentators could allege that the reform movement was merely a vehicle for Communist subversion...they could not deny that the reforms benefited a great number of Guatemalans.”²¹³ For that very reason, Arbenz could not return the land to the UFC.

6.2.4: The DD plans to weaken and corrupt the political institutions of the UD (to nullify the DAM)

In a systematic effort to delegitimize Arbenz and corrupt Guatemalans’ faith in their incipient democracy, the CIA proposed:

A propaganda campaign by radio and leaflet to frighten the populace and foment violence; and the training of about 300 mercenaries and Guatemalan exiles to infiltrate Guatemala, half to commit acts of sabotage, and the other half to pose as the ‘spearhead’ of a fictitious invasion force. In addition, the CIA would jam Guatemala’s radio stations and transmit false messages on its own radio and over army channels – all to disconcert the population.²¹⁴

The radio propaganda campaign against Arbenz included: “reports of imaginary uprisings and defections and plots to poison wells and conscript children.”²¹⁵ A CIA memo from September 11th, 1953 allotted \$270,000 for “psychological warfare” and “\$260,000” for “subversion.”²¹⁶ The CIA also tried to bribe Arbenz directly. They “had a large sum of money deposited in a Swiss bank for Arbenz. But the Guatemalan President – or his subordinates – rejected the offer.”²¹⁷

²¹³ Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 163.

²¹⁴ Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 111.

²¹⁵ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 113.

²¹⁶ “Memorandum for the Record,” (CIA, September 11th, 1953), doc. 51. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/ike/guat/20176.htm>

²¹⁷ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 113.

6.2.5: DD installs a new, sympathetic dictator not susceptible to the DAM

Before the coup could be carried out, of course, the CIA had to figure out who would replace Arbenz; they had to find someone who would not care about political calculations. The UFC “was especially preoccupied with the choice because its future in the country lay in the hands of the new leader.”²¹⁸ The fruit company “wanted someone suitably pliable,” that is, accountable to them, not the public.²¹⁹ UFC’s lobbyist, Thomas Corcoran, “sought assurances [from the CIA] that United Fruit’s interests would be ‘looked after’ following Arbenz’s removal.”²²⁰ The Director of the CIA, Allen Dulles, “promised that whoever was selected by the CIA as the next Guatemalan leader would not be allowed to nationalize or in any way disrupt the company’s operations.”²²¹

The UFC and CIA first approached General Ydigoras. According to Ydigoras, the UFC and CIA demanded he, as leader, “promise to favor the United Fruit Company and the International Railways of Central America [one of UFC’s subsidiaries];...destroy the railroad workers labor union...[and] establish a strong-arm government, on the style of Ubico.”²²² While initially tempted by the offer, upon further reflection Ydigoras found the UFC’s demands “unacceptable.”²²³

After vetting several more sympathetic candidates, the UFC and the CIA agreed upon Castillo Armas because he was “stupid,” “malleable,” and “looked like an Indian.”²²⁴ The CIA offered \$3 million to Armas to finance the coup which would install him as dictator of Guatemala; the UFC “agreed to supply arms to Castillo Armas and smuggle other weapons into

²¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 119.

²²⁰ Ibid., 119.

²²¹ Ibid., 120.

²²² Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 249.

²²³ Ibid., 249.

²²⁴ Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 122.

Guatemala via the company's railroad...(In return, it was understood, United Fruit would get its land and its privileges back after Arbenz was deposed)."²²⁵ Armas accepted the offer "with no conditions or objections."²²⁶

6.2.6 Conclusion

On June 18th, 1954, Castillo Armas "invaded Guatemala from Honduras with a few hundred men."²²⁷ The "main military action involved frequent bombings of Guatemala City and other key points from U.S. planes flown by U.S. pilots hired by the CIA and based in Nicaragua."²²⁸ Guatemala's "democratic spring" was over.

Guatemala held resources vital to American interests. The UFC had secured rights to those resource by "negotiating" with unaccountable generals; over time, the Guatemalan people resented the inequities those concessions facilitated. A hero of the 1944 democratic revolution – Jacobo Arbenz – decided Guatemalan resources should benefit Guatemalans, not a foreign-owned multinational corporation. Predictably, Arbenz's platform of agrarian reform was immensely popular in Guatemala. He ran, and won the election in 1950 with 65% of the vote. Once in power, Arbenz knew he could not back down from his promises. The CIA also knew that any material damages Guatemalans suffered by failing to come to an agreement with the UFC would be "politically offset" by nationalistic appeal. This, I have argued, is an underappreciated consequence of domestic-accountability. Accordingly, the United States went about corrupting Guatemala's democratic institutions while searching for a dictator to replace Arbenz – one who would not need votes.

²²⁵ Ibid., 126.

²²⁶ Ibid., 126.

²²⁷ Gordon, "A Case History," 146.

²²⁸ Ibid., 146.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Democratic mechanisms can have undesirable consequences. In Iran and Guatemala, the domestic-accountability mechanism intrinsic to a functioning democracy impeded Mosaddeq's and Arbenz's ability to reach a settlement with the United Kingdom and the United States. Mosaddeq and Arbenz were not communists. Both leaders rose to power on nationalist/populist campaigns geared towards improving the standard of living for the greatest number of their citizens. In order to do that, both leaders had to come face-to-face with powerful governments and foreign-owned corporations over policy issues which were strategically important and immensely profitable.

Of course, there were suspicions in Britain and the United States that Iran and Guatemala were falling under communist influence. I have not argued that these suspicions were irrelevant. However, I have demonstrated that they were of secondary importance. Communism was a constant; plans to overthrow Mosaddeq began immediately after he nationalized the AIOC, and plans to overthrow Arbenz began immediately after he expropriated UFC land. Another counterfactual is worth considering: if agreements were made, with communism still lurking in the background, would the U.K. and U.S. have gone through with the coups? Like the previous counterfactual, the answer, I suggest, is a resounding "no." This is all to say Mosaddeq and Arbenz got themselves into trouble when they sacrificed the interests of dominant powers for their own people (what democratically-elected politicians ought to do). The popularity of their respective policies prevented them from capitulating to the demands of the U.S. and Britain for "political reasons." This, I have argued, is due to the domestic accountability mechanism. The dominant powers recognized they had limited leverage in this situation – the oil was within Iran's borders, the land within Guatemala's – so the most efficient way to reach a favorable

settlement was to simultaneously corrupt democratic institutions in those countries and replace elected leaders with dictators. Leaders whose power does not depend on popularity can, by definition, accept unpopular demands.

I have not meant to imply that democracy is not worth pursuing or that dictators are preferable to elected leaders. What I do mean to imply is that we should not assume the continued proliferation of democracy will be unproblematic. While democratic mechanisms prevent war between democracies, they can facilitate coups. The DPT literature has grappled at length with the former and all but ignored the latter. Contra Clinton, democracies can in fact “attack” each other, if not in war then through coups. Of course, coups are preferable to full-scale war. Coups are the lesser of two evils. But they are an evil nonetheless, and one which the DPT literature to date has insufficiently understood.

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