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Change on the Horizon: The Church Committee (1975) and Jimmy Carter's Foreign Policy

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Introduction

In the decades since 1975, called the Year of Intelligence, a body of work has emerged that is derived from the information that a series of government investigations revealed about U.S. foreign intelligence operations. Partially declassified documents that make up this evidence tie Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covert operations to the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile and the state sponsored terrorism apparatus of Operation Condor in the Southern Cone of Latin America. While the Church Committee, the Pike Committee, and the Rockefeller Commission were all charged with the investigation of abuses of power by all branches of the U.S. intelligence services, each investigation had varied outcomes. The only one that is considered an overall success is the Church Committee, named for Senator Frank Church, a Democrat from Idaho. The Church Committee resonated in American foreign policy, but also in U.S. politics, and particularly in the next presidential election cycle in 1976. This paper will explore to what extent the legacy of the Church Committee (officially, the United States Senate Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities) influenced the presidential campaign of Jimmy Carter, as well as his subsequent presidency.

There is a large body of research that focuses on the social and political ramifications of CIA interference in foreign countries in the 1960s and the 1970s. The same attention has not been paid to how the media surrounding the 1976 presidential election and subsequent policies enacted by the Carter Administration had an impact on the legacy of early attempts to hold the CIA accountable for its actions, specifically the efforts of Church Committee. Every piece of secondary literature that discusses the events of the Church Committee neglects the impact of the election cycle on the way that the Committee was viewed by the public beyond stating that the activities disclosed in the report likely contributed to the victory of the Democratic Party. In order to pinpoint

how Carter and his Administration influenced the legacy of the Church Committee, especially in public, sources such as newspaper articles, televised segments from the Church Committee hearings, and government documents from various agencies will be analyzed and compared to the stated goals of the Committee as established under Frank Church.

In the 2005 publication, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, historian Patrice McSherry lays out the organizational and operational structures of Operation Condor. She describes the evolution of Condor in three phases: from a network of individual anticommunist intelligence services working parallel to state governments to a coordinated international security network and finally into a multinational cross border assassination network with contacts and bases operating in concert across multiple countries. *Predatory States* demonstrates that the CIA had working knowledge of Condor's goals and operations throughout its active period; CIA agents had been contracted to train the officers of Condor countries in counterintelligence and surveillance practices and continued to run scholarship funded trainings at the School of the Americas for many years. McSherry also notes that the CIA was involved in the acquisition of communication technology for the Condor network.

Her detailed investigation of personnel overlaps between CIA stations and the intelligence services of Condor countries and personal relationships between members of the CIA and organizations like Chile's DINA makes it clear that individual CIA agents associated with Latin America had advanced knowledge of Operation Condor and its goals and that they did not raise any objections or move to prevent operations from occurring unless they were directed to do so by the executive branch. The documents used as evidence in *Predatory States* were many of the same ones that were reviewed by the Church Committee and other investigators. They contextualize their decision to comply with certain censorship requests put forth by the CIA regarding their final

public report as well as the extended timeline of the investigation process. Despite the breadth of McSherry's investigation, it focuses almost exclusively on Condor's structure and presence outside of the United States. The Church Committee investigation was never mentioned, nor were the consequences of covert CIA involvement beyond the assassinations that could have been prevented if the organization had acted on the intelligence available to it.¹ However, it provided the same sort of background information that would have been available to members of the Church Committee during their investigation and explained the size of the scandal.

In *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* by historian Peter Kornbluh, the focus is narrowed down to the U.S government's relationship with Chile and the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Kornbluh, through his work with the National Security Archives, worked on the Chile Declassification Project and included many newly declassified documents in his research. The scope of his work extended beyond the period of focus of this thesis, to the lawsuits and investigations into Pinochet that occurred after Chile returned to a civilian government. Kornbluh connected CIA memos to orders issued to embassies and diplomats and communications with Henry Kissinger in his capacity as the Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon. *The Pinochet File* argues that it is impossible for the President to have been unaware of the CIA's role in the Allende coup, given the number of influential staff members who knew about Condor.²

The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents by journalist John Dinges, is an expansion of his book, *Murder on Embassy Row*. Dinges focused on the U.S. relationship with Pinochet through the lens of various assassination plots of which CIA

¹ Patrice J. McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005).

² Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, (New York: New Press, 2013).

documents demonstrate advance knowledge. The most prominent assassinations analyzed in this work were those of General Carlos Prats in Argentina and the double assassination of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Karpen Moffitt in the United States. Dinges highlighted many points in which a different decision could have been made by U.S. officials to prevent the Chilean intelligence service DINA from taking advantage of the Condor system on behalf of Pinochet in Europe as well as the Americas.³

Both *The Pinochet File* and *The Condor Years* serve as an introduction to primary source documents and demonstrate the connection between Condor activity and human rights in foreign countries as a point of comparison for a discussion of human rights advocacy in the United States, although neither focus on the Church Committee or its aftermath. While Kornbluh's research was useful for contextualizing the style of documents that the Church Committee worked to declassify the content of the documents is not central to my analysis of the impact of the committee. Kornbluh's work, like McSherry's, focused externally on the impact of CIA actions in Chile and not on the repercussions those actions had for the government at home. Dinges mentioned the Church Committee and the U.S response to the Letelier and Karpen Moffitt assassinations but remained focused on the human rights legacy in Chile.

The 2006 essay collection *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, edited by Brian Loveman, leveraged the opinions of policy experts to argue that human rights have not been a priority of U.S. policy in Latin America. While many of the essays focused on the CIA's modern relationships with countries that were not involved in Condor, such as Colombia and Venezuela, there were some that addressed recent policy in Brazil and Ecuador. The consensus of these authors rested on the notion that the interventionist nature of CIA

³ John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*, (New York London: The New Press, 2005).

operations in Latin America had not changed substantially from the policies in place during the Cold War.⁴ This is an important perspective because it argues that whatever legislative measures were put in place after the Year of Intelligence and the release of the Church Committee report had no noticeable effect on the type of covert foreign operations that are conducted. This contradicts the public perception of the Church Committee as a success; it cannot be considered a true success if no substantial changes have been made in the foreign policy of the United States. *Addicted to Failure*'s focus on modern CIA intervention in Latin America also meant that none of the authors addressed the impact of the Church Committee or early foreign intelligence legislation passed by Congress during Carter's presidency.

On the other hand, *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee*, by Dafydd Townley, argued that the Church Committee as the culmination of the Year of Intelligence had a significant impact on the way foreign intelligence operations were conducted. The Church Committee spurred the creation of a permanent oversight committee and several intelligence reform bills that were passed during the Carter administration. *The Year of Intelligence* also focused on the effect of public opinion on the success of the Church Committee legislation compared to the other investigative bodies and the long-term impact on the visibility of causes like privacy and human rights. The use of newspaper headlines to emphasize the impact of public pressure on government policy in 1975 provided a starting point for this thesis to look at the legacy of the Church Committee. Despite his heavy focus on the impact of contemporary public opinion on the success of the Church Committee, Townley did not extend that analysis beyond the year 1975.⁵ If public perception of the Church Committee

⁴ Brian Loveman, ed., *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, Latin American Silhouettes, (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

⁵ Dafydd Townley, *The Year of Intelligence in the United States: Public Opinion, National Security, and the 1975 Church Committee*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

as a success depended heavily on the outcome of the 1976 presidential election, Townley's analysis stops just short of encompassing that legacy in full. Using media from the 1976 election cycle to determine how strongly the issue of human rights was tied to the platform of Jimmy Carter before he took office will allow for a determination of whether the legacy of the Church Committee derives from its genuine impact on foreign policy legislation or to its association with the beginning of a new presidential administration. If it was considered a success because of its impact on foreign policy, there will be a noticeable trend in legislation, while if its association with the Carter Administration caused it to be considered a success there will be fewer explicit pieces of legislation passed after its conclusion beyond those associated with Carter's foreign policy agenda.

CONDOR and the Cold War

Operation Condor, the Church Committee investigation, and the 1976 election all took place within the specific context of the Cold War. Operation Condor was conceptualized as an intelligence sharing network that included the countries of the Southern Cone of South America, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The governments in each of those countries were rightist dictators or military juntas that had taken power on the premise of preventing the spread of Communism further into the Western Hemisphere. The United States considered Fidel Castro's Cuba an outpost of Soviet Communism and isolated its government as much as possible. No military body in the region wanted to risk losing the resources available to them through their country's relationship with the U.S. by allowing left-leaning politicians to come to power. The fact that Condor ran its communications on a network using U.S. technology based in Panama is

evidence of how important American resources were to the operation of the dictatorships in Latin America.⁶

Although Condor began as an intelligence sharing network meant to allow Condor countries to alert each other to the plans and movements of leftist guerrilla groups it quickly expanded into a network that allowed the dictatorships to target and silence any perceived threats to their regime. The elimination of communist organizations remained a priority, the Condor apparatus monitored anyone who spoke out against the dictatorships as well as their families and associates. The United States military trained members of the intelligence services of each country in skills such as interrogation; these intelligence officers returned to their home countries and used their skills against civilian dissidents on a massive scale. Eventually, Condor expanded across international borders, with multinational teams hunting down political refugees throughout the Southern Cone. Condor countries also carried out attacks internationally. The kidnapping, torture, and disappearance of thousands of people is the legacy of the dictatorships of this era, their actions supported by the resources of the CIA. This thesis uses Chile as a case study even though countries such as Argentina suffered more documented losses under Condor Operations because the involvement of the CIA in the overthrow of Salvador Allende's presidency in 1973 mean that the United States' relationship with Chile is documented extensively.⁷

⁶ "Southern Cone," DEA.gov. Accessed April 9, 2022. <https://www.dea.gov/foreign-offices/southern-cone>, McSherry, *Predatory States*.

⁷ McSherry, *Predatory States*.

The United States and Chile

The United States and Chile have a long history of diplomatic relations that began in 1824.⁸ Chile officially declared independence from the Spanish Empire on September 18, 1810, although revolutionaries had been fighting against Imperial Spanish rule beginning in 1808, when Napoleon placed Joseph Bonaparte on the throne. Fighting in the region continued through the restoration of the rule of the House of Bourbon under Ferdinand VII in Spain in 1813. Chile considered itself fully independent from Spain's influence by the February of 1818 and established the government of Supreme Director Bernardo O'Higgins. The United States delayed diplomatic relations with Chile until 1824 because King Ferdinand VII of Spain continued to make efforts to regain his rebellious territories in the western hemisphere between 1813 and 1823. By 1822 it became clear that he lacked the resources to do so, but an official U.S. envoy did not make contact with the Chilean government until 1824.⁹

From its establishment as an independent nation until the coup against Allende, Chile was governed almost continuously by a sovereign, constitutional government, but its proximity to the United States made it a country of interest.¹⁰ Like many other Latin American countries, the national resources in Chile attracted investments from U.S. companies. U.S. backed companies Kennecott, Cerro, and Anaconda dominated the copper industry. The International Telephone and Telegraph Company had a controlling stake in its industry. U.S. companies owned nearly 100 other corporations in Chile at the time of Allende's election.¹¹ One of the major concerns of Nixon's

⁸ "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Chile." Office of the Historian. Accessed January 27, 2022. <https://history.state.gov/countries/chile>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ben.el. "Historia Política – Periodo 1833 – 1891." Text. BCN Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, October 2020. <https://www.bcn.edl/historiapolitica>.

¹¹ Ted Szule, Special to the New York Times. "U.S. Government and Business Resigned to a Marxist Chile." *The New York Times*, September 21, 1970, 2, sec. Archives. <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/09/21/archives/us-government-and-business-resigned-to-a-marxist-chile.html>, "Milestones: 1969–1976: The Allende Years and the

White House was how Allende's election would affect those companies if he continued outgoing President Eduardo Frei's plan to nationalize Chilean industries and implemented the land reforms that had been a central part of his campaign platform. Despite the perceived threat to their profits, the New York Times noted that there has been no public pressure on the White House to take action to prevent the certification of Salvador Allende as the successor to Frei.¹²

Chile's strategic value to the U.S. was also something that the White House had to consider. Prior to the 1970 election Chile had been considered neutral in the Cold War. Allende ran as the candidate for Unidad Popular, the Popular Unity party, Chile's explicitly leftist coalition. Whether or not Allende planned to ally Chile to the Soviet Union in the Cold War, the White House considered the election of any left-leaning coalition, especially in the Western hemisphere, a threat. During its investigation, the Church Committee found that the CIA had conducted covert operations in Chile that included funding "simple propaganda manipulation of the press...large-scale support for Chilean political parties...public opinion polls [and] direct attempts to foment a military coup," as well as "efforts to oppose communist and left-wing influence in student, peasant, and labor organizations."¹³ The CIA also leveraged military attachés and diplomatic contacts. Covert programs received millions of dollars of annual funding, and the total cost of operations between 1963 and 1973 was roughly \$13.4 million dollars.¹⁴

At the same time as the CIA oversaw various operations, Chile received funding from the United States in the form of economic aid. Aid was a critical part of the Alliance for Progress agenda under President John F. Kennedy. The goal of the Alliance for Progress, established in

Pinochet Coup, 1969-1973," Office of the Historian, Accessed January 27, 2022.
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/allende>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, "Covert Action in Chile 1963-1973," 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, S. Doc., 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 2, 7.

1961, aimed to “inhibit the rise of communist leaning insurgents such as Cuba’s Fidel Castro” in other Latin American countries by providing loans to those that “would promote democracy and undertake meaningful social reforms” using the money. The United States earmarked more than \$20 billion dollars for this purpose.¹⁵ Chile received more than one billion dollars in direct aid from the United States between 1962 and 1969, consisting of Alliance for Progress loans as well as grants. The Chilean government also had access to \$200 to \$300 million dollars’ worth of credit provided by American banks between 1964 and 1970.¹⁶ Allende’s confirmation as the president of Chile marked the obvious failure of more than a billion dollars of U.S. investments to prevent a leftist political victory in one of our longstanding regional allies.

Despite official concern about Allende’s politics, the 1970 Chilean election was not a major worry for the American public. The *New York Times*, for instance, noted “a virtual lack of United States public reaction to the Allende election” in an article published in September of 1970. A review of major newspaper archives for mentions of Chile between 1960 and 1970 corroborates this statement; the most frequent mention of Chile was in relation to the rising prices of raw industrial materials as mines were nationalized. The few articles that directly mention Allende’s election as a potential threat to the stability of the region are not front-page news. Ironically, one 1969 article noted that “To impute a link between a political rival and the United States Government, especially the C.I.A., has become a tactic used by virtually every political party in Chile” as the leftist parties believed that the agency strongly influenced the outcome of the 1964 election. The Church Committee investigations eventually verified this belief, but the author of the

¹⁵ “Alliance for Progress (Alianza Para El Progreso) | Kennedy Library.” <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/alliance-for-progress>.

¹⁶ “Covert Action in Chile,” 4.

article regarded the accusations as a “campaign topic” with a “lack of tangible evidence” to support them.¹⁷

Prior to Watergate and revelations about the futility of the Vietnam War the idea that the CIA interfered in the democratic processes of another country would have been met with skepticism or outright disbelief from most Americans, similar to the attitude expressed in the article quoted above. Until scandals involving the CIA began making headlines with regularity, the average American was likely unaware that the CIA even had a presence in Chile. The military coup against Allende, on September 11, 1973, drew international attention to Chilean politics. The disappearance of two American citizens in the aftermath likely drew more American attention than the coup alone would have gotten. That mystery began a more general scrutiny of CIA activities that culminated in the Church Committee.

Archive and resource records for the Kennedy, Nixon, and Carter presidential libraries indicate that while Chile was a relevant topic during each of their presidencies, official functions and diplomatic visits made up the bulk of the collections. The majority of the documentation regarding their involvement with the CIA as an aspect of their foreign policies towards Chile was classified within the intelligence organization. This means that during the Church Committee investigation, the material that the Committee reviewed was not released to the public alongside the report. The Chile Declassification Project, hosted by the National Archive and the Department of State, contains much more information and is available for public review online. Some of the more recently released material remains partially redacted, but the release of documents was completed in the early 2000s.

¹⁷ Malcome W. Browne, “Most Parties in Chile Find C.I.A a Useful Target,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 1969.

The Chilean government has spent years working to hold former officials accountable for the atrocities they committed during Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship. There have been trials at all levels of the military, including efforts to indict Pinochet himself before his death in 2006. Although there are other Latin American countries, such as Argentina, that were also deeply affected by Operation Condor missions, U.S. diplomatic relations with them did not face the same kind of political scrutiny as relations with Chile did. Pinochet's dictatorship spanned multiple presidencies and generated coverage in American newspapers the longer it lasted and the more atrocities that came to light. There is ample documentation of Chile's influence on U.S. politics in the 1960s and 1970s available from multiple American sources. Chile has its own Spanish language documents related to Operation Condor and Pinochet's diplomatic efforts. These are supplemented by documents from the Archives of Terror, found in Paraguay in 1992, and in a collection of files kept by one of the key DINA operatives in Argentina, Enrique Arancibia Clavel. Nearly all of the sources located in Latin America are in Spanish and largely accessible online or as scanned copies in secondary sources.

Chilean officials have also been implicated in assassination operations on U.S. soil, and one of the most well-known DINA (Chile's National Intelligence Directorate under Pinochet) operatives was an American expat, Michael Vernon Townley. That kind of American connection at an intelligence level means that the CIA generated vast amounts of paperwork related to Chile. Combined with documentation of CIA operations taking place in Chile during the same period, any investigation into intelligence activities necessitated a focus on Chile. The only interim report released by the Church Committee during its investigation focused on Chile, and the full report released in January of 1976 contained a full investigation of Chile as well. While the CIA's

activities in Chile were not the beginning nor the end of America's relationship with the country, they impacted policy decisions for decades to come.

Foreign Intelligence Scandals

The revelation of CIA involvement in scandals relating to interference in the politics of foreign countries formed the basis of the Church Committee investigations. While there were differences in the relative severity of the scandals and in the level of explicit CIA involvement, the revelation of the CIA's activities in Chile with regards to the coup against Allende had a particular impact, one of the reasons that the Church Committee produced an interim report on Chile.

The ITT Scandal

In the months leading up to the military coup against Allende, the CIA utilized multiple covert methods of increasing dissent and instability within Chile to prevent Allende from taking office as the president of Chile. These included funding opposition parties and Chile's largest right-wing print newspaper and limiting Chile's access to international funding and loans. While each of these options reflected poorly on the CIA when it became public knowledge, an early operation leaked to the press was the collaboration between the CIA and the International Telephone and Telegraph Company. The story broke in an article by Jack Anderson on March 21, 1972. Anderson revealed that ITT had been funneling massive amounts of money to other covert CIA operations as well as lobbying for conservative parties on its own. The public evidence of obvious interference in the affairs of a foreign government by the CIA years before the Church Committee investigation makes it clear why policy changes were considered necessary. Frank Church chaired the Senate subcommittee established to investigate the scandal, the Subcommittee on Multinational

Corporations. It was his first exposure to the kind of work he would later do on a larger scale with the Church Committee. The investigation faced various forms of sabotage from the Nixon Administration and resulted in the report, *The International Telephone and Telegraph Company and Chile, 1970, 1971*. When the existence of Project FUBELT in 1974 revealed that former CIA director Richard Helms had likely committed perjury during the course of the ITT investigation, Helms became the first director of the CIA ever to be indicted for a crime (he was convicted in 1977 of 2 misdemeanor charges).

The Assassinations of Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi

In the immediate aftermath of Pinochet's coup, the regime abducted two American journalists. Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi had been living in Santiago where they both worked as editors of a progressive news pamphlet, FIN. Horman allegedly encountered U.S. naval officers in Viña del Mar who expressed support for the military coup when visiting with a friend. Once they made it to Santiago, they began looking for safe passage back to the United States, but Charles Horman was taken by members of the Chilean military on September 17, 1973, and Teruggi detained on September 20. Both men were reported to have been transported to the National Stadium, where the government detained thousands of supporters of Allende, and killed many of them. The families of Horman and Teruggi were told nothing of their sons' encounter with the Chilean military and encountered many difficulties identifying and repatriating their bodies. The 1982 film, *Missing*, portrays their plight and trials. Although neither case got a significant amount of attention in the press for a sustained amount of time, they would reenter the news cycle every few years to the detriment of the image of both the CIA and the U.S. Embassy in Chile.

The Cult of Intelligence

The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence was a book originally published in 1974 co-written by Victor Marchetti, a former special assistant to the Deputy Director of the CIA, and intelligence expert John D. Marks. The book laid out the CIA's interference in Chile and other instances in which the organization overreached. The CIA attempted to prevent the book from being published, and when that failed, excised large sections of text. Marchetti and Marks contested the censorship and managed to get roughly half of the information reinstated. The book went to publication anyway. Text that had been removed was indicated in boldface type and the remaining censored material was indicated by the number of lines deleted. *The Cult of Intelligence* was generally considered one of the driving factors behind the creation of the Church Committee because it collected a lot of information that had not been publicly available before that point. The authors reissued it in 1980, with additional declassified information indicated by boldface italics.¹⁸

The White House

In the years leading up to the Church Committee investigation, the Nixon White House was deeply involved in the actions of the CIA. Documents sent between the office of Henry Kissinger, the CIA, and various embassies around the world provided evidence of the knowledge that the President and high-ranking members of his cabinet had of covert CIA operations. The public denials of prior knowledge and responsibility issued by the White House every time a new scandal came to light, and then the obstinance of the Ford Administration when ordered to hand documents over to the Church Committee for investigation, made sense in the executive branch because of the risk that the disclosure of information could implicate the President. Once the

¹⁸ Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*. New York, N.Y: Laurel Books, 1980.

Nixon tapes of his White House conversations were discovered, additional evidence of executive knowledge of covert CIA operations became available to investigators. Several months before the Church Committee published its official report President Ford signed Executive Order 11905 as a measure to curb the powers of the U.S intelligence agencies. Although EO 11905 was detailed its vague wording allowed significant leeway to the CIA and other intelligence organizations if deemed to be acting under the orders of the President.

Committees and a Commission

In the last year of the Ford Administration, several high-profile investigations into the actions of U.S. intelligence agencies took place. Each investigation had a different mandate and different cumulative levels of success, but all of them helped set the stage for the 1976 presidential race between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. Officially known as the Select Committee on Intelligence – and the second investigation of intelligence operations begun in the House of Representatives - the Pike Committee was chaired by Otis G. Pike. The House charged the Committee to put together a report which would then be released to the President and the public, as deemed appropriate, given the subject matter. However, someone leaked the Pike Committee report to the Village Voice newspaper. The leaked report revealed that the Pike Committee had organized its findings into three sections. The first section, titled “The Select Committee’s Oversight Experience”, was reported to be 81 pages long. The third section, “Recommendations” apparently “had not yet been written” when the leaked document went to press. The Village Voice only published the second section, “The Select Committee’s Investigative Record”, with “some of the footnotes trimmed for space reasons” but intact otherwise. The published section consisted of 20 pages once formatted by the newspaper and focused on the costs of covert operations, the

mostly unsuccessful execution of several high-profile covert operations, and the risks inherent in unsuccessful or secret covert operations. In contrast to its prominence in the Church Committee final report and additional material, the Pike Committee's investigative report never mentioned Chile.¹⁹

The inability of Pike to find the source of the leak and prevent the disclosure of the most important information in the committee's report before it was officially cleared for release resulted in his committee being viewed as something of a joke by the public. The tone of the report is significantly more confrontational than the tone of the Church Committee material, something that likely contributed to the perception of the Pike Committee as less trustworthy than the other investigations into intelligence abuses. The Pike Committee never published its official report but exists online since it was leaked before the committee dissolved.

The Rockefeller Commission was the presidential commission charged with investigating the intelligence services. Chaired by President Ford's Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, it was officially known as the United States President's Commission on CIA Activities within the United States. The Rockefeller Commission's investigation had a narrower scope than either the Pike Commission or the Church Commission. It was charged specifically with looking at the activities of the CIA with a primary focus on CIA activities domestically. This meant that the Commission finished its report earlier than both committees, but it did not release a full uncensored version immediately. The most notable difference between the Commission report and the reports of either of the Committees was the focus on the history of the CIA as an organization. The Commission report included much more detail on the legally defined role of the CIA at its founding and

¹⁹ Aaron Latham, "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want you to Read," *The Village Voice*, February 16, 1976, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2019/09/16/the-cia-report-the-president-doesnt-want-you-to-read/>.

examined the sources of its authority as well as the internal and external control structures that were already in place to prevent improper actions on the part of the organization.²⁰

Critics suspected that the Ford Administration requested the alteration of the abbreviated report the Commission released. The Rockefeller Commission members never reported the same kind of obstruction from the White House that the Pike and Church Committees did. The eventual complete transcript of the report contained redactions and seemed to be milder in its assessment of the CIA's culpability than those of either the Pike or the Church Committees. The summary of the findings of the Commission state that there was "widespread public misunderstanding of the Agency's actual practices" and that "the great majority of the CIA's domestic activities comply with its statutory authority" despite admitted contradiction between the mandate of the CIA and the responsibilities delegated to it by the National Security Council and Congress.²¹

The Select Committee to Study Governmental Operation with Respect to Intelligence Activities, later known as the Church Committee, was established on January 27, 1975, by S. Res 21. 82 senators voted in favor of establishing the Select Committee for the purpose of determining "the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in by any agency of the Federal Government or by any persons, acting individually or in combination with others, with respect to any intelligence activity carried out by or on behalf of the Federal Government."²² The mandate was expansive because the investigation targeted all the major United States intelligence agencies, including the CIA, the NSA, and the FBI, and the operations that those organizations conducted within the period of the past several presidencies. The resolution specified

²⁰ Nelson Rockefeller, "Report to the President by the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States," June 6, 1975, http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/contents/church/contents_church_reports_rockcomm.htm.

²¹ Ibid., Chapter 3, 9-10.

²²United States Senate, "Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 94th Congress, First Session," 94th Cong, 1st sess., 1975, S. Doc, 1431-32, <https://www.senate.gov/about/resources/pdf/church-committee-vote1975.pdf>.

that the Committee investigate the extent of any cooperation between intelligence agencies, the role of the Director of the CIA in allowing questionable methods within the organization, the influence of the executive branch on intelligence activities, whether the CIA or the FBI had overstepped their mandates (had the CIA conducted operations domestically or the FBI conducted operations against United States citizens). The resolution also specified that the Committee should make recommendations with regards to whether “strengthened or consolidated” congressional oversight of intelligence activities or additional laws were necessary.²³ Frank Church, the Democrat senator of Idaho was chosen to chair the committee. The Committee had eleven members total, six Democrats and five Republicans, including the Vice Chairman John Tower from Texas.²⁴

The Church Committee Senate investigation published a report compiled into six books, including supplementary materials. Book I focused on foreign and military intelligence, and Books IV and VI contained relevant supplementary materials. Senator Church decided to publish transcripts of the Committee’s hearings as well in a separate seven volume series. Volumes two and seven were the volumes relevant to an analysis of covert CIA operations both domestically and abroad.²⁵ The dates on the last volume of hearing transcripts were December 4 and 5, 1975.²⁶ Church’s decision to make the results of the Committee investigation as public as possible is the reason that the Committee exceeded the time limit of one year allotted for its investigation. A series of closed hearings and a brief public report would have been much easier to format for

²³ Ibid, 1432.

²⁴ “U.S. Senate: Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,” Senate.gov.

²⁵ United States Senate, “Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,” 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, S.Doc., United States Senate, “Hearings Before the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,” 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, Vol. 2, S. Doc., Hearings Before the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, Vol. 7, S. Doc.

²⁶ “Hearings,” Vol. 7.

release to a general audience than the more than 2,000 pages of detailed information that made up the final report.

Despite his decision to make the results of the Committee investigation public, Church decided to hold most of the hearings in closed sessions “in order to protect intelligence sources and methods.” The public hearings, formatted as a series of educational case studies for the benefit of the American public, were held from September to October 1975. They focused primarily on examples of domestic misconduct within the intelligence community to better hold the public’s interest and were televised to increase their impact.²⁷ Even though the Committee chose areas that were close to home for many Americans as the subjects of the televised hearings, current events minimized the attention they got. The decision to hold all the public hearings toward the end of the investigation instead of interspersed throughout meant that the Committee lost some of the momentum based on widespread public indignation after the Nixon administration’s Watergate scandal that inspired the formation of the Committee in the first place.

The Church Committee also issued one interim report specific to CIA actions in Chile, *Covert Action in Chile 1963-1973*, due to the various covert operations that had come to public attention in the years leading up to 1975. Another interim report, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, contained a subsection that focused on the assassination of General Rene Schneider, the Chilean general who refused to allow a coup, and who was replaced by Pinochet. The interim reports served as a highlight reel for the people following the work of the Committee. So many documents were being reviewed in the process of compiling the final report; releasing supplemental reports focused on specific areas of concern allowed the Committee to publish previews of the information that would make up the final report. This staggered release of

²⁷ “U.S. Senate: Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,” Senate.gov.

its findings helped abate the public's frustration with the Committee as its one-year deadline for a complete report approached and then extended to sixteen months.²⁸

The Church Committee's final report represented the culmination of over a year's worth of work. It encompassed the findings discovered through 126 full committee meetings, 40 hearings, roughly 800 witness interviews, and information from 110,000 documents that the Committee reviewed before releasing the full report.²⁹ The Committee was expected to deliver its full report within one year from its creation, so the delay in publishing its findings meant that the Church Committee, despite the significance of its specific findings, lost credibility in the eyes of many observers. There was speculation that the Committee tailored its report to the wishes of the Ford White House even though the report was released in full to the public as soon as possible. Despite this, the Committee burnished a legacy much more positive than the other two investigations that took place in the same year.

Opposition Through Finances to the Pinochet Regime

The Kennedy Amendment

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mas) was an incredibly outspoken critic of Pinochet's regime. His opposition to U.S. support of the regime was in line with his historic promotion of human rights causes, a position that he held constantly throughout his nine senate terms.³⁰ His primary legislative contribution to the opposition of Pinochet's regime dealt with the restriction of U.S. aid to Chile. In 1974 Kennedy worked to obtain a cap on economic aid to Chile via the Foreign

²⁸ "U.S. Senate: Senate Select Committee."

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Edward M. Kennedy," JFK Library, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/edward-m-kennedy>, "Edward Moore Kennedy: A Legacy of Public Service," U.S. National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/edward-moore-kennedy-a-legacy-of-public-service.htm>.

Assistance Act. Section 25 focused on Chile, stating that “the total amount of assistance to Chile under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and the Foreign Military Sales Act during Fiscal Year 1975, may not exceed \$25,000,000, none of which may be made available for the purpose of providing military assistance (including security supporting assistance, sales, credit sales, or guarantees, or the furnishing by any means of excess defense articles or items from stockpiles of the Department of Defense”.³¹

A memorandum from Henry Kissinger to President Ford on May 26, 1975, outlines the efforts that the administration went through to find a loophole in the wording and the intent of the amendment with respect to what counts as sales, as cash sales were not expressly forbidden. The Department of State and the Department of Defense are recorded as having different interpretations; the Department of State believed that cash sales were allowed because they were not specifically forbidden while the Department of Defense believed that the intent of the amendment prohibited all aid and sales of military material. Senator Kennedy’s statement that the amendment “prohibits all forms of military assistance including but not limited to those enumerated in the Amendment” reinforced the position of the Department of Defense.³² Despite this reading, Kissinger endorsed the State Department’s evaluation of the amendment. This disregard for the intent of legislation with regards to Chile frequently occurred in Kissinger’s policies in both the Nixon and Ford administrations.

The amendment that later became known as the “Kennedy Amendment” was passed in July of 1976 as a part of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of

³¹ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Ford,” Office of the Historian, May 26, 1975, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve11p2/d190>.

³² “Memorandum from the President’s Assistant,” Office of the Historian, May 16, 1975.

1976.³³ The Kennedy Amendment banned all military and security supporting assistance as well as all military education and training for Chile. It banned assistance, credits, or guarantees to Chile as well as all forms of sales and capped economic aid to Chile at \$27,500,000. The amendment included a provision that allowed aid to be increased if it could be certified that Chile did not “engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights,” allowed “unimpeded investigation, by internationally recognized commissions on human rights,” and “had taken steps to inform the families of prisoners of the condition of and charges against such prisoners.”³⁴ It was deliberately crafted to make it impossible for Chile to meet those requirements under Pinochet’s regime. President Ford signed the bill despite his administration’s standard policy of cooperation with Chile.³⁵

The Harkin Amendment

While the Kennedy Amendment placed limitations on the military aid that Chile received from the U.S., the Harkin Amendment restricted regimes with a history of human rights abuses from accessing loans from the Inter-American Development Bank.³⁶ The amendment was attached to the African Development Fund Act H.R.9721. The exact wording of the amendment authorized the U.S. Executive director of the Bank to “vote against any loan, any extension of financial assistance, or any technical assistance to any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights...unless such assistance will directly benefit

³³ Richard D Lyons, “Senate Votes Overhaul of Military Aid,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1976,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1976/02/19/archives/senate-votes-overhaul-of-military-aid-senate-votes-bill-for.html>.

³⁴ United States Senate, “International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976,” 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1976, S.Doc., <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-90/pdf/STATUTE-90-Pg729.pdf>.

³⁵ “H.R. 13680 (94th): International Security Assistance and Arms Exports Control Act,” GovTrack.us, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/94/hr13680>.

³⁶ Jim Cannon, “MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT Subject: Enrolled Bill H.R. 9721 – Increased US Participation in the InterAmerican Development Bank, and Initial U.S. Participation in the African Development Fund,” Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, May 27, 1976, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0055/1669337.pdf>.

the needy people in such country.” Gross violations of internationally recognized human rights included torture, cruel or inhumane punishment, and prolonged detention without charge. While the wording of the amendment seemed to leave a loophole for aid to go through if it could be claimed to be “directly benefit the needy” subsequent subsections required a formal submission in writing describing how the loan would benefit the people and an exact, itemized explanation of the assistance to be provided. Considering “the extent of cooperation of such country in permitting an unimpeded investigation of alleged violations of internationally recognized human rights by appropriate international organizations” was also a requirement of the amendment.³⁷

Communication between the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Argentina revealed that while Chile was one country that would see their aid restricted by the wording of the Harkin Amendment the amendment targeted other countries. The document states that well “The legislative history of the amendment indicates congressional intent that the exception clause be interpreted broadly” and that “The Department particularly recognized the chaotic and possibly transitory nature of the current Argentinian situation,” the fact that “elements of the GOA are involved with right-wing terrorist activities and that those in central authority have taken little apparent action to restrain them” meant that the Harkin Amendment could potentially be used in the future.³⁸ The memo also demonstrates that regardless of the intent of Harkin in sponsoring the amendment, Ford administration officials were inclined to continue giving as much assistance to Latin America as they could. This obstinance on the part of the Executive was likely why more sweeping human rights legislation was created in Congress under Ford than Carter, who seemed less likely to nitpick and compromise the boundaries that legislation presented.

³⁷ Unites States Senate, “African Development Fund Act,” 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, S. Doc, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/94th-congress/house-bill/9721/text?r=14&s=1>.

³⁸ “Telegram 227379 From the Department of State to the Embassy in Argentina,” Office of the Historian, September 15, 1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve11p2/d53>.

While an effective way of preventing aid from being distributed to several of the dictatorships in power in Latin America at the time, the irony of the Harkin Amendment lies in the fact that the CIA used the denial of international loans and lines of credit to destabilize Allende's presidency and allow Pinochet to take power in the first place. Congressional commitment to expanding protection for human rights in foreign policy under the Ford administration hints at a wider shift in political priorities in America at the time. President Ford's signing of both amendments into law indicates that, regardless of the practical priorities of his foreign policy, he did not want to present himself as a leader who would allow human rights violations in international allies. The same momentum that created both the Kennedy and the Harkin Amendments likely contributed to the creation of the Church Committee and encouraged Church's dedication to a thorough investigation.

The Letelier and Karpen Moffitt Assassinations

The results of the Church Committee investigation were not the only politically significant events to take place in the run up to the 1976 election. On September 21, 1976, just 11 days before Election Day, a car bomb exploded in front of the Romanian Embassy in Washington D.C. In the car was Orlando Letelier, formerly Salvador Allende's ambassador to the United States, Ronnie Karpen Moffitt, a research aide at the Transnational Institute of Policy Studies, and her husband Michael Moffitt. The bomb killed both Letelier and Mrs. Karpen Moffitt, while Michael was seriously injured but survived. Letelier relocated to the U.S. after he was released from prison following his capture during the Chilean military's attack on La Moneda Palace, the seat of Allende's government.³⁹

³⁹Phil Gailey. "Bomb in Washington kills aide to Allende," *Boston Globe*, September 22, 1976, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/747731626/4B854996453A4265PQ/16?accountid=14503>.

Letelier was an outspoken critic of Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile. During his time in the United States, he advocated for a harsher political stance against the government in Chile alongside his work as a professor at American University. Letelier had a political presence in the U.S. prior to his assassination because of his role as an ambassador of Allende's new government in the early 1970s. The *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *Austin Statesman* all printed an interview with Letelier in 1971, shortly after Allende won Chile's presidential election. The interview opens with a quote from Letelier: "In the beginning they thought of Cuba; then they compared us with Czechoslovakia; but Chile is Chile." This defense of Chile's socialist government as a distinct entity in the face of American fears about the spread of Communism was a common refrain throughout the three years of Allende's presidency but it was not enough to stop the CIA from working to overthrow Allende from the moment he took office.

U.S. politics generally did not distinguish between communism and socialism, viewing both as an equal threat to the stability of the Western hemisphere, and viewing any government based on socialist ideologies as a likely ally to the USSR regardless of any stated ideological differences. Letelier repeatedly stated that there was "no Anti Americanism in Chile" and that Allende's plan to nationalize industries in which American countries had a stake was a matter of "foreign ownership" of the resources, not a slight against America. He also highlighted Allende's past career as a Chilean Congressman to allay any fears that he would prevent government processes, such as elections, from going forward in the future. Despite these assurances, the *Austin Star* ran the article with the headline "Chile Sends U.S. a Socialist Banker".⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Marilyn Berger and Staff Writer *Washington Post*, "Chile's New Brand of Socialism: Interview with Letelier," *Washington Post, Times Herald (NY)*, February 26, 1971, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/147963578/pageviewPDF/4B854996453A4265PQ/1?accountid=14503>, Berger, "Chile Envoy Tries to Calm US Doubts," *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1971, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/366957945/4B854996453A4265PQ/3?accountid=14503>,

Letelier left his ambassadorial role for the position of foreign minister and later defense minister within the Allende government.⁴¹ Because of his role as a minister in Allende's cabinet the military junta put Letelier and other high ranking officials on trial after the coup against Allende. There was contradictory information about whether he would be tried in front of a civilian court with members of the press allowed to attend or a closed military trial.⁴² From the date of his surrender on September 11, 1973, until his release by the military junta on September 10, 1974, Letelier was held without charges in a prison camp on Dawson Island. Letelier immediately left Chile for Venezuela after his release and later moved to the United States to begin lecturing at American University.⁴³

Early in 1975 Letelier accused Henry Kissinger of lying to him when passed on assurances that "there was not a single [CIA] person involved, directly or indirectly" with a women's march that took place in Santiago at the end of 1971. Letelier also revealed that he suspected CIA involvement in several other incidences, including a break in at the Chilean embassy in the U.S. While Kissinger denied Letelier's allegations, testimony given by CIA director William E. Colby confirmed that the 40 Committee, the decision making body of the National Security Council, had authorized \$5 million dollars "for anti-Allende efforts" following the 1970 election⁴⁴ Letelier made these allegations were made during the Church Committee investigation into CIA activities, and Senator Frank Church stated that "he would not tolerate leaks of any information from committee staff members and promised that any wrongdoing the committee found would be made public" at

⁴¹ Gailey, "Bomb in Washington kills aide to Allende."

⁴² Dan Griffin, "Chile Sets Trial of Ex-Leaders," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1974, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/146194947/4B854996453A4265PQ/9?accountid=14503>

⁴³ Lewis H. Diuguid, "Letelier, Ex-Envoy Here, Freed by Chilean Junta," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1974, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/146140747/4B854996453A4265PQ/10?accountid=14503>, Gailey, "Bomb in Washington kills aide to Allende."

⁴⁴ Lewis H. Diuguid, "Envoy Links Kissinger, CIA," *Boston Globe*, February 3, 1975, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/747796196/4B854996453A4265PQ/12?accountid=14503>.

the conclusion of its investigations.⁴⁵ The combination of the intelligence investigations and Letelier's vocal condemnation of the CIA made him a target for Chilean intelligence services working to preserve Pinochet's dictatorship. Kissinger responded to Letelier's allegations by stating that "he did not remember such an incident" occurring and that "he found the story particularly painful" because he had advocated for Letelier's release from Dawson Island, a statement that ignores his role in forming the policies that lead to Allende's overthrow and Letelier's detainment⁴⁶

On September 16, 1976, it was revealed that Pinochet had revoked Letelier's nationality on the grounds of "interfering with normal financial support to Chile" through his position as the director of the Transnational Institute, a branch of the Institute for Policy Studies. The revocation appeared to violate Chile's constitution as well as the charters of both the UN and the Organization of American States (OSA) despite Pinochet's claims that he led a legitimate democratic government.⁴⁷ Less than a week later DINA contractors assassinated Letelier. There was extensive news coverage of the bombing, with frequent mentions that "United States authorities had informed Mr. Letelier last May that some DINA agents were thought to be circulating in this country" and that Letelier reportedly feared for his life.⁴⁸ The Chilean government denied any involvement, and U.S. officials did not publicly pressure the regime to comply with any investigations into the origin of the bomb.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "Chilean: Kissinger Masked CIA Role," *Newsday*, February 3, 1975, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/922628748/4B854996453A4265PQ/13?accountid=14503>.

⁴⁶ "Kissinger Critical of Letelier Story," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1975, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/146273176/4B854996453A4265PQ/14?accountid=14503>.

⁴⁷ Lewis H. Diuguid, "Chile Decree Lifts Citizenship of Ex-Ambassador Letelier," *Washington Post*, September 16, 1976, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/146486918/4B854996453A4265PQ/15?accountid=14503>.

⁴⁸ David Binder, "Opponent of Chilean Junta Slain in Washington by Bomb in His Auto: CHILEAN JUNTA FOE SLAIN IN WASHINGTON," *New York Times*, September 22, 1976, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/123032703/4B854996453A4265PQ/17?accountid=14503>.

⁴⁹ "Terror in Washington," *New York Times*, September 22, 1976, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/123040332/4B854996453A4265PQ/18?accountid=14503>.

Declassified documents held at the National Security Archive reveal that the CIA did have advanced knowledge of Chilean plans to carry out international assassinations targeting prominent exiles and other perceived enemies of the regime. General Carlos Pratts, commander of the Chilean Army under Allende, and Bernardo Leighton, a high-ranking member of the Chilean Christian Democratic Party in Exile, had already been attacked at the time of the Letelier assassination. The attackers killed Pratts and severely wounded Mr. Leighton and his wife.⁵⁰ A *démarche*, a formal diplomatic document, drafted on August 23, 1976, by the office of Henry Kissinger reveals that U.S. government officials were “aware of a series of reports on ‘Operation Condor’” operating within the Southern Cone of Latin America. The document states that although “the coordination of security and intelligence information is probably understandable...Government planned and directed assassinations within and outside the territory of condor members has most serious implications,” particularly in the realm of human rights. This was an about face from Kissinger’s general policy under the Nixon and Ford administrations, implying that Kissinger and Ford were aware of the politically volatile combination of the Church Committee revelations and any efforts to silence international critics on the part of the Latin American military dictatorships.

The *démarche* directed ambassadors to “engage with the highest level of government” in Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile and make it clear that there was “deep concern” about the rumors of planned assassinations. It also included a statement that read “You should of course be certain that no agency of the U.S. government is involved in any way with exchanging information or data on individual subversives in the host government...It is essential that we in no way finger individuals who might be candidates for assassination attempts.”⁵¹ The *démarche* did

⁵⁰ Binder, “Opponent of Chilean Junta Slain in His Auto,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1976, <https://www.proquest.com/news/docview/123032703/2E3454EE8C954E1BPQ/18?accountid=14503>.

⁵¹ “Department of State, ‘Operation Condor’, Secret Cable,” National Security Archive, August 23, 1976, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16242-05-department-state-operation-condor-secret>.

not state that the U.S government was not involved with Condor countries in other ways, only that it could not provide targets to them. This left plenty of leeway for the CIA to continue its relationship with Condor members as normal. The office sent out the *démarche* in the last week of August, but Kissinger rescinded it five days before Letelier and Karpén Moffitt were assassinated in Washington D.C. There is no record of why Kissinger rescinded the document, but the short time between the withdrawal of the *démarche* and the assassination of Letelier and Karpén Moffitt reflected poorly on the Ford administration's foreign policy style.

A report sent to Henry Kissinger on November 5, 1976, describes an emerging connection between a group of anti-Castro Cuban exiles involved in the bombing of Cubana Airlines flight 455, DINA, and the assassins responsible for Letelier's death.⁵² The investigation into Letelier and Karpén Moffitt's deaths would continue into 1978, when communications between the Ambassador to Paraguay and the Secretary of State recommend that the U.S. reevaluate its relationship with the Condor countries. Condor communications ran through "an encrypted system within U.S. communications [network]," something that would reflect poorly on the administration if it came to light during the investigation.⁵³ The trials for the men who assassinated Orlando Letelier and Ronnie Karpén Moffitt took place in January of 1979 under the Carter administration; the group included Michael Townley, an American expatriate who worked as a DINA contractor.

The first time a senate document acknowledged that Chilean intelligence officers "have visited the United States using false identification, and their activities were not known," that DINA as the arm of an Operation Condor country "has, in the past, plotted assassinations in foreign

⁵² "FBI, Letter to Kissinger, [Regarding Ricardo Morales Navarrete]," National Security Archive, November 5, 1976, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/22213-document-05-fbi-letter-kissinger-regarding>.

⁵³ "State Department Cable, U.S. Ambassador Robert White (Paraguay) to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, *Subject: Second Meeting with Chief of Staff re Letelier Case*, Confidential," National Security Archive, October 13, 1978, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/21763-document-11>.

countries and maintained files on anti-regime activists,” and that DINA “maintains a close liaison with the German Nazi colony of La Dignidad in Southern Chile” was after the trials for the assassinations began.⁵⁴ October of 1979 was the first time that any declassified document, a dissent channel document, made the claim that it was probable that Pinochet personally ordered the assassination and recommended measures to address the defiance of the Pinochet regime and its refusal to address internal human rights violations.⁵⁵ President Carter made the decision to ignore the recommendations made in the dissent channel document and instead reduce embassy staff, scale back military connections, and issue a formal statement of disapproval.⁵⁶ While Carter took stronger action against Pinochet than Ford had, he did not take any steps to encourage Pinochet to alter his style of government in order to comply with international standards of human rights. Despite the fact that the bombing took place in Washington D.C. very close to Election Day, neither Ford nor Carter issued a formal statement addressing it.

The 1976 Election

Inflation was rising and its long-term impact on the unemployment rate and the overall health of the economy unknown. The energy crisis was also a major focus of the election, a point highlighted in the campaigns of both Ford and Carter. The persistent fear of the spread of Communism in the Western Hemisphere beyond the shores of Cuba and the aftermath of the Vietnam War were significant foreign policy concerns, alongside the continuing presence of military dictatorships in Latin America. There was also much speculation about Jimmy Carter, a

⁵⁴ “Senate Subcommittee on International Operations, Report, ‘Activities of Certain Foreign Intelligence Agencies in the United States’,” National Security Archive, January 18, 1979, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/22394-5-senate-subcommittee-international>.

⁵⁵ “The Letelier/Moffitt Assassinations: Policy Toward Chile,” National Security Archive, October 1, 1979, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/19608-national-security-archive-doc-1-letelier>.

⁵⁶ “The Letelier/Moffitt Assassinations,” National Security Archive, October 1, 1979, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/19611-national-security-archive-doc-4-letelier-moffitt>.

candidate who was almost entirely unknown at the national level despite serving as both a state senator and governor of Georgia. The absence of news headlines discussing intelligence reform legislation during the election cycle implies that the legislation put through Congress by Jimmy Carter after he won the election, as well as his general stance against the style of secret diplomacy conducted by Henry Kissinger, created the understanding that the Committee was a success. That view is not correct; the Committee was a standalone success because it reinforced the need for government transparency that Vietnam inspired in the American public.

Ford v. Carter Presidential Debates

The presidential debates between the incumbent president, Gerald Ford, and Democratic challenger, Jimmy Carter, took place from September to October 1976, with a total of three televised events. Every debate had a focus. The first centered on the introduction of the candidates and their domestic agendas, the second on defense and international relations, and the third on economic and foreign policy. At this point, the findings of the Church Committee were public knowledge; all six books of the report as well as seven volumes of material from the Senate hearings, had been published in April. While issues related to the revelations of the Church Committee were not central to the three debates, each debate discussed an important aspect of foreign policy connected to the overall legacy of the Committee.

The first debate (September 23) on economic concerns such as inflation, unemployment rates, and energy infrastructure presented insights into the relationship between Congress and the Executive Branch and the recent revelations of CIA activities. Throughout the Church Committee investigation, the relationship between the Ford administration and the Senate came under scrutiny as the two entities disagreed over the degree of secrecy needed to preserve national security while maintaining the integrity of the investigation. President Ford discussed the influence that the

Democratic majority in Congress had on the legislation passed during his time in office. “I must remind [Carter] the Democrats have controlled the Congress for the last twenty-two years,” he noted, as statement which gave an opening to discuss Ford’s general attitude towards Congress. Even though Ford had only been in office for two and a half years – and was a former congressman to boot - he had a somewhat confrontational relationship with his Congress. Ford’s association with Nixon and Watergate contributed to that relationship, but he seemed to believe that Congress was generally unwilling to work with him on his legislative agendas.

A debate panelist asked Ford if he thought that two recent allegations of misconduct by members of Congress had contributed to “the feeling in the country that maybe there’s something wrong in Washington, and I don’t mean just in the executive branch but the throughout the whole government,” as the American public had been voicing discontent with how Washington had been handling domestic issues. The President responded that “the anti-Washington feeling...ought to be focused on the Congress of the United States.” Ford contextualized the “anti-Washington feeling” in the lead-up to his answer; he related it to domestic problems tied to Congressional legislation, such as inflation and the energy crisis that were significant voter concerns in this election. Yet, he avoided answering the question about allegations of misconduct in Congress. Instead, Ford reiterated that the “focus [of the anti-Washington sentiment] should be where the problem is which is the Congress of the United States and particularly the majority in the Congress,” staying silent on any actions of his administration that may have contributed to public dissatisfaction with the government. After the revelation of unsavory and ethically questionable decisions made by high-ranking members of the U.S government over the past few years, Ford’s unwillingness to answer this question likely raised questions about his own commitment to transparency and cooperation between different branches of the government.

The confrontational tone of these statements was in line with Ford's actions towards Congress in 1975. He initially resisted requests from the Church Committee to turn over or declassify documents relevant to the investigation. This resistance on the part of the Executive branch motivated Frank Church to make the committee as possible without compromising national security processes. When pressed on whether he would be able to work with a Democratic Congress if he were reelected, Ford deflected with a comment on the Republican chances of gaining a majority in the House of Representatives and his role as acting as a "check" on the spending of the Democratic Congress, attempting to avoid a discussion about the accountability of his administration for the situations that it had inherited when Nixon resigned. Governor Carter, on the other hand, made the argument that it was not Congress at fault for the decline of faith in the U.S political entity but President Ford for being unwilling to present a united front within the government. He followed with a general observation that "there's been a constant squabbling between the President and the Congress and that's not the way this country ought to be run," appealing to voters who wanted the return of a government capable of working together to solve the problems put in front of it and distancing himself from the attitudes displayed by Ford at the same time.

Near the end of the debate both candidates were directly questioned about whether intelligence agencies should be subject to more laws than those that tied them to the oversight of the Executive Branch. Ford claimed to be "the first President in thirty years who has reorganized the intelligence agencies in the federal government. The CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency and the others. We've done that by Executive Order, and I think we've tightened it up, we've straightened out their problems that developed over the last few years." But research shows that Ford signed only one Executive Order that addresses the autonomy

of U.S intelligence agencies: Executive Order 11905, which lacked detail and did not address all the issues emphasized in the Church Committee report. Ford continues, saying “I have recommended to the Congress, however, I’m sure you’re familiar with this, legislation that would make it very proper...but even in this area where I think new legislation would be justified the Congress has not responded,” Ford continued, once again blaming Congress for the lack of concrete legislation, and refusing to expand on his role in the legislative stalemate. Governor Carter responded by alluding to a breakdown of trust of some sort. Due to audio recording difficulties, Carter’s original statement on the need for intelligence oversight remains unknown. Yet in a closing statement, he spoke first about the need for unity between the President and Congress as well as the inclusion of the American people in crafting a competent, well managed government.⁵⁷

The second debate (October 6) addressed international relations in the context of the Cold War, with a major focus on America’s influence in the Middle East and Africa and the state of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China. Chile was mentioned several times. Carter took a strong stance against secrecy in foreign policy, arguing against “agreements like in Vietnam that have been revealed later on to embarrassment,” such as a suspect one with the President of Rhodesia, because “the American people don’t know what those commitments are” and therefore could not hold the government accountable to promises that have been made or raise objections to policies that contradict the values that they believe ought to be upheld. Carter also cites the destruction of “elected governments like in Chile and the strong support of the military dictatorship there” as another reason to abandon secret diplomacy. Ford confronted the morality of decisions like U.S support for Pinochet in Chile when asked if he would put pressure on Chile with regards

⁵⁷ Ford v Carter I. “Presidential Candidates Debate | C-SPAN.Org.” C-SPAN.org, September 23, 1976. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?33353-1/1976-presidential-candidates-debate>.

to the conditions of its prisons and treatment of prisoners after he made the decision to intervene with the government in Rhodesia. “I believe that our foreign policy must express the highest standards of morality and the initiatives that we took in southern Africa are the best examples of what this administration is doing and will continue to do in the next four years.” Thus, he avoided entirely the question of Chile. Carter’s response pointed out Ford’s evasion and then took the President to task. “But this administration overthrew an elected government and helped to establish a military dictatorship. This is not an ancient history story. Last year under Ford of all the food for peace that went to South America eighty-five percent went to the military dictatorship in Chile.” He continued that Kissinger-Ford shuttle diplomacy, defined as diplomatic negotiations conducted by a mediator who traveled between two or more parties that were reluctant to hold direct discussions, led to secret agreements and meant that “We don’t have a comprehensive, understandable foreign policy that deals with world problems or even regional problems,” returning to his position against secret agreements.⁵⁸

Carter’s willingness to discuss Chile and include it among events such as Watergate that eroded the American public’s trust in the government differed noticeably from Ford’s approach. Ford had already faced questioning for his handling of both Watergate and the Church Committee investigation as well as the way his administration continued the Nixon administration’s policies under Kissinger. He was, therefore, unwilling to elaborate more. Regardless of the reason for his evasion, Ford’s actions make Carter seem much more open to changing the way that the United States treated foreign policy than he may have otherwise. When looked at together with the rest of Carter’s campaign platform, specifically efforts to strengthen the economy at home and establish the infrastructure to avoid another energy crisis, he came across as a candidate much less likely to

⁵⁸ “Shuttle Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1975,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/shuttle-diplomacy>.

involve the United States in the sort of scandals and nefarious foreign politics associated with the previous administration.⁵⁹

The final debate between took place on October 22 and focused almost exclusively on domestic issues related to the economy, housing, and crime. The first question, directed to Carter, was about the impact of the campaign on a seemingly disengaged public. Similar to the question in the first debate about anti-Washington sentiment, the panelist intended this question to encourage both candidates to share their perspective on what lay at the heart of the concerns of the American public. “I think the major reason for a decrease in participation that we’ve experienced ever since 1960 has been the deep discouragement of the American people about the performance of public officials...Also in the aftermath of Vietnam and Cambodia, Watergate and the CIA revelations people feel, have felt that they’ve been betrayed by public officials,” said Carter. Once again, he listed the revelations of the Church Committee among the events of the decade that had a major impact and refused to shy away from the deleterious influence that they had on public opinion. Ford’s response focused, again, on a diatribe toward Congress, claiming that “we have seen on Capitol Hill, in the Congress, a great many allegations of wrongdoing, of alleged immorality, those are very disturbing to the American people.” According to the President, public dissatisfaction with American politics derived from Congress; he would not accept any measure of responsibility on the part of his administration. Nothing more related to national security or foreign policy was discussed in the debate, but the difference between Carter and Ford with respect to foreign policy remained clear. Carter presented himself as open to honest discussion and in favor

⁵⁹ Ford v Carter II. “Presidential Candidates Debate, Jimmy Carter and President Ford | C-SPAN.Org,” October 6, 1976. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?33210-1/1976-presidential-candidates-debate>.

of more government accountability. Ford appeared obstinate and unwilling to divert from the several high-profile controversies that had arisen from Nixon's policies.⁶⁰

In short, Carter seemed much more willing to push for executive accountability than Ford did, and the President's refusal to address valid concerns about his relationship with Congress and policies implemented by his administration were constant throughout all three debates. Although the American public seemed interested in moving on from the scandals of the past, Carter recognized that that did not necessarily mean that the public could pretend that those scandals never occurred. The context of the Cold War meant that the image that the United States presented to the world was more important than ever; any perceived weakness on might be an opening for the Soviet Union and China to expand their influence in global politics. Watergate, the end of the Vietnam War, and the revelations of the Church Committee combined to encourage skepticism that politicians knew what they were doing and were acting in the best interests of the nation.

A Latin American Perspective

The National Library of Chile hosts several digital archives that give some insight into the Chilean reactions to the events of 1975 and 1976. On May 5, 1975, Decree 1009 was passed in Chile, prohibiting the carrying and dissemination of political propaganda.⁶¹ Underground pro-democracy and leftist organizations created most of the pamphlets after being denied access to traditional publications because of the dictatorship's censorship policy. While the library's archive of pamphlets distributed during Pinochet's dictatorship dates the documents generally as originating between the years 1973 and 1988, there are references to events that affected American

⁶⁰ Ford v Carter III. "Presidential Candidates Debate | C-SPAN.Org," October 22, 1976. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?33391-1/presidential-candidates-debate>.

⁶¹ "Panfletos del período de la dictadura militar (1973-1988) - Cronología," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-3641.html#cronologia>.

policy during Carter's administration. One pamphlet, written post 1985, consisted of a list of incidents that the Minister of the Interior of Pinochet's government refused to address. Human rights violations such as kidnappings, torture, and assassinations that the Kennedy and Harkin Amendments identified as criteria for the denial of aid are prominently listed. The Condor victims Orlando Letelier, Carlos Prats, and Bernardo Leighton are named specifically.⁶² Even though the regime denied any connection to illegal activities and human rights violations elements of the Chilean public clearly understood the extent of its involvement. They also understood who else was involved.

A two pamphlet caricature series depicted U.S. money being passed around the world and ending up in the hands of some of the era's most recognizable dictators. The money flows directly from Washington, but also from U.S. allies including France and Italy. It ended up in places like Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela, funding dictatorships, communists, and general political instability that directly contradicted America's stated foreign policy goals.⁶³ A second caricature showed Uncle Sam in full stars and stripes standing next to the well-known Chilean caricature character Juan Verdejo. Verdejo is explaining to Uncle Sam that Chile and America are friends, but that Chile will not be a vassal. Uncle Sam is pouting.⁶⁴ Each of these caricatures clearly demonstrated the Chilean opinion that the U.S. saw Chile as a tool and not a full ally. Nixon, Ford, and Carter's decisions to maintain "normal" diplomatic relationships with Chile despite the conditions that the

⁶² "El Ministerio del Interior debe responder," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-77794.html>.

⁶³ "Los Agarra Aguirre de la política, 1983 – 1988," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-77835.html>, "Los Agarra Aguirre de la política, 1983 – 1988," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-77836.html>.

⁶⁴ "Oiga compadre: ¡amigos sí!, pero vasallos ¡no!, 1983 – 1988," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-77832.html>, Stephen Buttes, "Cold War Caricatures: 'Topaze', Hunger and the Politics of Poverty in 1960s Chile," *Chasqui*, vol. 46., no1., 244-260. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26492158>.

Chilean people experienced under Pinochet's dictatorship seems to confirm the accuracy of Chile's interpretation of America's politics in the region.

The archive of opposition journalism held several opposition magazines, published underground like the pamphlets, that opposed the policies of the dictatorship. The publication *Solidaridad* ran from 1976 to 1977 and focused heavily on the violations of human rights in Chile. Most of the articles addressed the regime's policies through a religious lens because the human rights organization The Vicariate of Solidarity, which ran the publication, was in turn funded and organized by the local Catholic Church through the Archdiocese of Santiago.⁶⁵ While the Church still experienced censorship by Pinochet's government, it successfully in maintained an outreach role within the country until the transition back to a civilian government by focusing on conditions within local jurisdictions and not a unified national opposition to Pinochet. Another publication that opposed Pinochet was APSI, the Press Agency for International Services. APSI initially attempted to limit censorship of its articles by focusing on international news in its first years of publication. It eventually shifted to covering domestic news and advocating for freedom of expression and a transition to a democratic model of government.⁶⁶ APSI's 1975 publications did mention the preparations for the 1976 presidential election in the United States, specifically how it was a referendum on the leadership of the country. At one point after Carter's election the publication comments that Carter's State Department does not seem likely to use different strategies than the department under Kissinger's leadership.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Solidaridad*, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile,, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0037004.pdf>.

⁶⁶ "APSI – Memoria Chilena," Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-96757.html>.

⁶⁷ *Actualidad Internacional*, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0041463.pdf>.

Despite the volume of digital publications available through the library not many newspaper sources were available for the years 1975 and 1976, or for the duration of Allende's presidency outside of party affiliated publications. Some of this difficulty was caused by the fact that unlike in the United States, where the Library of Congress holds copies of national newspapers, the National Library of Chile does not have access to archival material associated with active publications. *El Mercurio*, known for its role as a CIA affiliate in the lead up to Pinochet's military coup against Allende and the oldest newspaper still active in Chile, holds all its own historical issues behind a subscriber paywall. Meanwhile, the Library of the National Congress of Chile primarily holds material related to the activities of the Congress. There are no parliamentary documents available for the duration of Pinochet's dictatorship.⁶⁸

The Carter Administration

Jimmy Carter held office for one term, but he is generally seen as having been successful in foreign policy with the significant exception of the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979. His failures came with the domestic economy - the problem of inflation and the second energy crisis plagued his administration. Carter negotiated Cold War politics abroad throughout his term, even reigniting tensions with the Soviets by 1980. He maintained his position on the control of the intelligence services during his term. Executive Order 12036 was issued on January 24, 1978, as a follow up to Ford's Executive Order 11905. Executive orders, which allow for quicker action on an issue than legislation, but which can easily be undone by following administrations, were important if Carter wanted to make a lasting impact in that area. The Senate passed Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) later that same year. Many members of Congress, several of them

⁶⁸ "Labor Parlamentaria," Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, <https://www.bcn.cl/laborparlamentaria/wsgi/consulta/resultados.py?texto=1975#arriba>.

on the original Church Committee, supported FISA, which they touted as the successful culmination of the Committee's investigation.

Despite the challenges Carter faced in the latter half of his term, he was very popular when he entered office. He was the embodiment of a post-Watergate president, a Washington outsider that offered the country the chance to rebuild its faith in the government.⁶⁹ Human rights played a central part in this effort. Human rights as a political concept coalesced in the late 1960s and early 1970s and made its way into mainstream global politics alongside the signing of the Helsinki Declaration in 1975. By tying human rights into his campaign platform alongside a return to a moral America, Carter ensured that human rights would remain a political talking point not only throughout his presidency, but after he left office. Additionally, advocating for the protection of human rights internationally gave Carter an entry point into foreign policy that he may not have had otherwise, given his limited experience in the area prior to his election. Because Carter chose to associate America's moral authority on the international stage with its position on human rights, human rights quickly became entwined with the concept of democracy during his administration.⁷⁰

At a glance there does not seem to be a problem with associating human rights with democratic values. However, centralizing it in his foreign policy left Carter, and the wider American public, open to accusations of hypocrisy by opposition governments. Opposition governments such as the Soviet Union pointed out the United States' volatile history with respect to racial equality. At the same time, American human rights advocates saw the continuing relationship between the Carter's government and countries like the Soviet Union, Chile, and Argentina, which had extremely poor human rights records, as a sign that Carter was only

⁶⁹ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁷⁰ Mary E. Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda*, (Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

committed to advancing human rights insofar as it served his wider political agenda.⁷¹ Despite the contradictions inherent in the concept of human rights as a policy that had to be applied within the context of the Cold War and preexisting global structures, Carter successfully introduced human rights into the American political discourse during his presidency by presenting it as a necessary aspect of the return to a moral America.

Jimmy Carter and Chile

Jimmy Carter won the 1976 election on a platform that prioritized transparent and honest foreign policy. After his election he consistently championed human rights in his public addresses. Even though he took this public position, he maintained the United States' diplomatic relationships with Chile and other countries in Latin America that, over the course of his presidency, became known for questionable human rights practices. Carter also maintained cordial personal relationships with the heads of those governments. In September of 1977 he met with Augusto Pinochet.⁷² A very brief interview he gave after the meeting illustrated his attitude toward engaging with dictatorships and other governments with problematic records.

Carter and Pinochet discussed “the problem that exists with the question of human rights in Chile, and he [Pinochet] described to me [Carter] some of the steps they are taking to improve the rights of the people there as they have recovered from the recent coup,” even though Pinochet censored the Chilean media and prohibited political opposition parties within the country. They

⁷¹ Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemma of Human Rights Policy*, (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986).

⁷² “The Daily Diary of Jimmy Carter,” Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/diary/1977/d090677t.pdf>, White House Staff Photographers, *President Alfredo Lopez of Columbia; Gen. Augusto Pinochet of Chile*, Jimmy Carter's Presidential Photographs, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Catalog), 1/20/1977-1/20/1981, White House Staff Photographers, *General Augusto Pinochet of Chile*, Jimmy Carter's Presidential Photographs, (Washington D.C.: National Archives Catalog), 1/20/1977-1/20/1981, White House Staff Photographers, *Gen. Augusto Pinochet of Chile*, Jimmy Carter's Presidential Photographs, (Washington D.C.: National Archives Catalog), 1/20/1977-1/20/1981.

also discussed the “possibility of some observers who might go to Chile to observe what has been done there,” whom Carter later clarified would be sent by the UN and not the U.S. While Pinochet admitted delays in “the release of prisoners and...the expedition of the judicial system,” he claimed that Chile’s intelligence agency had been eliminated; this was not true. DINA and many of its responsibilities had been incorporated into the CNI. Pinochet also “recognized” that Chile had a problem with human rights and had “plans for an increase in human freedoms in the future.” Carter described his meetings with dictators as opportunities to “describ[e] to them the problems as I see them, to ask for their explanation in a very frank and forthcoming way and to request their plans for the alleviation of the problem or the explanation of the charges that have been made against their governments.”⁷³ Whether he took them at their word with regards to the status of civil liberties in their home countries with regards to foreign policy is difficult to analyze, as many of the documents related to this subject have not been released by Carter’s Presidential Library and Museum.

Carter’s Foreign Policy

After his inauguration President Carter made several speeches that articulated his foreign policy, specifically with regards to human rights and America’s place in the shifting balance of global power. The speech that most directly addressed his foreign policy goals was given on March 17, 1977, at the UN General Assembly roughly two months after his inauguration. During his speech the newly inaugurated President Carter outlined his general foreign policy goals before the assembled world leaders. His opening statement reiterated the position that he took in his debates

⁷³ “Meeting President Augusto Pinochet Ugarte of Chile – Remarks to Reporters Following the Meeting,” The American Presidency Project, September 6, 1977, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/meeting-with-president-augusto-pinochet-ugarte-chile-remarks-reporters-following-the>.

against Ford; a “firm commitment to a more open foreign policy” and his belief that “the American people expect[ed him] to speak frankly about the policies that we intend[ed] to pursue.” Considering that Carter had yet to face any diplomatically challenging situations at the time of this speech, his goals for the U.S “first to maintain peace and reduce the arms race; second, to build a better and more cooperative international economic system; and third, to work with potential adversaries as well as our close friends to advance the cause of human rights” under his administration seemed entirely reasonable. They were also slightly ironic to those who had followed recent U.S foreign policy, considering how America consistently leveraged aid to encourage international compliance with its preferred course of action and how recent administrations played a role in supporting regimes that perpetuated human rights abuses. Carter went so far as to recognize that “the United States cannot solve the problems of the world. We can sometimes help others resolve their differences, but we cannot do so by imposing our own particular solutions” continuing the juxtaposition between past actions and his administration’s position.

Carter focused specifically on Latin America and outlined a policy that placed relations with the region “on a more constructive footing, recognizing the global character of the region’s problems.” This could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of how many countries had interests in the region at the time of the address or as an acknowledgement of how the actions of many other countries, including the U.S., contributed to instability in the area. It is likely the second one, considering Carter’s follow up remark was that “we [the United States] are ready to normalize our relationships and to seek reconciliation with all states which are ready to work with us in promoting global progress and peace.” He calls on all the signatories of the UN to remember that “no member of the United Nations can claim that mistreatment of its citizens is solely its own business. Equally,

no member can avoid its responsibilities to review and to speak when torture or unwarranted deprivation occurs in any part of the world” even though the United States maintained relations with countries that had repeatedly violated the rights of their own citizens, such as Chile and Argentina.

Carter emphasized the role that he hoped the U.S. would play in the advancement of human rights throughout the latter part of his address, as he perceived the U.S. as having “a historical birthright to be associated with this process.” He found that birthright in the country’s long struggle with racism and internal inequality, as “our own ideals in the area of human rights have not always been attained in the United States, but the American people have an abiding commitment to the full realization of these ideals.” He claimed that “we [the United States] are determined, therefore, to deal with our deficiencies quickly and openly. We have nothing to conceal,” despite the fact that a year earlier Congress had undertaken the most widespread investigation into government misconduct abroad and unearthed many secret policies and actions that appalled citizens with their invasiveness.

His closing remarks called for all nations to “be prepared to offer its fullest cooperation to the Human Rights Commission, to welcome its investigations, to work with its officials, and to act on its reports” because “when gross or widespread violation takes place-contrary to international commitments-it is of concern to all.” Carter again failed to explicitly acknowledge that the U.S. continued to support governments known for violating their citizens’ rights in a continuation of Nixon and Ford diplomatic policies, undermining his claim that “these mutual concerns will be reflected in our political, our cultural, and our economic attitudes” when interacting with other countries. While Carter may have felt comfortable making such sweeping claims at the beginning of his presidential term, as the sentiments he expressed were continuations of his campaign

platform, his policies were untested in actual practice.⁷⁴ Later in his presidency his firm commitment to human rights as a tenant of his foreign policy was compromised by the realities of the Cold War. Carter could not risk destabilizing America's relationship with the USSR or its allies over the human rights violations committed by its government because establishing a treaty that halted the nuclear arms race was a foreign policy priority that Carter's administration had inherited from his predecessors, Nixon and Ford. If he took a hard stance on human rights violations in Latin America, he risked alienating the Soviet Union and ending negotiations before they began. He also ran the risk of coming across as a hypocrite if he targeted Latin America over human rights violations but made an exception for the Soviet Union and its allies who were committing the same violations in their own countries.

A few months after Carter addressed the United Nations General Assembly, he gave the commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame, a religious university known for its work advocating for the protection of human rights around the world. As such, human rights were a theme woven throughout his remarks as a tribute to the work done at the Notre Dame Center for Civil Rights. One month before his speech the university had hosted a conference on human rights and American foreign policy. While Chile was not specifically mentioned with regards to human rights, Rhodesia, Brazil, and South Korea were highlighted because of the work that several religious leaders present at the ceremony had done in those countries. Carter focused on connecting America's foreign policy with its national character, outlining his vision for "a foreign policy that is democratic, that is based on fundamental values, and that uses power and influence, which we have, for humane purposes. We can also have a foreign policy that the American people both support and, for a change, know about and understand." This illustrates Carter's apparent

⁷⁴ "Address by President Jimmy Carter to the UN General Assembly," U.S. Department of State, March 17, 1977, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207272.htm>.

commitment to a move away from the shuttle diplomacy that he spoke out against during his debates against Gerald Ford.

As he did in his address to the UN, Carter maintains the position that because “we [Americans] know that democracy works, we can reject the arguments of those rulers who deny human right to their people” at the same time as “we [Americans] seek to bring that example [of democracy] closer to those from whom in the past few years we have been separated and who are not yet convinced about the advantages of our kind of life.” Again, this statement contradicts the fact that Carter more or less maintained the policies of previous administrations that had outright interfered in the governments of other countries to force them to align with what U.S. policy in the region dictated. Our actions in Chile specifically contradict Carter’s statement that “we are confident that the democratic methods are the most effective, and so we are not tempted to employ improper tactics here at home or abroad.” While Carter campaigned on a platform with a focus on rebuilding American people’s confidence in the government, at the time of this speech he had not reached a point where he could honestly say that “we [Americans] are confident in the good sense of American people, and so we let them share in the process of making foreign policy decisions. We can thus speak with the voices of 215 million, and not just of an isolated handful.”

Even though the Church Committee investigation found that the U.S. had been significantly involved in destabilizing various leftist governments in Latin America specifically Carter still made the claim that Americans were “free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.” Given that slowing the arms race with the Soviet Union and limiting nuclear proliferation in the region remained one of Carter’s primary foreign policy goals as President, and that aid continued to be delivered to military dictatorships around the world, Carter was overstating the degree of change in America’s foreign

policy. On the other hand, he did acknowledge that historically the U.S. had “been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We’ve fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water...But through failure we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained our lost confidence” as a country. It is interesting to note that while Carter willingly highlighted America’s relationship with Chile as an example of poor policy prior to his election, after his election he generally highlighted Vietnam.

He returned his focus to the prior administration’s view of the Soviet Union, making the claim that U.S. policy “was guided by two principles: a belief that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable but that it must be contained, and the corresponding belief in the importance of an almost exclusive alliance among non-Communist nations on both sides of the Atlantic.” While that claim was generally true, Carter’s policy did not substantially shift away from that kind of alliance. He returns to the theme of human rights and how “traditional issues of war and peace” cannot be separated from “the new questions of justice, equity, and human rights” in American policy. He expected that America’s policy going forward would be “a new American foreign policy—a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision,” a policy that would “shape an international system that will last longer than secret deals” and shuttle diplomacy.

In the pursuit of that “new American foreign policy” Carter called for openness and laid out “America’s commitment to human rights as a fundamental tenant of our foreign policy” going forward. He characterized that commitment as a way to return to the moral values of America’s past and avoid lagging behind other countries in the modern world. In his closing statements Carter reemphasized his belief that “it is incumbent on us in this country to keep that discussion, that debate, that contention [about human rights] alive. No other country is as well-qualified as we to

set an example. We have our own shortcomings and faults, and we should strive constantly and with courage to make sure that we are legitimately proud of what we have,” moving forward. Although he called for cooperation with “the newly influential countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia” because the U.S. needed “their friendship and cooperation in a common effort as the structure of world power changes,” he did not connect their status as emerging economies to foreign policy decisions made by previous administrations.⁷⁵

In contrast to the commencement speech he gave at Notre Dame, the commencement speech that Carter gave to graduates of the naval academy at Annapolis in June of 1978 focused on practical, militaristic foreign policy issues and less on concepts like human rights. Unlike the other speeches analyzed here, this speech focused much more heavily on Carter’s foreign policy goals with regards to the Soviet Union. Midway through his address he used the Soviet Union as a case study to illustrate the importance of human rights. He prefaces this by stating that “We [the United States] desire to dominate no one. We will continue to widen our cooperation with the positive new forces in the world” which could potentially include the Soviet Union, nations in Eastern Europe, and the People’s Republic of China because “We are particularly dedicated to genuine self-determination and majority rule in those areas of the world where these goals have not yet been attained.” The measure of “genuine self-determination” seems somewhat arbitrary, as all the nations listed above claimed to be governments of the people even though their political ideologies generally opposed the United States.

Carter characterizes the Soviet Union as a nation whose “abuse of basic human rights in their own country, in violation of the agreement which was reached at Helsinki, has earned them the condemnation of people everywhere who love freedom,” and whose policies have created the

⁷⁵ “University of Notre Dame Commencement,” Miller Center, May 22, 1977, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/may-22-1977-university-notre-dame-commencement>.

problems facing their nation, including rising tensions with the United States with regards to nuclear proliferation. The “totalitarian and repressive form of government” that created the “closed society” of the Soviet Union was very similar to the conditions found under dictatorships around the world, making Carter’s critique of the Soviet policy a universal critique of governments of that type. Carter recognizes that “even Marxist-Leninist groups no longer look on the Soviet Union as a model to be imitated,” a departure from the Ford administration’s policy that every left leaning government presented a potential ally to the Soviet Union. One exception to this was Cuba, a nation “closely aligned with the Soviet Union and dependent upon the Soviets for economic sustenance and for military aid and political guidance and direction.” Even then, Cuba did not have the same kind of problem with human rights that the Soviet Union did.

In his closing remarks Carter contrasted the Soviet Union in its isolation with the United States, “surrounded by friendly neighbors and wide seas” with a foreign policy that “enjoys bipartisan public support” even though our relationships with other countries in the Western Hemisphere, specifically Latin America, had been somewhat contentious both domestically and in the eyes of the citizens of those countries. Quite a few of their domestic problems could be attributed to past U.S. policies that affected the economic or political stability in the region. Carter emphasized his belief that “our [American] democratic way of life warrants the admiration and emulation by other people throughout the world” and that his foreign policy goals supported that global image of the United States. He cast the United States as part of a larger movement, a nation whose “work for human rights makes us part of an international tide, growing in force,” strengthened our international position even as his administration continued to maintain status quo relationships with Latin America.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ “President Carter’s Speech at Graduation,” USNA 1978, June 7, 1978, <https://www.usna1978.org/president-carters-speech-at-graduation/>.

As domestic concerns became more and more urgent throughout his presidency Carter maintained his position on human rights. However, stabilizing the situation at home turned his attention away from the explicit competition of the Cold War. On July 15, 1979, in what became the most famous speech of his presidency, Jimmy Carter planned to address the nation on the looming threat of the second energy crisis. While the energy crisis remained at the center of what became known as the “Crisis of Confidence” or “Malaise” speech, it focused on the lack of confidence that the American people had in the government. In it, Carter worked to reconnect to his campaign position as “a President who is not isolated from the people, who feels your pain, and who shares your dreams” for the future of the nation. He identified the apparent importance of “what the Government thinks or what the government should be doing” compared to “our Nation’s hopes, our dreams, and our future,” as the source of the disconnect between the public and his presidency. In his words, it was “clear that the true problems of our Nation are much deeper-deeper than gasoline lines, deeper even than inflation or recession.”

He described how he decided to abandon his plan for a speech outlining energy recommendations to Congress and instead rewrote his speech based on advice and recommendations he gathered in meetings with regular citizens. Those meetings “confirmed [his] belief in the decency and the strength and the wisdom of the American people, but [they] also bore out some of [his] longstanding concerns about our Nation’s underlying problems.” Carter admits to “mixed success” in his goals to put his campaign promises into law but emphasizes that legislation would not be able to fix the fundamental threat to American democracy. He did not mean the political or civil liberties of American citizens or the country’s military strength abroad, but “the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation” that threatened to “destroy the social and the political fabric of America.”

The way that Carter spoke about the crisis was very similar to the way that he had previously spoken about human rights and America's evolving global role. He cast confidence in direction of the Nation as the foundation for "public institutions and private enterprise, our own families, and the very Constitution of the United States," as something that has "defined our course and served as a link between generations." Without confidence in the "government itself" or in the people's "ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy" Carter perceived the U.S. as "beginning to close the door on our past," which had provided social unity and served to guide the national purpose. He listed events like "the agony of Vietnam" and "the shock of Watergate" as contributing to the public's distance from and distrust of the government. The revelations of the unchecked operation of intelligence agencies at home and abroad encapsulated in the Year of Intelligence could realistically be added to that list.

Just as he did in his debates against Ford, Carter acknowledged that "th[ose] wounds [were] still very deep. They have never been healed," by government or public action. He also criticized "a system of government that seems incapable of action...a Congress twisted and pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests," and the fact that "a balanced and fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends," for making the crisis seem unsolvable. Carter observed that "Often you see paralysis and stagnation and drift" when considering the state of the nation in 1979. He advised Americans to "have faith in each other, faith in our ability to govern ourselves, and faith in the future of this Nation," as the first step towards overcoming the national crisis of confidence.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ "'Crisis of Confidence' Speech," Miller Center, July 15, 1979, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-15-1979-crisis-confidence-speech>, "Crisis of Confidence," American Experience | PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/carter-crisis/>.

At the conclusion of his speech Carter again used reminders of past American accomplishments to encourage the American people to move forward. He outlined two potential paths for the future of the country as he saw it, warning against “the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest,” because “Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility. It is a certain route to failure,” and advocating for a strengthening of the connections in American society that allowed the country to become a global power. Despite the powerful sentiment of the Crisis of Confidence speech, it did not serve as the catalyst for action that President Carter hoped it would. Inflation, unemployment, and the energy crisis remained significant problems. Carter entered the 1980 election cycle with a low approval rating and a faltering domestic agenda.

Notable Foreign Policy Events

Given the dedication to human rights around the world present in speeches given throughout his presidency, it is surprising that Carter’s actual foreign policy achievements did not explicitly revolve around the protection of human rights in places like Latin America. In fact, there is only one notable treaty that involves Latin America at all. Early in his presidential career Jimmy Carter signed the Torrijos-Carter treaties, also known as the Panama Canal Treaties. The first treaty, the Permanent Neutrality Treaty, declared the canal a neutral zone open to vessels from all nations whose neutrality defended by the U.S. military. The second, the Panama Canal Treaty, outlined the transition of control of the canal back to the Panamanian government on December 31, 1999, until which point the U.S. and Panama would have joint control.⁷⁸ The treaties were not

⁷⁸ “Panama Canal Treaties,” Archives.gov, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/text/page25_text.html, Panama Canal Treaty (with annex,

ratified by Congress until 1978 because the prospect of losing control of the major shipping canal in the Western hemisphere was an unappealing prospect for many Americans. Carter initially opposed the idea of a treaty, stating in an early debate with Ford that he would not surrender “practical control of the Panama Canal Zone any time in the foreseeable future.” Pro-treaty members of his cabinet convinced him that a treaty was the best way to avoid accusations of American imperialism in the region, an accusation that had been levied both domestically and internationally after the revelations of CIA interference in the governments of developing countries.⁷⁹

Carter made a brief speech at the signing of the treaties. His statements reflected his campaign platform in terms of his commitment to “traditional” American values like fairness and just action, but it did not mention human rights. He believed that the treaties “mark[ed] the commitment of the United States to the belief that fairness, not force, should lie at the heart of our dealings with the nations of the world,” and that the treaties would “serve the best interests of every nation that uses the canal,” despite Congressional doubts about how transitioning control of the canal to Panama reflected on the strength of the U.S. in the context of the Cold War. Carter tied the success of the treaties to the solidifying of diplomatic relations with other countries in the region by mentioning that other countries that were members of the Organization of American States (OSA) had the opportunity to subscribe to the neutrality of the canal as well.⁸⁰ OSA connections had previously been used to export U.S. military training to Latin American countries, and by drawing the organization into a nominally more peaceful context Carter signaled that the

agreed minute, related letter, and reservations and understandings made by the United States, US-Panama, September 7, 1977, *UNTS 1946-*, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201280/volume-1280-I-21086-English.pdf>.

⁷⁹ “Milestones: 1977-1980: The Panama Canal and the Torrijos-Carter Treaties,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>.

⁸⁰ “Statement on the Panama Canal Treaty Signing,” Miller Center, September 7, 1977, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-7-1977-statement-panama-canal-treaty-signing>.

U.S. was in favor of taking on a less confrontational role in the region, a change from the positions of the Nixon and Ford administrations.⁸¹

Carter's foreign policy ended up focusing on the Eastern Hemisphere, whether or not that was what he intended. Political instability was rife in the Middle East, and with the U.S. suffering an extended energy crisis Carter needed to exercise all his influence in the region to try and ensure stable access to oil. The political landscape of Latin America was more stable during Carter's presidency than his successors because the dictators in the region suppressed all forms of political and personal dissent. Additionally, the United States' interests in Latin America were not as crucial to the continued functioning of the country as the oil of the Middle East. These two factors meant that Carter diverted his attention from the region, limiting the impact that his foreign policy had on the human rights crisis experienced by people living under the dictatorships.

The Camp David Accords are among the most well-known foreign policy achievements of Carter's presidency. According to the U.S. Office of the Historian, "Rarely had a U.S. President devoted as much sustained attention to a single foreign policy issue as Carter did over the summit's two-week duration." The intensity of Carter's role in the summit was due to the strong historic enmity between Egypt and Israel and the unwillingness of either side to back down from their position with respect to the future of Gaza and the West Bank.⁸² The Camp David summit resulted in two framework documents being signed by all parties, not in a full treaty.⁸³ Despite the significant progress made at Camp David, a peace treaty would not be signed until

⁸¹ McSherry, *Predatory States*.

⁸² "Milestones: 1977-1980: Camp David Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process," Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david>.

⁸³ Framework for peace in the Middle East agreed at Camp David (with annex), US-Egypt-Israel, September 17, 1978, *UNTS 1946*-,

https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/EG%20IL_780917_Framework%20for%20peace%20in%20the%20MiddleEast%20agreed%20at%20Camp%20David.pdf.

March 1979.⁸⁴ Negotiating an arms limitation treaty with the Soviet Union was also a foreign policy priority for Carter. Carter intended for the SALT II treaty to replace the Interim Agreement between the U.S. and the USSR with a long-term treaty.⁸⁵ The SALT II document was sent to the U.S. Senate for ratification in June of 1979 after years of negotiations between the U.S. and the USSR. Carter asked the Senate to delay their consideration of the treaty on January 3, 1980, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Despite the lack of an officially ratified treaty, the U.S and the USSR were “individually bound under the terms of international law to refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty, until it had made its intentions clear not to become a party to the Treaty,” and functionally the agreement remained in place for the remainder of Carter’s presidency.⁸⁶

In contrast to the relative success of the Camp David Accords, the Iranian Hostage Crisis dominated headlines for the last year of Carter’s presidency and is generally considered the defining foreign policy crisis of his administration. The Crisis involved the entire staff of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran being seized as hostages by Iranian students after an Islamic fundamentalist revolution removed the pro-American Shah from power. The hostages were not released to the U.S. for more than a year, and Carter’s inability to ensure their swift return overshadowed all his other foreign policy achievements in the eyes of observers at home and abroad. The “weak and ineffectual” and “vacillating” appearance of the U.S. response emboldened the Soviet Union and Soviet aligned rebels in countries across the world.⁸⁷ Diplomacy eventually resolved the hostage

⁸⁴ “Milestones: 1977-1980: Camp David Accords,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david>.

⁸⁵ “Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II),” The Nuclear Threat Initiative, October 26, 2011, <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/strategic-arms-limitation-talks-salt-ii/>.

⁸⁶ “Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II),” U.S. Department of State, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/isn/5195.htm>.

⁸⁷ “The Iranian Hostage Crisis – Short history,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises>

crisis, but in the interim President Carter attempted a more militaristic response, something that he had been opposed to on the campaign trail and throughout his presidency. He authorized a secret mission to rescue the hostages, a plan backed by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and opposed by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, a decision that caused Vance to resign.⁸⁸ The operation failed, and 8 service members were killed. President Carter publicly acknowledged that “the responsibility [for the mission and its result] is fully [his] own.” His honesty about the failed rescue mission did not redeem him in the eyes of the American public, and his failure to quickly and cleanly resolve the Iranian Hostage Crisis contributed greatly to his low approval rating going into the 1980 election and his loss to Ronald Regan.⁸⁹

Carter was able to achieve a de facto end to the arms race with the Soviet Union and advance peace in the Middle East, but those achievements came at a cost. He was not as able to build human rights into his foreign policy as his speeches indicated that he wanted to. Because so much of Carter’s foreign policy relied on focused diplomatic negotiation, he was unable to use financial tools to pressure countries with poor human rights records into changing their policies the way that Congress pressured Pinochet and other Latin American dictators. The Soviet Union would not have been willing to negotiate a nuclear nonproliferation treaty if Carter had taken a hard stance in favor of human rights and the Iranian Hostage Crisis may not have been diplomatically resolved. His foreign policy goals also limited the reforms that he was able to enact domestically.

Intelligence Reforms

⁸⁸ “The Iranian Hostage Crisis,” Office of the Historian.

⁸⁹ “Statement on the Iran Rescue Mission,” Miller Center, April 25, 1980, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-25-1980-statement-iran-rescue-mission>.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA) was the most tangible legislative result of the Church Committee investigation. The original document heavily emphasized the limitations and procedures that had to be followed by an agency that desired to use electronic surveillance within the United States to gather intelligence on individuals or groups associated with a foreign government. The act established disclosure procedure with respect to electronic surveillance, stating that “On a semiannual basis the Attorney General shall fully inform the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence concerning all electronic surveillance under this title.”⁹⁰ FISA was a foundational intelligence oversight document that has been heavily amended in the years since Carter’s presidency. It now details procedures for the destruction of some private records, physical searches, the use of pen registers and trap and trace devices, and the acquisition of business records.⁹¹ The Senate and the House also instituted in-house reforms in the form of permanent committees whose focus was intelligence oversight.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was established in May 1976 by President Ford in the midst of the investigation of the Church Committee.⁹² Its purpose was to “Oversee and make continuing studies of the intelligence activities and programs of the United States Government,” as well as “submit to the Senate appropriate proposals for legislation and report to the senate concerning such intelligence activities and programs,” and “provide vigilant legislative oversight over the intelligence activities of the United States to assure that such activities are in

⁹⁰ United States Senate, “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978,” 95th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1978, S. Doc., <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-92/pdf/STATUTE-92-Pg1783.pdf#page=15>.

⁹¹ “The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA),” Department of Justice, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/it/privacy-civil-liberties/authorities/statutes/1286>.

⁹² Frederick M. Kaiser, “Legislative History of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence,” *Library of Congress*, August 16, 1978, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/intel/ssci-leghist.pdf>.

conformity with the Constitution and laws of the United States.”⁹³ Included in the document were provisions detailing the bipartisan membership of the Committee, the investigatory and subpoena powers of the Committee, and the security clearance level and public disclosure policies of its members.⁹⁴ In spite of his publicly contentious relationship with his Congress, Ford did accept the necessity for intelligence oversight reform, likely because it was recommended to him by multiple committees and Presidential Commissions.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence was established on July 14, 1977, early in Carter’s presidency. Its purpose was to “oversee and make continuing studies of the intelligence and intelligence-related activities and programs of the United States Government, and to submit to the House appropriate proposals for legislation and report to the House concerning such intelligence and intelligence-related activities and programs.” It is clear that the House Committee functioned almost identically to the Senate Committee because it also had the responsibility to “provide vigilant legislative oversight over the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States to assure that such activities are in conformity with the Constitution and laws of the United States.” An interesting difference from the wording of the Senate resolution is that the House Committee was expected to “make every effort to assure that the appropriate departments and agencies of the United States provide informed and timely intelligence,” to both the executive and legislative branches.⁹⁵ This clause was likely intended to curb the secrecy and interagency competition that the Church Committee revealed in the course of its investigation. It could also have been an attempt to prevent the kind of stonewalling that

⁹³ “Overview of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Responsibilities and Activities, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/about>.

⁹⁴ United States Senate, “A Resolution to Establish a Standing Committee of the Senate on Intelligence Activities,” 94th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1976, S.Doc, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/94th-congress/senate-resolution/400>.

⁹⁵ United States House of Representatives, “H. Res. 658,” 95th Cong., 1st Sess., 1977, H.Doc, https://republicans-intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/h.res_658_passed_14_july_1977.pdf.

hindered both the Church and Pike Committees from completing their investigations in a timely manner.⁹⁶

Presidential Perspectives

Jimmy Carter was a prolific writer before, during, and after his presidency. His post-presidency writing provides valuable insight into whether he considered himself successful in meeting his goals for foreign intelligence reform. His book *A Government as Good as Its People*, published in 1977 and written during his election campaign in 1976, served as a highlight reel of notable public statements he made on the campaign trail. In it, he discusses the CIA specifically several times, listing the Church Committee revelations about misconduct among the revelations about Vietnam, Cambodia, and Watergate.⁹⁷ Clearly the issue tied closely into his campaign platform, as he made those comparisons in his debates against Ford. Despite the repeated emphasis on revelations about the CIA, Carter only comments on Frank Church's committee in the context of a discussion of potential opponents in the democratic primaries. Carter was of the opinion, at the time of his response, that Church was "a very fine senator" who would probably "finish [his committee investigation] up before he gets involved," placing him behind Carter's campaign in planning and preparation.⁹⁸ Carter held up the improper actions of the CIA as an example of why America needed a president who would guide the country back to its roots as a moral example for other nations but did not connect that sentiment to any concrete policies in the lead up to his election.

⁹⁶ "History and Jurisdiction," Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Republican Office, <https://republicans-intelligence.house.gov/about/history-and-jurisdiction.htm>.

⁹⁷ Jimmy Carter, *A Government as Good as Its People*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 45, 53, 106, 138, 160, 167.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

The apparent decline of morals in American government preoccupied Carter throughout his campaign, particularly with respect to foreign policy. Another of his pre-presidency publications addressed this in detail. In it, Carter claims that “A nation’s domestic and foreign policies should be derived from the same standards of ethics, honesty and morality which are characteristics of the individual citizens of the nation,” standards that he would lead the country back to. He characterizes previous administrations as having used “varying degrees of secrecy and outright lying,” to shape their policies without the input of their constituents. Carter described the attitudes toward the United States that he encountered during his time as Governor of Georgia; he broadly categorized Latin America as full of “personal warmth [toward Americans] and also frustration at our relative unconcern with the affairs of our own hemisphere.” Carter continually emphasized the importance of building mutual relationships in order to achieve foreign policy goals, a strategy that he employed throughout his presidency with varying success. He explained his focus on the need for a moral grounding for foreign policy as an expression of the reality that “There is no possible means of isolating ourselves from the rest of the world, so we must provide leadership,” combined with his personal view that “It [leadership] should derive from the fact that we try to be right and honest and truthful and decent,” in our dealings with others. Carter presented the “educated and freely-expressed will of the American people,” as central to his foreign policy plans moving forward.⁹⁹

Carter continued to write after he transitioned into his post-presidency life. His first presidential memoir was published roughly a year after he left the presidency in 1981. It rarely mentions either the CIA or Chile, and when Carter described his experiences with the U.S. intelligence community, he focused primarily on their work during the Panama Canal Treaty

⁹⁹ Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best?*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1975), 123-128.

negotiations and the Iranian Hostage Crisis. He did discuss how the focus on human rights had an impact on his presidency, stating that “It became clear in the early days (and increasingly so later on) that the promotion of human rights was to cut across our relations with the Soviet Union and other totalitarian governments, the emerging nations who were struggling to establish stable regimes, and even some of our longtime Western allies,” something reflected in the constant, repeated mention of human rights in Carter’s speeches and interviews throughout his term. Accordingly, because “human rights had become the central theme of our foreign policy in the minds of the press and the public,” Carter seemed somewhat distracted from other foreign policy elements of his campaign platform such as intelligence reform, and vulnerable to political attacks painting him as a hypocrite when human rights standards were unevenly enforced across geographic regions. He does not characterize his administration as either successful or unsuccessful in the area of human rights, likely because he was so recently president and contradicting the majority opinion that his presidency failed as a result of his struggles to decisively resolve the energy crisis, inflation, and the Iranian Hostage Crisis would have been in poor taste.¹⁰⁰

Jimmy Carter’s *White House Diary*, published in 2010, included many more overt references to the CIA and the intelligence community because it drew on the daily thoughts and events recorded by Carter in his diary throughout his presidency. Annotations made to his entries added more depth to the events as he initially recorded them. For example, on August 30, 1977, his entry stated that “the assessment of all CIA operations has been completed and there are no illegal or improper actions now being conducted, although some very embarrassing things in the past,” indicating that he had fulfilled part of his campaign promise to turn away from secret operations as a primary foreign policy tool. In an annotation he made to his February 8, 1979 entry

¹⁰⁰ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, (Toronto; New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 143-146, 165, 167

Carter mentioned Frank Church's role in Church Committee and the passage of FISA (also mentioned on April 15, 1977), whose restrictions on covert surveillance had since been undercut by the PATRIOT act, passed after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It is interesting to note that even though Church was a Democratic Senator and had been in the running for the position of Vice President after his presidential campaign failed, Carter's diary entries depict a difficult personal and political relationship between the two spanning the entirety of Carter's term. Carter's position as a Washington outsider and a nontraditional democratic candidate was likely the source of the friction in their relationship, as Church had a long personal history with democratic politics. Carter noted on December 4, 1980, that "We [Carter and his cabinet] reviewed the vast improvement in agencies formerly discredited, like... HUD, EPA, and CIA. There had been no scandal," comparable to Watergate involving the U.S. government during Carter's presidency, another mark in favor of his general policy. Most of the work that Carter mentioned doing with the goal of intelligence reform involved reorganizing the intelligence community and consolidating roles and information, not in limiting or defining their capabilities beyond what was outlined by Congress.¹⁰¹

The memoirs of other members of Carter's staff clarify the internal direction of the Carter administration's foreign policy. Cyrus Vance's memoir details his role as Secretary of State in shaping foreign policy during Carter's presidency. A review of foreign policy topics done before Carter took office highlighted foreign policy issues that Vance prioritized for the incoming administration. His position on Latin America was that the "residue of resentment and hostility," that Carter had to confront in the region "stemm[ed] from historic patterns of U.S. paternalism and neglect," and that policy needed to shift accordingly. He recommended discontinuing "special relationships" with Latin American countries, and shifting instead to "serious diplomatic attention,

¹⁰¹ Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 109, 290&63, 491, 187, 32.

on the basis of negotiations conducted between equal sovereign powers, to the countries which lie to our south.” Vance listed Chile as a country where bilateral relations would be especially important as the country continued to become more economically powerful.

Throughout his memoir, Vance outlined the role he saw human rights playing in Carter’s White House. For example, he thought that one of the pillars of American foreign policy should be “a recognition of the changes taking place in global political, economic, and social conditions,” including the growing importance of human rights in global diplomacy. He and Carter reportedly agreed on this point and planned to make human rights a higher priority than it had been in other administrations, but where Carter tended to make generalizations about the importance of human rights in his policy in his public speeches Vance cautioned him that they “had to be flexible and pragmatic in dealing with specific cases that might affect our national security, and that [they] had to avoid rigidity.” Vance’s preferred way of dealing with human rights foreign policy is evident in the way the administration handled the Soviet Union, choosing to prioritize SALT II negotiations over pressuring the USSR on its domestic human rights conditions. This “quiet diplomacy” unless in exceptional circumstances was the way Vance handled all the negotiations he undertook while working for Carter.

Vance worked with Carter to define what human rights meant for the administration, as there was no clear definition of the term when he took office. The definition that they settled on relied on evaluating “considerations we would take into account, on a country-by country basis, in deciding the extent to which human rights concerns would influence other aspects of our relations with a particular country,” a highly flexible policy that prevented a universal definition of human rights standards from being developed by the Carter administration. Vance’s dedication to flexible policy and the fact that the American public was not privy to the details that contributed to Carter’s

decision making left the administration open to criticism of being “naïve and inconsistent” in their human rights policy, as happened after the 1977 setbacks during SALT negotiations. Vance detailed times when human rights were the subject of disagreement within the White House, as they were when confronting issues in Cambodia and Korea. Vance characterized Carter as a president willing to “do what was in our long-term national interest, and not what was politically expedient or good for his ratings in the public opinion polls,” high praise for a president that eventually drove Vance to resign in protest over his handling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis an event that Vance denied was caused by the Carter Administration pressing the Shah of Iran on human rights. Generally, Vance considered championing human rights a “national requirement for a nation with our heritage,” and a position that would benefit the United States as a long-term foreign policy position.¹⁰²

Stuart Eizenstat’s interpreted the Carter Administration’s policies from his position as a member of Carter’s 1976 campaign team and then as his Chief Domestic Policy Advisor. He portrayed human rights as equally important in Carter’s domestic considerations, especially when they were tied to the promotion of a foreign policy initiative in Congress and to the American public, as the Panama Canal Treaties were. Eizenstat stated that human rights did not become a central component of Carter’s electoral platform until late in 1976. He characterized human rights as a political element that served to unify the Democratic party’s factions; the “hard line anti-Communists led by Scoop Jackson, who wanted it applied to the Soviet Union, and the liberal Democratic followers of George McGovern, who...targeted right-wing military regimes,” as well as “the centrist New Yorker Pat Moynihan, who had served in both the Kennedy and Nixon administrations, and Sam Brown, the activist opponent of the Vietnam

¹⁰² Cyrus R. Vance, *Hard Choices*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 451-52, 28, 46, 54, 126-27, 257, 357, 421, 435-36.

War.” Eizenstat also makes it clear that Carter worked within a preexisting legal human rights framework established by the liberal Democratic majority in Congress when they passed restrictions on the distribution of aid to Chile and other dictatorships in Latin America. Even though Carter and his congressional majority were both Democrats there was conflict between the two branches with respect to human rights. Congress instructed Carter to end all aid to the regime in Argentina, and while Carter “supported the goal” he also “opposed the congressional mandate, because it limited his flexibility in dealing with the brutal generals running the country,” something that became common in the interactions between Carter and Congress with respect to the regimes in Latin America. Eizenstat recalled that it was “devilishly difficult to fashion a clear and uniform human rights policy,” because human rights advocates in Congress wanted to put more pressure on the dictatorships to transition back to democracy while Carter wanted to retain his ability to negotiate as he saw fit.

Domestically, Carter established the position of assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs and sent Rosalynn Carter on a seven-country diplomatic tour of Latin America to make his pro-democracy stance clear. Congress directed the State Department published its first annual human rights review, a report that is still published today, and the State Department also established the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. The National Security Council (NSC) established the Interagency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance. These changes were bureaucratic, with no real impact on the way human rights oriented foreign policy was enforced. Carter’s role as the first American president to generally prioritize human rights in his foreign policy meant that there were “many inconsistencies in its application; many occasions when Carter’s rhetoric did not match his actions; and many instances when he had to restrain members of Congress who wanted to be

more absolutists than pragmatic,” in pressuring countries to reform. Eizenstat viewed the long-term results of Carter’s human rights foreign policy as produc[ing] lasting change in Latin America,” an opinion reflected by notable Latin American citizens such as Raúl Alfonsín, elected president of Argentina in 1983, and Diego Guelar, Argentina’s ambassador to the European Union.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The Church Committee investigation into actions of the United States’ intelligence organizations, specifically the CIA, was overall effective in revealing human rights violations. It revealed widespread abuse of power and interference in international politics to the American public. The organization of the Committee; clear goals for its investigation, no leaks of sensitive information to the press, periodic release of documents to the public, public and televised hearings as appropriate, and its relatively short duration, all gave the Committee credibility that other investigations into the same topic did not have. The Committee’s efforts to disclose as much information as possible in a timely manner helped keep the issue of intelligence reform present in the minds of politicians and the public. While the Committee did not have the authority to institute wide-ranging reform, it did produce a list of recommendations and actions to be taken to prevent such widespread intelligence misconduct from occurring again in the future.

The 1976 election cycle highlighted the revelations of the Church Committee as one of the causes of American’s distrust of the government and inspired Jimmy Carter to campaign on “three basic themes: truthfulness, management competence, and distance from the unattractive aspects of

¹⁰³ Stuart Eizenstat, *President Carter: The White House Years*, (New York, N.Y.: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin’s Press, 2018), 575-84.

Washington politics.”¹⁰⁴ His distance from Washington and scandals like Watergate made Carter broadly appealing to a wide range of voters, as did his willingness to address areas where the government had a responsibility to do better in the future. After Carter won the election, human rights took precedence in his foreign policy decisions. The Church Committee did not directly address human rights in its investigation, but human rights as a foreign policy element when determining how much aid a country received from the U.S. addressed some of the conditions created by excessive CIA interference in foreign governments.

While Carter connected human rights to the situation in Chile, he never took steps to directly address the CIA’s supporting role in the coup against Salvador Allende. A true commitment to improving human rights around the world would have involved severely restricting diplomatic ties with any country that did not meet the Carter administration’s human rights standards, regardless of its relative importance to U.S. domestic affairs. A unilateral application of human rights criteria to foreign relations with countries in Europe, Latin America, and Africa would have come across as a genuine commitment; exceptions to the rule, like the USSR, made Carter’s personal commitment to human rights seem weak and ineffectual overall. Carter could also have offered a presidential apology or otherwise acknowledged the damage that the CIA inflicted on citizens of Latin American countries such as Chile and Argentina with an official statement as a way of underscoring his commitment to a more transparent foreign policy. Such actions would have served to distance himself further from the foreign policies of Nixon and Ford.

In his memoirs it is clear that human rights were personally important to Carter. They meshed well with his commitment to traditional American values and his campaign goal of returning America to its previous standing as a moral example for the rest of the world. The

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *White House Diary*, 26.

findings of the Church Committee gave Carter the platform to incorporate human rights into his foreign policy as frequently as possible, as they emphasized individual rights and recommended limitations on government interference in the lives of people domestically and abroad. The U.S. public was generally supportive of human rights as a policy concept after the revelation of the CIA's involvement with right-wing regimes around the world as well as the ending of the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, the reality of the Cold War limited Carter's ability to express his commitment to the concept of human rights because his administration needed to maintain existing connections with foreign powers even if they had poor human rights records. Additionally, public support for human rights, and Carter's foreign policy in general, waned the longer domestic concerns such as the energy crisis went unresolved.

Even though Carter's human rights policy was not universally applied throughout his presidency, he was the first president to emphasize the concept of human rights on the world stage. Human rights would not have been so enshrined in Carter's foreign policy without the groundwork of the Church Committee investigation, much less become a commonly recognized element of political discourse. The Church Committee also inspired a reform movement, however brief, that continues to impact the organization of intelligence agencies today. During his presidency, Carter played a role in establishing the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and passing FISA through Congress and his diary entries indicate significant interest in reforming the U.S. intelligence community. However, Carter was limited by his inability to implement lasting reforms without congressional support, and other foreign policy priorities such as the Panama Canal Treaties, the negotiations between Israel and Egypt, the SALT II negotiations with the Soviet Union, and the Iranian Hostage Crisis took precedence and prevented intelligence reform from becoming a major factor in his presidency.

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