INTRODUCTION

Over the past forty years, since America assumed global responsibility after World War II, it has encountered various types of recurring foreign policy problems. We might expect historical experience to produce learning, a record of increasing intelligence and effectiveness across return engagements. Often, however, such government learning has not occurred, and the purpose of this book is an inquiry into the nature of the problems involved.[1]

My subject will be one recurring problem, American policy toward revolutions which use Marxist rhetoric, receive material aid from the Soviet Union, and are directed against a repressive government that has received substantial material aid and political support from the United States.[2] The case material will be drawn from the history of American policy in Latin America, the 1954 overthrow of a leftist government in Guatemala, the evolution of Cuban policy from 1958 to 1962, and the current repetition of similar policies in the 1980s.[3]

Chapters 1–3 review the history of America's failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, Operation MONGOOSE, and the Cuban nuclear confrontation crisis of 1962. These chapters include discussion of the successful use of the Bay of Pigs model in 1954 (against a government in Guatemala) and the U.S. government's contract with the Mafia to assassinate Premier Castro at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Readers unfamiliar with recently declassified material will, I think, find the invasion to have been more intelligently conceived than earlier explanations credited.

Chapters 4–6 recast the case material and broaden the scope of historical evidence to explain three vectors reflecting the blockage of government learning: (a) the adoption of similar policies across historical encounters; (b) the repetition of collectively self-blocking behavior within the national security decision process; and (c) the repetition of a common syndrome of errors in judgment and perception. Chapter 6 presents a new theory of American foreign policy, identifying a common source to explain the principal features and recurrence of these vectors; it is also, in part, a reflection on the vulnerabilities to which a great (and global) power is prone as an effect of the forms by which the human imagination seeks to understand this role.

Chapter 7 applies this historically based explanation to analyze, and place

in a broader perspective, American foreign policy toward Central America in the 1980s. I draw lessons about the weakness in the design of American political institutions which makes it difficult for them to effect and sustain long-term learning outside the Western European arena, and conclude with suggestions to improve the foreign policy learning rate.

My thesis is that these three vectors of blocked learning in American foreign policy reflect imagination-based behavior, specifically a system of hierarchical images used to understand the nature of power. I will develop a case that American foreign policy decisions evidence a "dual track" information processing by which a system of strong imagery (and associated motives engaged within it), used to understand the world, determines policy more consequentially than analytical reasoning. Standard theories of failed analytical brilliance, poor design of bureaucracies, inadvertent flaws in decision-making processes, or simple cognitive errors do not, I will argue, explain the historical record. I will also argue that remedies based on such theories would effect useful changes, but these would be modest at best. And if the reconstruction I propose of these American policies is true generally, then our understanding of international politics might become wiser by the lesson that analytical brilliance and technical rationality are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for peace. Of desirable qualities, if given modesty and graciousness by all parties we might recognize there to be little basis for armed conflict between nations.[4]

Let me recount a story to introduce the historical discussion which begins in the first chapter.

During the afternoon of June 22, 1954, Allen Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, met with President Eisenhower to make an urgent request. The CIA, with Eisenhower's approval, was conducting a covert operation to overthrow a leftist government in Guatemala. Three old bombers had been used to effect psychological warfare against the regime. Earlier that day, two had been shot down; Dulles wanted to resupply the operation with aircraft from America.

At the meeting in Eisenhower's office was an assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, Henry Holland, who argued forcefully against the plan. He warned that the resupply could become public knowledge and raise an outcry against America's involvement. Holland also opposed such involvement because it further violated treaties previous United States governments had signed. Among these was the Charter of the Organization of American States, signed by the United States and ratified by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. The United States had formally pledged to respect the principle (Article 15) that:

"No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat . . . "[5]

The assistant secretary thought a legal prohibition clear. The words of the treaty—"directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever"—were as strong a prohibition as language could state.

President Eisenhower asked Dulles to estimate America's probability of success if replacements were sent. "Twenty percent," said Dulles. Without resupply, he estimated the CIA's chance of success to be "about zero." Eisenhower granted his request.

Strong feelings had been expressed. To ease any tensions Dulles might feel, afterward Eisenhower took him aside and kidded him about his "twenty percent" estimate: "Allen, that figure of twenty percent was persuasive," Eisenhower said. "It showed me that you had thought this matter through realistically. If you had told me that the chances would be ninety percent, I would have had a much more difficult decision." Dulles, a grin on his face, replied: "Mr. President, when I saw Henry walking into your office with three large law books under his arm, I knew he had lost his case already."[6]

This brief conversation between two old friends thirty years ago begins a story of repeated American encounters. As we will see, the slightly breathless dramas of daily newspaper headlines are misleading. The people change, but the issues, arguments—and usually the policy decisions—remain the same.

NOTES

1. Current reviews of definitions and theories in the study of government learning are L. Etheredge, "Government Learning: An Overview" in S. Long, ed., *Handbook of Political Behavior*, vol. 2 (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), pp. 73–161 and L. Etheredge and J. Short, "Thinking About Government Learning" *Journal of Management Studies* (1983) 20(1), pp. 41–58. See also G. Brewer and P. deLeon, *The Foundations of Policy Analysis* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1983). Discussions central to the field include A. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980); C. Argyris and D. Schon, *Organization Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); K. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Communication and Control* (New York: Free Press, 1963), and his *Politics and Government: How People Decide Their Fate*, 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974); H. Wilensky, *Organizational Intelligence: Knowledge and Policy in Government and Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1967). For general work concerning intellectual life and organizational behavior see the work of J. March, e.g., M. Cohen, J. March and J. Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice" *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17 (1972): 1–25; and J. March, "Bounded Rationality, Ambiguity, and the Engineering of Choice" *Bell Journal of Economics* 9 (1978): 587–608; E. Jaques, *A General Theory of Bureaucracy* (New York: Heinemann, 1981); K. Weick, "Cognitive Processes in Organizations" in B. Staw, ed., *Research in Organizational Beahvior: An Annual Series of Analytic Essays and Critical Reviews* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1979), vol. 1; K. Weick and R. Daft, "The Effectiveness of Interpretation Systems" in K. Cameron and D. Whetten, ed., *Organizational Effectiveness: A Comparison of Multiple Models* (New York: Academic Press, 1983); H. Lasswell, "Research in Policy Analysis: the Intelligence and Appraisal Functions" in F. Greenstein and N. Polsby,

ed., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), vol. 6; and Y. Dror, *Design for Policy Sciences* (New York: American Elsevier, 1971). The Club of Rome Report (J. Botkin et al., *No Limits to Learning* (New York: Pergamon, 1979)) is visionary but probably loads too many empirical issues and too much normative content into a single concept.

2. Other recurring problems which, recent history suggests, any new administration should expect to face would include: (a) the threat or use of force by the Soviet Union to defend its hegemony in Eastern Europe; (b) another war will occur between Israel and its neighbors; and (c) there will be a further opportunity for arms control negotiation with the Soviet Union, accompanied by arguments that new weapons systems which will serve as effective bargaining chips.

   There are types of "invisible," continuing problems with which a president should be prepared to deal at his own initiative and which would might benefit from institutional memory, e.g., the 15 million deaths each year, worldwide, from malnutrition and starvation.

3. The most recent works on the Guatemala operation are by S. Kinzer and S. Schlesinger, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982) and R. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1982).

   The most recent work on the Bay of Pigs is P. Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) who supplemented and enriched previous accounts by interviews with both American and Cuban participants. The author's eye for detail has been invaluable for my purposes of reconstruction and improvement of theory. I have reviewed the basic sources, attempted to clarify remaining ambiguities with American participants, and incorporated more recent material. In my interpretation, I place more weight on the intellectual merits and dramatic logic of the invasion plan and on systemic determinants of the decision.

   There is substantial agreement about what happened. The lacunae are: (a) the private discussions of Rusk and Bundy with the president; (b) information concerning the specific location of the 2,500 hardcore supporters the CIA believed were in Cuba, and what aid they were expected to provide; and (c) the issue of whether D-Day was intentionally postponed to allow time for a second Mafia attempt on Castro's life.

   The Operation MONGOOSE story has fewer published sources. Arthur Schlesinger's account *Robert F. Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978) is based on access to many still-restricted documents (e.g., Robert Kennedy's private journal). His occasional tendency to attribute virtues to the White House, and "excesses" to the CIA, is at variance with other accounts. The Church Committee investigations (U.S. Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. Senate Report 94-465, November 20, 1975, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975); T. Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979); and D. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors* (New York: Ballentine, 1981) are also valuable. T. Branch and G. Crile, "The Kennedy Vendetta: An Account of the CIA's Entanglement in the Secret War Against Castro" *Harper's* (August, 1975), pp. 49–63 is still the best descriptive overview. W. Hinckle and W. Turner, *The Fish is Red: The Story of the Secret War Against Castro* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981) introduce a broader range of issues covering the post-1962 period: Further declassifications will be necessary before scholars can be certain of the reliability of the picture they have assembled. A significant problem of inference is that right-wing and expatriate groups have

free-lanced against Castro, and CIA agents have often posed as "representatives of American business interests," making it a complicated task to assay what activities against Castro have reflected official policy.

Graham Allison's systematic review of the Cuban Missile Crisis decision, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) remains the standard work on the American side. Using the information provided at the time (Operation MONGOOSE had not been disclosed in the press), Allison tended to discount the Cuban defense hypothesis. An excellent introduction to current scholarship is N. Lebow's "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly" *Political Science Quarterly* 98 (1983): 431–458.

The complex interplay of events and reciprocal interpretations during the early 1960s has yet to be analyzed fully. R. Slusser, "The Berlin Crises of 1958–59 and 1961" in B. Blechman and S. Kaplan, ed., *Force Without War: The U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1978), pp. 343–439 makes a valuable beginning. Scholars may have understated the benefit, to Khrushchev, of dramatizing a threat to Berlin to deter Kennedy from using American troops against Cuba, a deterrent threat that appears to have worked.

4. I am referring to a reformulated imagination system of decision making *consistent* with modesty and graciousness. Thus, I am not making a simple or authoritative prescription. I will develop this argument in chapter 6. For a related discussion of the "triple need for modesty" see S. Hoffman, "Detente" in J. Nye, ed., *The Making of America's Soviet Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 231–263, esp. p. 260; also S. Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978).
6. Cited in C. Ronning, ed., *Intervention in Latin America* (New York: Knopf, 1970), p. 14.
7. D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953–1956* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 425–426 tells the story in his memoirs. Note that he expects an American audience to appreciate the humor, his decision criteria, and probably his choice to "ease tensions" with Dulles rather than Holland. Eisenhower and Dulles had known one another since World War II, when Dulles had been involved in Allied spying operations and an attempt to assassinate Hitler. See S. Ambrose and R. Immerman, *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), passim. The story suggests they shared a common sensibility concerning the conduct of international power, and a viewpoint about legal arguments and restraints, which I will discuss in chapter 6.

   After the operation succeeded, Eisenhower hosted a briefing and slide show for his cabinet, and included his wife, Mamie, so the CIA could explain how they had pulled off the operation. He beamed with pleasure. The memory of his warm congratulations remained with the same CIA team as they began to design the overthrow of Castro. See Wyden, *Bay of Pigs*, p. 21.