

Reagan's Iran-Contra Affair of 1985-1987: Its Place in U.S. Foreign Policy History According to Sylvan and Majeski.



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Abstract

The general narrative of the Iran-Contra scandal is that the efforts of Reagan and a few other high-level policy- and decisionmakers led to a situation which is virtually unique in its clear condemnation of presidential actions and its excessive use of presidential power to achieve presidential goals. David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski however, would be inclined to disagree. Their model of international U.S. Policy since the late 19th century is one of continuity; they believe all decisions on U.S. foreign policy follow a previously laid-out set of goals. According to Sylvan and Majeski, these policies are put in place by governmental institutions such as the department of state and they are able to account for nearly all foreign policy decision-making. In the rare case that a certain international situation does not fit any of the current policies put in place, a new policy is created which can be applied to any similar future cases. The level of applicability of Sylvan and Majeski's theory to the Iran-Contra affair showcases to what extent it was a unique event in foreign policy history. Specific elements of the affair are unique, such as its entwinedness with the Reagan doctrine, and the modest prosecution of those involved. As a whole, however, the scandal relied heavily on institutional precedent and can clearly be aligned with the foreign policy history and continuity postulated by Sylvan and Majeski.

Keywords

Clients, Central America, Enemies, Institutional Precedent, Iran-Contra, Foreign policy continuity, Reagan, Sylvan and Majeski,

Introduction

This thesis will closely examine the uniqueness of the Iran-Contra Affair of 1985-1987 and research whether Sylvan and Majeski's 'continuity theory of U.S. international relations', as outlined in their *U.S. Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, Enemies and Empire* (2009), is applicable to this affair. Iran-Contra is an important part of U.S. foreign policy history and political history, because it is a unique instance of presidential power being used to significantly influence U.S. foreign policy. Its uniqueness is mostly dependent on perspective and specific terminology, however. If one was to take the outlook postulated by Sylvan and Majeski in *Foreign Policy in Perspective* and apply it to the Iran-Contra affair, the affair appears far less unique. Sylvan and Majeski argue that "key policies have been remarkably stable over the past hundred years, not in terms of end but of means" (Sylvan, Majeski 1). Subsequently, this could apply to Reagan's administration and the Iran-Contra Affair, stating that it was simply a perpetuation of U.S. foreign policy towards Central America and in general. Viewing the Iran-Contra affair through this lens poses a significant question because the affair is often regarded as an abuse of presidential power on Reagan's part, rather than a continuation of American foreign policy leading up to this point. Approaching the affair from a new, theoretical angle which claims otherwise could yield interesting and salient results. I will also be examining other, more widely accepted and propagated views of the affair, such as Malcolm Byrne's *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Affair and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power*. (2017), which offers up a far more traditional view of the president and his actions during Iran-Contra. I will be using these differing perspectives and further research to answer the question: Is the Iran-Contra Affair of 1985-1987 a truly unique scandal in United States political history?

In his preface, Byrne states that "The personalities—starting with President Ronald Reagan—are critical to the story" (Byrne XV). When Sylvan and Majeski's filter is applied to the Iran-Contra Affair, it paints a very different picture to Byrne's view. It takes Iran-Contra, along with a wide range of other U.S. foreign policy events which have had differing outcomes or characteristics (geographically, socially, etc.), and groups them together in a preconceived and implemented model of U.S. foreign policy based mostly on institutional decisions. Because of this, their model also places far less value on individual high-level decision-making and decision-makers such as Reagan, or other powerful people in Reagan's administration like Oliver

North, a key member of his National Security Council staff. According to Sylvan and Majeski, high-level decision-makers cannot significantly influence policy directives which were put into place prior to their tenure. This is a relatively unique look at U.S. foreign policy history in general, and the Iran-Contra Affair more specifically.

The Iran-Contra Affair took place from 1985 to 1987, during Ronald Reagan's otherwise publicly lauded presidency: he is often featured in public opinion polls on the U.S.' most successful presidents, most recently a 2018 Quinnipiac University poll, where Reagan was voted the 'Best President since World War II' (Quinnipiac 2018). Iran-Contra was an affair during this presidency which had a significant impact on U.S. national and international security interests due to its controversy and outright unlawfulness, in defying the Boland Amendment. During the height of the cold war, leftist or even communist forces started taking over countries in South America, Africa, and the Middle-East. The Soviet Union was tightening its grip on the world and the United States felt they had to retaliate or at least reacquire a sense of control. Two specific points of worry for Reagan and his administration were Iran and Nicaragua, two countries with issues relevant to U.S. foreign policy. Nicaragua was being overrun by 'Sandinistas', leftist freedom fighters, after having previously been controlled by a U.S. client, the Somoza family. Nicaragua was of additional interest to Reagan and his administration because it is in Central America, and a significant part of Reagan's foreign policy was centered around containing Communism in that region, as he considered it too close to home. Iran had fallen victim to an even more direct issue: American hostages were being kept by Hezbollah, an Islamist militant group, and the administration understandably wanted to do anything in their power to bring these hostages home. Reagan and his administration headed arms sales to Iran in order to try and free the hostages, breaking an active arms embargo while doing so. More importantly however, they also went against the Boland Amendment, put in place by Congress. This Amendment, among other things, prohibited the U.S. and its president from funding the 'contras' in Nicaragua, a guerrilla group fighting against the Sandinistas. Reagan and his administration knowingly going against this amendment is the crux of the entire Iran-Contra Affair.

Applying Sylvan and Majeski's continuity theory to the Iran-Contra Affair may offer a fresh view on how it managed to occur and if Iran-Contra was as unique as the current academic discussion makes it out to be. I expect there to be a significant overlap between reality and

Sylvan and Majeski's theory of institutionalized decision making. First, I will be critically examining Sylvan and Majeski's theoretical framework by drawing from their literature. This will involve clearly defining the characteristics which Sylvan and Majeski use to outline their continuity theory and placing these within a larger knowledge base. In this way I will create a clear theoretical framework based on their research in which I can then place the Iran-Contra Affair. Second, I intend to look more closely at Iran-Contra itself, analyzing high-level decision making and comparing its frequency and saliency to that of previously implemented policies. Important is also the role of institutions during this period, and whether these institutions used innovative and unique policies, or took advantage of institutional precedent. These characteristics will make applying a continuity theory or one of its opposing theories more workable and offer insight into what prompted a political and historical event which is often considered unique. Finally, the third chapter will consist determining what elements of the Iran-Contra affair can be deemed as unique in U.S. foreign policy history, and determining how this allows the affair to fit into Sylvan and Majeski's theory. This result will determine whether it is possible to challenge the current academic discussion about Iran-Contra. If Iran-Contra turns out to have an abundance of characteristics in common with Sylvan and Majeski's continuity theory, it indicates an arguable shift in the academic conversation.

My analysis will be focused on primary sources from the Iran-Contra period which discuss the involvement of major decision makers or lay out the policy making system of governmental institutions at the time. I will also be looking at secondary literature concerning both Sylvan and Majeski's theory, and theories which offer up a different view of decision-making during Iran-Contra and fit into the academic discussion on the Iran-Contra Affair to a larger extent. I will then closely examine the role of governmental institutions such as the Department of State, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency, to include their respective influences in making Iran-Contra the unique scandal it was. I expect to find concrete evidence which points to a policy making system which does not solely revolve around major decision makers such as Reagan and his advisors, but instead draws on previous policy iterations and makes slight alterations. Examples are policies or ideologies put into place by earlier presidents which still strongly guide Reagan's administrations during their support of the Contras. In case the hypothesis of this thesis is incorrect, there will be various instances of Reagan and his administration formulating a new policy which is at odds with previous policy. If

the hypothesis was correct, and Iran-Contra is not a one-dimensional or unique event, it will have an added set of factors which is often overlooked to brand the affair as a unique occurrence in U.S. foreign policy history.

Chapter 1: The Continuity Theory

In their 2009 publication *U.S. Foreign Policy in Perspective: Clients, enemies and empire* David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski combine theoretical political theory and diplomatic history to justify their claim that United States foreign policy has been a stable and little-changing affair since the Spanish American War in 1898. They claim that “U.S. leaders have for over a century pursued an unchanging set of goals. Among those goals, the two most often mentioned are democracy and open markets” (Sylvan, Majeski 3), and that these constant goals are proof of a system of continuity present in U.S. Foreign policy. This system uses ‘policy instruments’ for a wide variety of foreign policy goals. Although the implementation of these policy instruments might differ marginally when applied to different political situations or different nation states, Sylvan and Majeski argue that their inherent ‘mission’, the goal of these policy instruments, is consistent across U.S. foreign policy history since 1898 (8). This is most prominent in their definition of meso-continuity, which states that in certain situations the U.S. government will deploy certain policy instruments, regardless of where the situation takes place. An example of this is in what situations the U.S. tends to use non-military intervention, such as in the Dominican Republic in 1908, or El Salvador in 1921 (Sylvan, Majeski 113). Two different countries with distinct governments and political situations which both result in the same response from the U.S. government: non-military intervention.

The research behind this continuous usage of specific policy instruments and missions for specific situations is well grounded and thorough, based on a multitude of examples throughout U.S. history. Sylvan and Majeski condense this aspect of their theory to so-called binary decision diagrams. They use these diagrams to place each historical political event into a distinctive category which is associated with a specific policy instrument or set of policy instruments. They argue that U.S. foreign policy and more specifically U.S. interventions (both military and non-military) are based on the same system of binary decision-making, which takes place at an institutional level, rather than at the highest political level (Sylvan, Majeski 108). Following this argument paints a picture of a world where most, if not all, historical occurrences of U.S. intervention can be neatly categorized into a previously thought out scenario and its appropriate policy instrument, such as routine maintenance or non-military intervention. Relevant is also the individual influence, or lack thereof, amongst lower-level decision-makers within U.S.

institutions such as the Department of State. According to Sylvan and Majeski, these people have little to no say in the implementation of policy and are basically subject to the turning of the institution's cogs and wheels (20).

Though this argument made by Sylvan and Majeski seems stable enough due to it being applicable to a variety of historical events which they also outline, it also lacks any semblance of nuance. Their use of a binary decision diagram neatly boxes in almost every scenario imaginable and proceeds to completely disregard unique aspects of these scenarios. In hindsight this appears to hold fast, as institutional decision-making at the time of these events lead to similar results, but the lack of nuance and detail also takes away the role of high-level decision-making by oversimplifying the process of governmental decision-making. For instance, Byrne describes the mindset during Iran-Contra as follows: "The legal question, by all indications, essentially disappeared as a concern for policy makers. –members of Congress would continually be kept in the dark" (84), showing that policy makers actually played a significant role in shaping policy and its approval during the affair.

This concept of continuity is based on another system by Sylvan and Majeski, which also tends to skip over variance in order to neatly categorize nation states or countries, namely the system of clients and enemies and the varying policy responses within this system. The system categorizes every country that the U.S. has conducted foreign policy with as either a client of the U.S. or an enemy of the U.S.. This categorization is based on characteristics which are extremely broad, and which focus mostly on how the U.S. views its (potential) clients, rather than vice versa. Many South American countries for instance, such as Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia are characterized as client states, as are countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Sylvan, Majeski 59). Some of the clients mentioned, however, such as Qatar, are often seen as having a tenuous relationship with the U.S. and would be hard to categorize as a client simply because of certain characteristics or historical events in which the U.S. provided aid. According to Sylvan and Majeski this client characterization is because the U.S. provides some form of economic or social aid to these countries and watches over this list of clients as a sort of globalist empire which focuses on surveillance and continuity in regime; "What unites these states is the U.S. commitment to the maintenance of their regimes and their acquiescence in that commitment. This two-sided relationship is continuous" (Sylvan, Majeski 37). The U.S. acts as a

patron to these clients and has a variety of policy instruments to maintain these clients and their desired regimes.

A final division within client states themselves is the distinction between wealthy client states and poorer client states. Sylvan and Majeski offer up explanations for both variations, explaining why the U.S. would want to keep on poor client states and why rich client states would seek the patronage of the U.S. respectively. According to them, the patronage of poor client states is mostly defensive and preventive: if a small state is not protected or otherwise taken care of it might harm U.S. credibility. Additionally, if a small state is not a U.S. client state, it might seek other patronage, further strengthening opposing states. Thus, the U.S. keeps on poor client states, albeit grudgingly. This grudge is often mutual, as many poorer countries are not wholly enthused by their U.S. patronage, but feel the need to uphold it for economic or safety reasons. The justification for richer client states such as the Netherlands is even simpler: it is based on “a sense of diffuse friendship with the American people and of general loyalty” (Sylvan, Majeski 18).

Enemy states on the other hand, are defined as “nonclients whose regimes are seen as choosing systematically to differ with the U.S. on key issues of foreign and domestic economic and political policy” (Sylvan, Majeski 176). These enemy states are regimes which promote a policy which is directly oppositional to either U.S. foreign policy or creates an issue with a U.S. client state. A similarity between client states and enemy states is that a regime change or political shift within a country or nation state can lead to a re-characterization of that country or nation state. The Soviet Union for example can be categorized as an enemy state, while the current Russian state is far less oppositional and thus will not be referred to as an enemy state. Furthermore, there is naturally a third type of state, located politically and ideologically between client and enemy states: the non-client state. This third and final category is an important factor for judging the system as a whole, as it lends far more credibility to the system than a simple down-the-middle differentiation between client and enemy state would. Non-client states are also far less important within the system, however, as policy instruments are shaped to accommodate and control client states or enemy states, and nothing in between.

Especially the broad definition of client states within this system can be problematic. Sylvan and Majeski's theory has a built-in safeguard: it states that a policy instrument exists for

every U.S. foreign policy situation, which can be applied directly or after some minute changes to the instrument or mission. Whenever this is not the case due to a highly unique diplomatic scenario, the theory also states that a new policy instrument is created, or an old policy instrument is significantly altered or combined with other policy instruments in order to assess and control the situation. This is done mostly institutionally and can from this point forward be added to the list of foreign policy instruments, making it a viable option for the next political scenario. This feedback loop creates a system which rarely needs to be altered in order to adapt to a specific scenario and will quickly incorporate changes for the future when it is forced to (Sylvan, Majeski 14). The client state system has a similar safeguard, as any state or country which is not currently a client or enemy but then starts showing characteristics of one (due to a change of regime or political conviction), can rapidly be 'acquired' and become part of the current system. Imperialistic analyses of the United States are relatively prominent, especially throughout the country's twentieth century, but this analysis revolves around imperialism to justify its theory of client states and subsequently its policy instruments and missions related to these client states.

All these patron-client relations are upheld through a set of organizational systems based in Washington D.C. and the respective countries. The 'surveillance' element of client state imperialism is mainly regulated through these organizational systems. In Washington D.C. these systems comprise organizations such as the CIA, the National Security Council, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). In the client states they are represented by a 'country team' which focuses on surveillance and maintenance of the client state (Sylvan, Majeski 22). This country team provides an in-depth look into the workings of these client states and enables policy making and policy decisions based on its findings. This policy is always made in collaboration with institutions back in Washington D.C.. In this way, policy instruments can be altered slightly or more significantly in order to match the situation in any given client state as optimally as possible. Sylvan and Majeski effectively argue that the presence of this interaction between country teams and U.S. institutions greatly reduces the influence of high ranking decision-makers such as the president and his counsel.

The client state system also banks significantly on the concept of stability within the client states to explain why many U.S. client states remain client states to this day, or why very

few states go from being client states to enemy states or vice versa. As previously mentioned, the U.S. attempts regime maintenance and stability within these client states, but actual stability extends past specific regimes. Sylvan and Majeski postulate that if a regime falls, even if it does so violently or without democratic elections, it is still possible for the U.S. to keep it on as a client state. This is because the crucial stability is based on the country's political ideology and international foreign policy. If a client state is taken over by a leader who spurns the U.S., for instance, but who largely perpetuates the foreign policy and ideology of its previous leader, it is still a viable client state in U.S. eyes. This is a major factor in explaining and justifying the continuity of the U.S. system of client states and extends to its foreign policy continuity; if a country is still viewed as a client state, there is most likely no policy or policy change necessary from this point of view.

A contrary view to that of Sylvan and Majeski is the one offered up by Valerie M. Hudson, who states in her article on actor-specific theory that "All that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups-- and that such decision makers are not best approximated as unitary rational actors equivalent to the state" (1). She promotes the idea that specific political actors play a significant role in creating new foreign policies and upkeeping current ones, and states that these actors are influenced directly and indirectly by insights from a variety of academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology and economics (Hudson 2). According to her political theory, and more specifically international relations theory often leaves out a human element in the decision-making process which could significantly affect the outcome. She also refers to Most and Starr's concept of 'foreign policy substitutability'; "that is to say, for any possible combination of material and structural conditions, there will still be variability in resulting foreign policy" (Hudson 4), a concept which is directly juxtaposed against Sylvan and Majeski's concept of foreign policy continuity. In her view, specific actors function as important factors within a broader organizational behavior, alongside other factors such as information flow and external factors such as other countries' foreign policy.

Other scholarship on this issue has yielded similar results, as is the case for John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein. In *How Presidents Test Reality* they analyze how Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson handled foreign policy decision-making on Vietnam issues in 1954 and

1965 respectively. According to Burke and Greenstein, decisions on both issues were influenced greatly by the character of the sitting president. Eisenhower for instance valued input from all members on his National Security Council and was constantly personally involved, trying to be as informed about the situation as he could be. Because of his involvement in the decision-making process and policy making, Burke and Greenstein characterized policy making in 1954 as follows:

Although Eisenhower and his associates collectively shaped the New Look, the strategy was remarkably congruent with Eisenhower's personal predilection to think in terms of policy trade-offs and interdependencies. (Burke, Greenstein 108)

This passage shows that both Eisenhower's personal strategy and the strategy crafted by both him and his counsel around the 1954 Vietnam crisis reflected their individual and combined persona's. Although Burke and Greenstein are less positive about Johnson's interaction with his National Security Team, they nonetheless acknowledge his influence on the decision-making process in 1965 by stating "Lyndon Johnson's personality and operating style contributed to the fragmentation of the policy-making process and reinforced the failure of his decision makers to examine their differences closely and rigorously" (Burke, Greenstein 144). To Burke and Greenstein, then, high-level decision-makers plays a significant role in the shaping of U.S. foreign policy, a view which is almost completely contradictory to Sylvan and Majeski's more clinical theory of continuity and institutional low-level policy shaping.

Sylvan and Majeski's continuity theory regarding United States foreign policy and client state acquisition and maintenance is relatively unique in its dismissal of individual policy makers, choosing to focus on the country's policy making institutions as a collective, continuous entity. Although its theoretical framework is quite heavy-handed in its division of client and enemy states and unnuanced in its application of policy instruments and missions to foreign policy situations, it still offers a fresh look at U.S. foreign policy history. Its applicability to various foreign policy situations can often be defended relatively easily but is also often countered by other literature and its use of primary sources to indicate the importance of high-

level decision-makers such as Burke and Greenstein's book. This makes it a highly interesting theoretical framework to apply to the Iran-Contra crisis, as a discussion of its merits will be multi-faceted and can shine a new light on a currently rather one-dimensional discussion.

Chapter 2: The role of institutions

Following up on Sylvan and Majeski's continuity theory leads to an increased emphasis placed on U.S. foreign policy institutions, such as the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council. If U.S. foreign policy is as stable as they say it is, these institutions would follow their pre-existing foreign policy motives and policy instruments. Thus, it is important to analyze how these institutions impact long-term patterns in U.S. foreign policy. More specifically, how have these institutions regarded foreign policy to client states in Central America, and how have they been influenced by the rise of Communism across the globe. In 1964, shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis and at the height of Cold War tensions, Hubert H. Humphrey described the value of Central America to U.S. foreign policy; "The obvious geopolitical factors of proximity, size and population make the Latin American continent of particular importance to us" (586). Reagan felt the same way about the continent, even more strongly so because of his fear of a communist threat so close to home. Whether Reagan's strong feelings about this issue could significantly impact the way institutions and their policies respond to Central America will be looked at more in depth later.

Throughout the Cold War, counter-insurgency in South and Central America was a significant part of U.S. foreign policy. This counter-insurgency was propagated mostly through political means and more infrequently through military intervention. These military interventions, carried out by the Department of Defense, were infamously accompanied by the CIA's influence on various Central and South American regimes. Examples of U.S. intervention in Latin America during the Cold War era include struggles against Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959 and influencing the civil war in the Dominican Republic in 1965. More general policy for the South American continent can also be found in Secretary of State George Schultz's statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 27, 1986, where he spoke on the Nicaragua issue:

U.S. assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance is an essential element in our efforts to defend Central America from aggression, to preserve recent democratic gains, and to improve prospects for renewed economic growth and

equitable development. It is an important stimulus to a diplomatic solution to the Central American conflict. It contributes to our defense against Soviet and Cuban military intervention in this hemisphere. (32)

Although Schultz is targeting the Nicaraguan issue specifically, his words reflect on U.S. policy towards Latin America during that period in a broader sense. Defending from aggression and preserving recent democratic gains are two blanket statements which focus on stabilization of U.S.-approved regimes. Attempting to stimulate economic growth in the region is a measure to make the region increasingly independent, with the caveat that this new prosperity be focused around regimes approved by the U.S., so as not to inadvertently aid the opposition. This opposition is mentioned in the last line of Schultz's quote; the Soviet and Cuban military. By building up Central American countries as the U.S. saw fit, they hoped to create a semblance of a barrier between the United States and the looming communist threat. In order to do this effectively they had to foster relations with these countries (Sylvan and Majeski would interpret this as acquiring new client states), and support U.S.-friendly regimes both militarily and economically. U.S. support of the Contras in Nicaragua is largely based around the Sandinista's affiliation with Communism, rather than a shared goal or political ideology. This aligns very well with Stephen and Majeski's client state theory, which postulates support for regimes which can benefit the U.S.' global sense of security and monitoring.

The Department of State, then, was devoting a significant amount of time and resources to the containment of Communism and to the promotion of U.S.-favored regimes in Central America, a foreign policy point which was very important to Ronald Reagan and his administration. The question, however, is whether Reagan's administration significantly influenced this foreign policy or whether it was simply a continuation of policy set in motion much earlier. A release by Under Secretary of State George Ball on U.S. policy toward Cuba in 1964, over twenty years before Schultz's speech, uses the header "Latin America, Tempting Target for Communism" (738) and proceeds to outline how social injustice, economic struggles and an overbearing, corrupted elite have made Latin America as a region susceptible to strains of Communism. This goes to show that the policy decisions made under Reagan's administrations are not as uniquely linked to the *zeitgeist* of the eighties as they may seem; not only had political

ideologies regarding Central America up to that point shown similar characteristics, so had policy decisions by relevant members of the Department of State.

According to Sylvan and Majeski's premise of continuity in American foreign policy history, this apparent Cold War focus on creating a bastion of defense against Communism in Central and South America should stem from an earlier foreign policy perspective on the same region (Sylvan, Majeski 4). In other words, although the rise of Communism in the region was not a threat before World War II, the U.S. would have had the same vested interests and similar foreign policy instruments in place. Richard R Fagen's article on United States Policy in Central America looks back at foreign policy history and agrees with Stephen and Majeski, regarding Central America at least. Looking at the history of U.S. involvement in Central America, Fagen states: "for at least the 50 preceding years, as part of the spirit and ideology of Manifest Destiny, US filibusterers and entrepreneurs had pushed sporadically and often violently into Central America in search of power and profits. In many instances, the US Government was not far behind" (105). This implies that even before the advent of the Cold War and communist tensions and fears, the U.S. government (and its individual citizens) were prone to push into Central America and shape events in the region. Fagen goes on to say that this shaping of events and the use of instruments to do so has become much more systematic and streamlined in the twentieth century, listing several cases where the U.S. interfered directly, such as Nicaragua in 1909 or Honduras in 1911 (105). This goes to show that Central America had always been a point of interest for the U.S. government.

Another institution which had often taken an interest in Central American affairs is the National Security Council, the NSC. The NSC as an institution was home to various points of view on the Iran-Contra issue, being composed of important players from different departments. George Schultz, for instance, Secretary of State under Reagan and Secretary of Labor and later of the Treasury under Nixon, was strongly opposed to the Iranian 'Arms-for-hostages' deal. On the other hand, he was also in favor of removing the Sandinistas from power as soon as possible. Nevertheless, he did not agree with the method Reagan intended to use to accomplish this. Constantine Menges, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs during this period, writes about the dividedness amongst members of the NSC, and even their opposition to the president and his policies: "... some members of the president's own foreign policy cabinet

have also acted against his policy decisions on Central America. ... they have conducted an invisible campaign to pursue their own foreign policy agenda” (94). He then goes on to list a staggering seven situations where individual members of the NSC deviate from the course set by the NSC and the president himself, often in a way which would harm the president's policy decisions. Specifically, the Department of State and its representatives on the NSC favored a political agreement with the Sandinistas which involved the Sandinistas remaining in power but working with the United States to prevent further spread of Communism throughout Central America, in order to prevent a communist Panama or Mexico (Menges 95). This was not an option for Reagan, whose ambition to rid Central America of every shred of Communism far outweighed his willingness to reason with certain communists, even in order to stop Communism on a more relevant, much larger scale. This is not to say Reagan was hardheaded, narrowminded, or had no vision, he just had no interest in a more diplomatic attempt to solve the problem of Communism. It was such a comprehensive and significant issue to him, that he opted for a ‘to-the-ground’ approach. Additionally, the Sandinista government had previously supported communist guerrillas in other parts of Central America, in much the same way the U.S. would support the Contras’ fight against the Sandinistas, which meant that negotiations were off the table. The NSC under Reagan was polarized because of Schultz’ and the Department of State’s reluctance to follow Reagan’s policy directives and their attempts to push a more diplomatic policy. However, Menges states after another failed attempt by the Department of state to drastically change U.S. policy towards Nicaragua, that “the National Security Council had served its intended purpose: to give the president all sides of a major policy issue and assure that he was in charge” (127). This shows the effectiveness of the NSC as an apparatus which informs the president of everything happening within his administration.

Institutions such as the CIA also started showing an interest in Central America, albeit much later (the CIA was founded in 1947 following the events of World War II and the role of British secret service). The CIA is most famous, or even infamous, for its alleged role in overthrowing and replacing a plethora of governments in Central and South America during the fifties, sixties, seventies, and eighties. A poignant example of this is the 1954 Guatemalan coup, dubbed ‘Operation PBSUCCESS’ by the CIA, which deposed a democratically elected president in favor of a leader, Carlos Castillo Armas, who was more aligned with U.S. ideology (Fagen 106). Coincidentally, this coup also fits into Stephen and Majeski’s theory, as it states that the

U.S. is not bothered by an undemocratic leadership or even a dictatorship amongst their clients, if the client in question appears to remain loyal (Sylvan, Majeski 31). Another, more recent and less conspicuous instance of the CIA interfering with governmental affairs in Central America is their sponsoring of Montesinos's regime in the nineties. A weekly intelligence review by the CIA in December of 1960 also displays how closely the CIA was monitoring communist movement in Central America at the time: "Fourteen leaders of the communist-front April and May Revolutionary party (PRAM) – are about to leave for Cuba" (Central Intelligence Agency 1960, 2). The document also frequently mentions 'the communist threat' and shows the continued interest for the Central American region displayed by the CIA.

Much of this anti-communist CIA narrative which started in the early twenties and continued well into the nineties was marketed as part of a larger national security issue. CIA military interventions in the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and Chile in the sixties (Fagen 107) showed how much Central and Latin America were at the forefront of institutional policy-making and how entwined the region was with the nation's anti-communist rhetoric. With the advent of Carter's administration in the seventies, which claimed to be more focused on a human rights and unobtrusive approach to foreign policy and which was a more left-leaning and liberal administration than previous administrations (Cohen 198), there appeared to be some semblance of peace in Central America. Military and economic interventions were far less frequent than they were in the seventies and the administration seemed to place less of an emphasis on creating a wall against the looming threat of Communism, appearing content to maintain their current clients in Central and South America. The final years of the seventies showed Carter and his administration attempting to create an atmosphere of centrism and human rights in the region, hoping that moderate intervention and rejection of leftist beliefs would yield better results than heavy-handed anti-leftist rhetoric and policy implementation (Fagen 109). This approach ultimately failed, as the region simply did not respond to these tactics well. Carter's nuance on the issue also made him seem weak and paved the way for supporters of Reagan and the Republican Party to capitalize on disgruntled reactions to this policy failure.

In his article on Latin American affairs, Fauriol mentions a similar issue to Carter's, during the George H. W. Bush administration directly following Reagan's;

Attempts to put Latin American affairs on the back burner had by the last quarter of 1989 stumbled predictably over the renewal of violence in El Salvador, the end of the cease-fire in Nicaragua, the October coup attempt in Panama and subsequent U.S. military operation, a far from complete regional debt agenda and a strong Latin American drug connection. (117)

This highlights two interesting points concerning U.S. foreign policy towards Central America, especially when put into perspective alongside Stephen and Majeski's continuity theory. The first is that different administrations have attempted to take radically different approaches to the region and its long-standing turmoil; Carter and Bush were far less inclined to take comprehensive and clearly outlined military or economic action than Reagan, who was hell-bent on creating a Central America which would function as a barrier against the communist threat. The second point, which ostensibly follows the continuity theory quite readily, is that regardless of the administration's original policy goals towards Central America a similar outcome was forced by developments in the region. These developments appear to dismiss and disregard direct efforts by U.S. administrations, originally based on political ideology. However, Sylvan and Majeski largely attribute the continuity and unchanging character of U.S. foreign policy to policy trends and static policy instruments throughout U.S. political history, rather than influences from without such as the state of the Central American region.

Fauriol also places emphasis on another motivation for the Bush administration to focus on Central America, namely the spread of drugs and drug empires. While this was also an important facet of Reagan's presidency, including his famous 'Just say no' campaign involving his wife, Nancy Reagan, Reagan kept his war on drugs largely within the borders of the United States. Bush took meetings in Colombia, cooperated with Mexico, created border task forces, and attempted to work around the Latin American principle of noninterference (which prevented regional cooperation on anti-drug issues) (Fauriol 119). This is another example of varying approaches and interests between administrations, even though Bush's war on drugs involved questionable military intervention in the same way Reagan's war on Communism did. The bush administration also appeared to have focused on a wider range of issues present in Central America, including the drug problem, debt problems, democratization of the region, and U.S.-

Latin American trade relations. Reagan on the other hand was extremely focused on containment over everything else. However, as both presidencies were involved in military conflicts and U.S. military intervention in Central America, a certain sense of long term policy and U.S. attitude towards Central America can be extrapolated.

This long term policy has revolved around U.S. institutions and their involvement in multiple Central American countries, fueled on by specific administration and their policies. Although the motivations behind this policy and its direct effects differ greatly, they all herald similar outcomes, perhaps due to the implementation of similar policy instruments as Sylvan and Majeski suggest. Political ideologies in U.S. government concerning Central America have focused on containing Communism, containing the spread of drugs, increasing democracy levels within the region, and ignoring all sense of democracy in order to instate U.S.-friendly governments or leaders. These were seen as the most effective ways to promote political stability across the region, something which would in turn prevent the rise of Communism and reduce the amount of U.S. intervention needed to make sure there were no anti-American sentiments. All these differing and seemingly contradictory goals have used similar policies and policy instruments, however, such as monitoring, military intervention, military support, economic support, and full-bore military and political coups. Many of these policy instruments are identical to ones mentioned by Sylvan and Majeski in their concept of policy continuity. Sylvan and Majeski also state, however, that these policy instruments are used in order to maintain motives and policy goals which remain stable for a client state or region, with possible (minor) variations in policy instruments and the use of them. It is arguable whether policy goals and administrative or institutional motives remain stable in this case, due to the wide range of efforts from the fifties to the nineties.

From an institutional point of view there has been a relatively stable vocalization and implementation of U.S. interests in Central America. This was clearly displayed in the homogeneity of Department of State releases from 1960 to 1980 and the similar motives in CIA releases from the same period. A large part of U.S. involvement in Central America revolved around promoting democratization and providing an enhanced socio-economic situation for these countries in order to ameliorate citizens' well-being in order to prevent revolution and to make the concept of revolution seem less attractive where possible (Brands 290). In situations where

this was impossible or ineffective, regime change and instatement of a U.S.-favored leader was often the policy, a policy the CIA is still widely known for. Brands also mentions an important factor of political success in Central and South America being “an ability to define objectives that are consonant with US political will and capabilities” (312), as being able to assess these politically and socially charged situation effectively allows for a correct implementation of policy instruments.

Chapter 3: How Unique was Iran-Contra?

U.S. foreign policy throughout history has traditionally used various 'doctrines', pertaining to specific eras and geographically distinct areas, since the introduction of the Monroe doctrine in 1823. The Monroe doctrine, for example, limited European power with regards to the Americas and further colonization of the American continent, an issue which was mostly pertinent to the nineteenth century, although it was most recently underwritten by President John F. Kennedy. More recent doctrines are Roosevelt's corollary to Monroe's doctrine, the Truman doctrine, the Carter doctrine, and the Reagan doctrine. These doctrines display a consistent and stable foreign policy; "While many other presidents announced overarching foreign policy goals, the term "presidential doctrine" refers to a more consistently applied foreign policy ideology" (Kelly 1). Presidential doctrines are an interesting aspect of foreign policy, as they indicate both stability, throughout the period of the doctrine, and change, between one doctrine and the following one. Sylvan and Majeski do not pay much attention to the varying doctrines, stating instead that the continuity of U.S. foreign policy simply lies in its desire to maintain clients and combat enemies (Sylvan, Majeski 6), postulating doctrines as simply an extension of this inherent goal. The difference in approach between different presidents and their doctrines can significantly influence policy towards specific countries, however, and is therefore important to take into consideration. The Carter doctrine was the most recent doctrine before Reagan's presidency which focused primarily on U.S. economic and national interests in the Persian Gulf (Kelly 1). Although Carter's doctrine was also influenced by Soviets due to Afghanistan's expansion into the Persian Gulf, Soviet activity in this part of the world is less relevant to the Reagan doctrine, which focuses on Central and South America. The Reagan doctrine is also the most salient doctrine pertaining to the Iran-Contra case. It is often cited as a direct precursor of the Iran-Contra scandal and an important influence on relations between the United States and Central and South America. Reagan phrased his doctrine during his State of the Union speech in 1985:

We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives--on every continent from Afghanistan to Nicaragua--to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth. (State of the Union 2016)

The Reagan doctrine, then, concentrated on defying 'Soviet-supported aggression' globally, and securing American rights. Stating that it meant to defy this aggression also meant that it would do this in any country or against any government, as long as the Soviets were involved and supportive of the regime or of the revolution. Securing rights which had been America's from birth is far more obscure and less relevant to Reagan's policy on global Communism.

Reagan's doctrine was based on Reagan's fear of the spread of Communism globally. He was particularly afraid Central and South American countries would be more easily charmed by communist notions, due to many of these nations being weakened politically or economically. Although it is unlikely that Reagan was specifically concerned with the general well-being of citizens or the health and strength of governments in this region which did not oppose the U.S., he felt the region was too 'close to home' to receive the same treatment as the rest of the world. U.S. foreign policy towards Communism globally up until Reagan's administration was one of containment: it attempted to keep Communism contained to countries which were irreversibly communist, such as the Soviet Union, China, and an array of Eastern European countries which had forged alliances with the Soviet Union. It first did this by shoring up and strengthening the political and economic status of nations which shared borders with communist states or were otherwise more likely to be convinced by communist ideals. In the seventies, containment was brought about and perpetuated through *détente*, a different approach to the concept of containment with a similar result. Reagan's method of intervention was also more broad and far-reaching than previous iterations, however. Whereas before the U.S. had attempted to contain Communism by supporting governments which were fighting against communist uprisings and insurgencies, Reagan's administration took it one step further. Under Reagan, support for anti-communist institutions did not stop at currently active governments, but was extended to anti-communist revolutions fighting against communist governments, also known as 'freedom fighters'. This term is ironic in the case of the Contras fighting against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, as the Contras were a remnant of the old dictatorial Somoza regime. Regardless, Reagan supported their cause because it opposed Communism. Reagan's new policy involved offering military and financial support to countries which were actively resisting their communist governments, especially in South and Central America, and paved the way for an expanded anti-

communist foreign policy, through the aid of anti-communist revolutionaries such as the Contras in Nicaragua.

At the same time, Reagan was also focused on expanding the United States' arsenal, to display U.S. military superiority to the world and stay one step ahead of the Soviet Union. This put pressure on the Soviets, with Cohen stating in his book that the Soviet leadership felt most threatened by "the apparent intention of the United States to begin a new high-tech race for defensive weapons" (215). Because Reagan's doctrine was so much more active in fighting Communism and attacking its roots to prevent its spread, it is heralded as a significant change in U.S. foreign policy history, coming off Carter's more held-back approach. Carter focused on the promotion of human rights globally and establishing the U.S. as a major power without significant new or revised foreign policy, except his doctrine regarding the Persian Gulf. Much of Reagan's policy-building stemmed from Reagan's view of the Soviets as the "Evil Empire", a term he used in a 1983 speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, along with describing the forces of Communism as "The focus of evil in the modern world" ("Evil Empire" Speech 2008). This shows how far removed his stance on Communism was from that of the U.S. government in the previous decade. The 1970s were characterized as the era of 'détente', a concept described by Henry Kissinger as "an environment in which competitors can regulate and restrain their differences and ultimately move from competition to cooperation" (Wood 198).

Détente was a period of U.S. foreign policy in the 1970s which revolved around de-escalating conflict between the Soviets and the Americans significantly. Previous foreign policy objectives had been focused on the containment of the Soviets and Communism across the globe (Wood 198), and détente expanded on this, meaning a willingness to co-exist in order to prevent further strife. This willingness to co-exist would not significantly impact Western military buildup or the existing alliances with other Western states, rather preserve it at its current level whilst using diplomatic foreign policy to strengthen 'bonds' with the Soviets. Détente was effectively a different approach to the same issue, Communism, with the same goal of attempting to contain Communism. It just did so in a more diplomatic and less invasive way. This stemmed from increasingly high tensions between the two superpowers during the 60s, peaking with the Cuban Missile Crisis, the spread of Communism across Eastern Europe, and various proxy wars

in multiple continents (Daigle 195). Parallel to this, the arms race and increased nuclear arsenal expansion from both the United States and the Soviet Union meant that the outbreak of an actual war between the two would result in Armageddon. Although the Soviets felt as if their nuclear arms capabilities were still somewhat limited in the early seventies, their global influence had been growing steadily through relations with various countries across the globe (Daigle 196). Additionally, Daigle argues that in 1969 Nixon needed détente in order to be able to fully extract U.S. troops from the Vietnam War. This would not be possible with the current relationship between the U.S. and the Soviets, but a system of careful cooperation and military deterrence would provide a base which facilitated extricating the U.S. from the shambles that was the Vietnam War (196). For the Soviets a policy of détente was interesting due to their lacking military capacity and their break with communist China, greatly reducing their overall global presence and one of their foremost and largest allies. Interestingly however, this significant shift in U.S. foreign policy towards the Soviets and the communist bloc does not necessarily differentiate from the linear U.S. foreign policy goals as described by Sylvan and Majeski. Although the direct interaction and political diplomacy towards the Soviet Union changed, these different means still built towards the same end. The Soviets remained contained and it was difficult for them to spread Communism due to both their reduced influence and their desire to keep a good standing with the Americans to promote détente and deterrence.

Reagan's policies, additionally, served the same end-goal and were part of a similar foreign policy directive towards countries in Central and South America specifically, and Third World countries across the globe more generally as Carter's. The difference lay mainly in their method of achieving these goals; Carter was plagued by moral reservations and disagreements within his team of advisors and thus struggled to make a pro-active decision or effectively intervene in affairs South of the U.S (Westad 331). Reagan was far less involved as a president when it came to global affairs and U.S. foreign politics, and far less interested in being up to date on exact foreign policy goals and global political situations. It seems highly unlikely for a president to be completely absent from decision making on salient foreign policy questions, and this was not the case with Reagan either. Rather, he was active in decision making, but many of his ideas were not backed up by or based on theoretical reasoning or analysis of past political conflict and resolution in the relevant country or region. An example by Westad is how Reagan advocated for U.S. interventionism in the Third World: "While impervious to any of its

theoretical underpinnings, Ronald Reagan had from the mid-1970s onwards become one of the main critics of American “inaction” in the Third World” (333). Reagan was frustrated by this inaction and attributed the rise and growth of the Soviet Union to it, further increasing his own tendency towards interventionism. Foreign policy objectives and directives to Latin and South America did not drastically differ from previous administrations under Reagan, then. In fact, throughout the majority of the Cold War, the U.S. held a similar stance towards Third World countries, differing mostly on the level of policy execution, with some influence by personal presidential ideologies. As already mentioned, interventionism already took place throughout the South-American continent in the fifties, sixties, and seventies, it was not just Reagan's prerogative or his very own idea. Important also is to note that different president's approaches to the issue of Communism could still strive for and achieve the same results. An example of this is how Nixon introduced *détente*, Carter opted for a more modest approach to foreign policy in general and the communist issue more specifically, focusing instead on a human rights approach, while Reagan went on the offensive and painted the Soviets as an evil counterpart to the inherent good of the U.S. Their stances and policies on Communism differed significantly, but ultimately served the same end goal of containing and repressing Communism.

Another example of U.S. foreign policy towards the Third World remaining stable over time but being affected by specific administrations or eras of U.S. political ideology was the Carter administration's struggle with Iran, set in the same period. Policy towards Iran had seen few bumps or major revisions since the toppling of the Mosaddeq regime in 1954, supported by the U.S. (Westad 289). After the toppling of the Mosaddeq regime, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi came into power. At the time Iran was a cornerstone of America's fight against the spread of Communism in the Middle-East, so the U.S. was hell-bent on supporting it sufficiently, in order to fight back against Communism. During the sixties, economic modernization efforts in Iran increased by order of the Shah, and by virtue of immense U.S. economic support, and Iran could truly be regarded as a U.S. client, within Sylvan and Majeski's client-state framework. These developments backfired however, leading to economic and political instability and turmoil. The Carter administration's approach to this crisis was very much in character. Carter continued to promote a spread of American values and beliefs to shore up defenses against the communist threat, instead of opting for a more interventionist approach (Westad, 293). After the Iranian revolution in 1978 and the change of the Iranian regime, the U.S. still attempted to retain

Iran as a client by building relations with the new regime, based largely on a mutual anti-communist ideology. If the U.S. had chosen not to continue client relations with this new regime, it would have required an institutional framework and set of policy directives which were not necessarily present. Westad argues that this revolution was important because it was the rise of a new American enemy in Islamic anti-imperialist movements in the Middle-East (298).

Theoretically speaking, the rise of a new and considerable enemy to the United States could indicate a shift in foreign policy towards the Middle East in order to adjust to these new developments. However, it is also important to note the relevance of the U.S.'s willingness to adapt to a new Iranian regime in order to continue its anti-communist regime in the region. This is a characteristic of U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War and more generally according to Sylvan and Majeski: it represents how the U.S. is relatively indifferent to a country's regime, ruler, and often even political ideologies or leanings. Instead, U.S. attitude towards other nation states is based on whether that state is identified as a client or enemy. Although it is possible for a state to convert from client to enemy or vice versa, this rarely happens, and it requires significant change in that country's attitude towards the U.S. and its ideals. This is why Iran is an interesting example of a client state, as its regime from the 50s to the late 70s was supported by the U.S., but even after the fall of this regime it was kept on as a client and part of the same foreign policy objectives.

Reagan's more comprehensive and aggressive approach towards Communism in Central and South America is also considered by Westad in his analysis of the 1983 invasion of Grenada by the U.S. as "The breakthrough for a more offensive strategy against revolutionary regimes" (345). Seen as an easy victory for the U.S., close to home, it was the ideal opportunity to fight back against the Left and Communism, with minimal chance of failure or U.S. loss of face. If Reagan's more interventionist approach in their 'backyard' is actually a change of policy or at the very least policy implementation from earlier administrations, this is an important turning point in U.S. foreign policy history, away from more hands-off policies such as the economic warfare against Costa Rica in the five years prior to the Grenada invasion. The question remains whether this shift in policy and approach would significantly impact overall policy goals. It paved the way for other interventions in South and Central America under the Reagan administration, such as their involvement in Nicaragua. U.S. involvement in Nicaragua and in the Iran-Contra scandal as a whole is relatively in line with earlier foreign policy objectives in

the sense that it facilitated a regime change in favor of U.S. ideals and that it ended up having horrific results for Nicaragua as a country (Over 30.000 dead) (Westad 347). It is hard to argue, then, that the Iran-Contra scandal was a unique event in U.S. foreign policy history in this sense: it follows a set of U.S. foreign policy objectives which dates back to the start of the Cold War, focusing on the containment of Communism, and arguably an even broader set of objectives which have been around for much longer than the Cold War; 1898 if Sylvan and Majeski are to be believed. Additionally, although Reagan created and implemented a new foreign policy doctrine which took a much more aggressive stance regarding the fight against global communist governments, especially in Central and South America, one could argue that this change in doctrine still did not impact the continuity of U.S. foreign policy as a whole. In fact, Sylvan and Majeski imply in *U.S. Foreign Policy in perspective: Clients, enemies and empire* that doctrines in general are more relevant to actual implementation of policy towards specific countries than actually affecting the larger picture of foreign policy (98). Regardless of its impact on general foreign policy history, the Reagan doctrine made Iran-Contra possible, by creating a set of circumstances and policy objectives which were far more pro-active in regard to fighting back against Communism than previous U.S. foreign policy objectives had been. Institutional precedent on the matter of Reagan's doctrine is relative: although CIA and DoD intervention had been a factor in Central and South American regime building and U.S. relations with these regimes prior to Reagan's administration, Reagan's more comprehensive approach to dealing with Communism in these regions still expanded U.S. foreign policy directives.

The unique aftermath of the Iran-Contra Affair required a specific but not unlikely set of circumstances in order to be significantly different from similar occurrences in U.S. presidential history, such as Nixon's Watergate scandal. These circumstances were manifold and ranged from circumstances which seemed more inconsequential, such as presidential approval, to far more considerable and specific circumstances, such as the political doctrine and balance of power in the American continent at the time. All these circumstances turned a massive scandal which already had few antecedents into an affair which seemed unique, but is significantly aligned with Sylvan and Majeski's Continuity theory.

Conclusion

Iran-Contra is often classified as a unique event in U.S. political history with relative ease. This classification, however, is only superficial and quite simplistic, as there are many factors which are a part of defining a specific foreign policy event as 'unique'. It is also important to define the parameters of its uniqueness, in this case within Sylvan and Majeski's model of foreign policy continuity. Sylvan and Majeski have attempted to redefine the landscape of U.S. foreign policy with their continuity theory by stating that there is very little significant progress or change across its entire history. Although this theory loses some of its soundness due to its own overstatement of its scope and magnitude, it can still be used as a valuable tool to reconsider events in U.S. foreign policy history, such as the Iran-Contra scandal. It defines events such as these as simply a continuation of the same policy end goal, albeit using other means or influenced slightly by personal input from high-level decision-makers such as President Reagan himself. Another important factor in determining how unique a specific event is, is any institutional precedent or lack thereof regarding the same manner of issues or events. Whether U.S. governmental institutions have been through a similar event before or not, and more importantly, regardless of whether they have been or not, do they have a policy or policies in place in order to deal with such an event? A key aspect of Sylvan and Majeski's continuity theory is the presence of long-lasting institutional policy instruments which can be adapted to apply to almost any foreign policy situation. Additionally, even if these policy instruments cannot be adapted sufficiently, they can be combined, or a new long-lasting policy instrument can be created for future use.

Institutions under the Reagan administration often referred to previously instated policy instruments and foreign policy doctrines, and a long-lasting American set of ideals and policies regarding Central and South America. These ideals and policies had already been showcased by earlier U.S. forays into the continent in the three decades before the Iran-Contra scandal. Different major branches of government and influential institutions such as the CIA, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense had previously been involved in civil wars, coups, and regime changes in the region. As they were doing so, they followed a set of objectives which remained relatively stable and unchanged over these few decades. This set of objectives revolved around creating an environment which was conducive to the spread of democracy and

allowed, to some extent, for self-determination, as long as this happened in a way which was in line with U.S. global foreign policy. From this perspective, institutional precedent was key in how the Reagan administration handled the Iran-Contra Affair: it fell in line with previous policy instruments and objectives and was nuanced by personal input from actors such as Reagan and North. Consequently, it is impossible to argue that the Iran-Contra Affair was a wholly unique and original occurrence in U.S. political history. It does not exclude the possibility, however, that Iran-Contra had certain unique aspects which set it apart from the general continuity of U.S. foreign policy. Its entire existence and occurrence were made possible by the introduction of the Reagan Doctrine and its emphasis on pro-actively stopping the spread of Communism in Central and South America. Reagan's powerful anti-communist narrative in an America which was seeing a rise in conservative sentiment and a desire for an active administration meant that after the scandal took place, consequences were limited. Even public opinion of Reagan did not suffer a lasting hit after the scandal, dropping from 63% approval in late October of 1986 to 47% in early December, but bouncing back to 63% by December 1988, the final poll of his presidency (Newport, Jones, Saad 2004). This was due to a variety of circumstances which made the aftermath of the Iran-Contra Affair and the prosecution of the people involved unique. The Iran-Contra Affair then, had certain unique aspects but cannot be classified as a true deviation from U.S. foreign policy continuity as it is described by Sylvan and Majeski. Many of its supposedly unique features had previously been seen in some iteration in U.S. foreign policy history and were not unique to Iran-Contra. On the other hand, however, certain features such as the relatively moderate prosecution of those involved and its specific place in time within a set of foreign policy doctrines can be used to categorize the Affair as somewhat unique. Iran-Contra fits Sylvan and Majeski's model of continuity relatively well, but also has unique and contradictory features. This is to be expected, however, as a model which postulates a bold and broad concept such as a foreign policy continuity is bound to lack complete applicability to specific foreign policy events, rather situate these in the larger context of foreign policy history.

The uniqueness of Iran-Contra is a concept which would be interesting to direct further attention and research to, for instance to its relation to another major presidential scandal such as Nixon's Watergate. Prior to Watergate, the Executive Branch and its presidents were often not scrutinized heavily by Congress or the public. After the Watergate scandal was brought to light, faith in the presidential office and in its honesty was greatly reduced, and subsequent presidential

actions and Executive orders were often analyzed more thoroughly. Both public and Congressional analysis and condemnation of the players in the Iran-Contra affair, especially Reagan, were much more in line with the norm pre-Watergate. This could be explained in part by Reagan's popularity and by the fact that it concerned foreign policy and not domestic political issues, but not entirely. The comparison between Watergate and Iran-Contra is made especially interesting because of the scale of both scandals and the similarities and differences between them. Additionally, further research into Reagan's legacy on U.S. foreign policy towards Central and South America could provide salient and current new insight.

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