PEACE CORPS TO THE RIGHT:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. PEACE CORPS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

A Master’s Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Management and Policy.

By

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ABSTRACT

One conceptual goal of the Peace Corps is to promote world peace and friendship; one practical goal is to provide assistance to developing countries. I examine the duality of the Peace Corps mission to serve as an a-political agency of human development and to promote public diplomacy, as well as consider a third, external goal of United States strategic foreign interests. The aim of this paper is to determine when these goals compete and the conditions under which one goal takes precedence over the others. I investigate whether external factors beyond the stated mission lead to host nations receiving favorable treatment from the Peace Corps, using panel data for six Central American countries over the period 1973-1999. My results indicate a robust positive relationship between factors such as right-leaning government disposition, democratic institutional presence and the amount of Peace Corps activity a host country experiences.
THANK YOU

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This thesis is dedicated to my little brothers and my big sister.

Sincere gratitude,

CHRISTA MARIE HALL
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The La Paz Incident

Controversy ensued in 2008 when the Peace Corps Bolivia was withdrawn and programs were "temporarily suspended" due to deteriorating political relationships between the United States government and that of President Evo Morales. In 2007, while inducting thirty new Peace Corps trainees in La Paz, U.S. Embassy Security Officer Vincent Cooper asked the new trainees to report on other international volunteers in the region, particularly Cuban and Venezuelan aid workers. Peace Corps Deputy Director Doreen Salazar, who was present at the time interrupted, clarifying to trainees that they were not to comply. "Peace Corps is an a-political institution," said Salazar to ABC News. "We made it clear to the embassy that this was an inappropriate request, and they agreed." However Cooper went on to ask the same of new Fulbright Scholars in Bolivia, which also made headlines. The actual details of the incident are somewhat nebulous, but within one year followed the suspension of all Peace Corps Programs in Bolivia. The one thing fairly certain about this situation is that this is a current example of the Peace Corps being used as foreign policy tool. Not as an intelligence gathering tool like many have suspected, but as one of negative reinforcement. The removal was seen as a punishment for non-compliance with U.S. Foreign Policy and the Ambassador's ejection.

Tensions had been high between the two nations during that time, especially after Evo Morales came into office, challenging the Bush Administration’s anti-coca leaf
production campaign and right-leaning agenda in Bolivia. After Morales expelled U.S. Ambassador Phillip Goldberg deeming him “persona non-grata” for allegedly siding with opposition factions in the coca producing Chapare region, the Peace Corps Director Ron Tschetter pulled all volunteers and suspended all programs in Bolivia for the second time. The Peace Corps’ official line was that the security of the Peace Corps Volunteers was in jeopardy. There is speculation that the United States was punishing the Morales administration for not complying with the new agricultural demands. Alongside Peace Corps Bolivia suspension, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) de-certified Bolivian drug eradication efforts, USAID suspended all programs and Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATDEA) trade preferences were suspended by executive order of George W. Bush.

What one learns from this incident is two-fold: 1) judging by Salazar’s reaction, the Peace Corps maintains its mission while keeping distance from U.S. intelligence gathering, 2) foreign relations can have an effect on the Peace Corps’ activities. This begs a few questions: What motivates the Peace Corps beyond the stated mission? Why do they open and close posts? Budget and security are examples of concerns that might affect Peace Corps activities. These are understandably given, however they do not always take precedence. Other factors hold heavier weight. United States foreign policy and administration preferences can sway the decision-making process.

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a Bolivia expelled U.S. ambassador Philip Goldberg on September 10, 2008 on the grounds that he was supporting the opposition because of his meetings with militant opposition leaders, and because of U.S. funding for opposition groups in Bolivia (cepr.org).

b The Bolivian government expelled the Peace Corps in 1971 after a fictional movie depicting the sterilization of Bolivian women, Yawar Mallku or “Blood of the Condor,” ignited anti-American sentiment, as well as widespread accusations from locals. The organization did not return to the country until 1990, and the volunteers are still shown the film during training and avoid family planning programs.
The combination of U.S. administration’s and the host country’s strategic goals can transform the Peace Corps into a foreign policy tool. While the effects are most often relatively benign, the symbolism is profound. There are countless stories and opinions of the Peace Corps, many of which involved the Peace Corps being a part of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. However every case is different, and given the Peace Corps’ mission, there should be no particular pattern of involvement beyond developmental need. The Peace Corps has often been accused of being a tool of the CIA, however there has yet to be concrete proof of this. There are incidents where the Peace Corps was clearly used for U.S. foreign policy purposes.

I examine the duality of the Peace Corps mission to serve as an a-political agency of human development and public diplomacy, as well as consider the third, external goal of strategic foreign interests of the United States. My hypothesis is that while the Peace Corps maintains its mission on the ground as an a-political agency that promotes development and diplomacy, the goals of the Peace Corps do compete against one another in certain circumstances, and on occasion one may take precedence over others. I predict that patterns will emerge regarding activity in Central America, and will be found in accordance with strategic U.S. foreign interests such as communism containment, the existence of democratic institutions and the host nations’ proclivities toward the right end of the political spectrum. The ultimate purpose of this study is essentially to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the politicization of United States humanitarian assistance, particularly involving the United States Peace Corps in Central America. Answering the questions I have posed with hard evidence and historical anecdotes will help those who study international aid and foreign relations
policy better understand the nature and incentive of development aid vis-à-vis the United States Peace Corps.

1.2 The Geopolitical Context of the Peace Corps Inception

The Peace Corps was born in 1961 after John F. Kennedy first planted the seed in Michigan during his presidential campaign. A few others had proposed it previously and some believe that he thought maybe even Nixon would consider proposing it. At an impromptu speech on campus of the University of Michigan, Kennedy announced the idea. At the apropos arena of the University of California, Berkeley he outlined it. After narrowly winning the popular vote, Kennedy took office and his first real order was to get the Peace Corps moving. To make it official, he authorized Public Law 87-293, determined to be an “Act to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps.” The plan was to spread ideals of democracy and to counter the “The Ugly American”

c image.

The geopolitical context of the era is crucial. Although goodwill, cultural reciprocity and peace were Kennedy’s agenda, peace was not the only purpose. Kennedy’s speech that morning never actually mentioned the word “peace.” He discussed how Americans serving abroad would help to defend a free society. He stressed that the Soviet Union “had hundreds of men and women, scientists, physicists, teachers, engineers, doctors, and nurses . . . prepared to spend their lives abroad in the

\[ \text{The Ugly American} \] is the title of the 1958 political novel by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer that eventually led to the term becoming an idiom describing the image of Americans abroad as ostentatious and pretentious.
service of world communism” (National Archives, archives.gov, 2011). Peace corps was a grassroots approach to spread American ideals.

At a news conference after signing Executive Order 10924 establishing the Peace Corps on a pilot basis, Kennedy stated, “Our Peace Corps is not designed as an instrument of diplomacy or propaganda or ideological conflict. It is designed to permit our people to exercise more fully their responsibilities in the great common cause of world development.”d Thus, the Peace Corps was born.

After two months in office Kennedy pledged that the U.S. would help transform Latin America into a “vibrant progressive area of the world.” He stated that he “perceived ominous socioeconomic crisis and deep yearning for change.” Kennedy wanted to modernize societies and build self-reliant democracies. He also feared that the region was “ripe for revolution” – that they would embrace the Soviet Union and communism – like in Cuba. On March 13, 1961 Kennedy hosted a White House ceremony to present his reform ideas to Latin American dignitaries and staffers (Rabe, p. 10). This was when he outlined the Alliance for Progress; ostensibly his plan to underwrite a socioeconomic restoration Latin America. He said he wanted to, “Demonstrate to the entire world the framework of democratic institutions.”

It is no secret that in the context of the Cold War the U.S. was involved in a contest of ideologies, and sought to play some of them out in underdeveloped nations. The Peace Corps played a role in this struggle. Kennedy’s brother-in-law and public protégé Sargent R. Shriver was the first Director of the Peace Corps. It became his

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baby and he whole-heartedly believed in its mission. When referring to the Peace Corps’ end-game, he stated, “If these countries succeed in their plans for economic, social and political progress, it will not matter if they agree with us on a given issue, or even whether they like us. If they become healthy, democratic societies, they will not be a threat to world peace. That is what matters.” (Viorst p.20)

Shriver believed that though the Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) carry no rifles to battle, they serve their country on fronts that are “vital to the peace around the world.” He envisioned the Peace Corps as an a-political, altruistic agency. Instead of battling military combatants, he understood the Peace Corps’ enemies to be hunger, ignorance, and disease. However the early days faced myriad growing pains; quality was sacrificed for quantity and as far as volunteers went, ‘exceptional was the exception.’ The experience was for the American and PCVs’ abilities were oversold to developing countries, such as Ethiopia, India, the Philippines and Colombia. Many were sent with few real skills, language ability or even cultural awareness. Many referred to this as the ‘numbers game.’ It was a tenuous start for the Peace Corps; too many volunteers were sent with too little direction. This would not go unnoticed or un-criticized. Another relentless criticism was how much autonomy this new cadre really had. In his book, author of When the World Calls: Fifty Years of The Peace Corps, Stanley Meisler asks the Peace Corps’ independence. How much could it divorce itself from embassies? He states, “Peace Corps independence is not unlimited. But the nature and extent of the limits are often ambiguous.” (Meisler p.79)

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* Interview with Stanley Meisler; Mr. Meisler is a former Evaluation Specialist for the Peace Corps and is perhaps the foremost authority on the history of the agency. His book and our dialog have been paramount to my understanding of the agency’s history.
1.3 The Post-Cold War Peace Corps

In his book *Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Containment After the Cold War*, Robert Litwak discusses the shift of U.S. foreign policies as they go from a bipolar to a multi-polar system. The Cold War era presented a clear-cut divide between the first and the second world, ideologically. The post-Cold War transition also changed the status of non-allied nations like North Korea, Iran and Cuba, from communist states to ‘rogue’ states. During the Cold War, Washington found it easier to define who the enemy was: communist. Current geo-strategic interests have evolved since the end of the Cold War; ideologies and alliances have had a new emphasis on domestic and economic interests. As evident by the incident in Bolivia, the Peace Corps does still get caught in the crosshairs of U.S. foreign strategy. In the past it was defined as communist, today the more ‘rogue’ a state is, the less democratic and the more left-leaning its system is. Therefore, the patterns of the Peace Corps post-Cold War remain constant; the presence of a right-leaning, democratic government should experience more Peace Corps programs than left-leaning, authoritarian regimes.

From the first program in Ghana to today’s almost ubiquitous presence in developing nations around the world, the Peace Corps’ reach and impact has been profound. To fully understand the organization, it is important to know the basic facts about the Peace Corps:
Figure 1: Peace Corps Facts

Peace Corps Facts:
Officially established: March 1, 1961
Americans who have served: 200,000+
Peace Corps director: Aaron S. Williams
  Nominated by Barack Obama in August, 2009
Host countries served to date: 139
Current Host countries: 77
Volunteers and trainees: 8,655
Gender: 60% female, 40% male
Marital status: 93% single, 7% married
Minorities: 19% of Volunteers
Average age: 28
Volunteers over 50: 7%
Education: 90% have at least an undergraduate degree

THE PEACE CORPS MISSION:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Even the mission itself suggests a passive diplomatic agenda to improve others' opinions of Americans (and vice versa). And it seems to work. In a study by PEW Research Center on Anti-American Sentiment Analysis¹, where Latin America had the strongest Peace Corps presence, results show that opinions of the US are higher where the Peace Corps spent more time. In 2002, Hondurans reported 81% favorable rating.

¹ http://pewglobal.org/database/?indicator=1&group=2
Though it gets federal funding, the Peace Corps began as and remains an independent agency. This independence however can be challenged, particularly depending on who is in the White House at the time. The Peace Corps’ independence is essential to ensuring that it will not be used to advance the short-term goals of whoever’s administration is in power. It is also a necessary condition to garnering the trust and respect of the host countries.

Respective to the whole federal budget, the Peace Corps budget is minimal at $359 million, or two one-hundredths of one percent of the $1.8 trillion (outlays basis) requested by President Bush for FY2004. By contrast, the National Defense budget request added up to $400 billion, including personnel expenditures of $99 billion (Rieffel, 2003). Due to the intense pressure to contain spending for all domestic and foreign programs, the Peace Corps is at constant battle to receive its full budget request from Congress.

Peace Corps is a federal agency; the president proposes the budget and Congress appropriates it. Though it was not originally intended, partisan agendas are sometimes conveyed through Peace Corps operations. One obvious impact is on the size of its budget. Another impact relates to the selection of the head of the agency, who is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate (Rieffel, 2003). The Peace Corps is one of the least expensive instruments being used to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives⁹. The placement of programs has a distinct process. The Peace Corps announces its availability to foreign governments who then must formally

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⁹ A Peace Corps Volunteer earns $2,700 per year in the form of a readjustment allowance. Base pay for an Army private is $15,480 per year (E2) and for a second lieutenant is $26,208 per year (O1). Base pay for Foreign Service and Agency for International Development employees is even higher (Rieffel, 2003).
request a program. They also must determine the areas in which the Peace Corps can help. The Peace Corps then matches the requested assignments to its pool of applicants and sends the PCVs with the appropriate skills to the countries that first made the requests (Peacecorps.org).

Chapter 1.5 The Peace Corps Volunteers

Though this analysis does not focus on the volunteers’ work at the ground level, the selection process and demographics of the volunteers do suggest that they represent a particular subgroup of the American population and are specifically chosen. This is no coincidence. The more a-political the volunteers are, the more trustworthy the Peace Corps is to host nations. They are chosen to remain indifferent to local politics and to adhere to the grass-roots mission. This is essential to the survival of the Peace Corps, as they get constant accusations of espionage they must be as neutral as possible on the ground. According to the Peace Corps’ 2010 Agency Assessment, 40% of the 40,000 applications came from college campuses, and of those 90% were Liberal Arts majors. Among the Peace Corps recruitment camp, this category of American is best suited for the job because of his or her age and background, at an “unparalleled peak of energy, curiosity, flexibility and optimism.”

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It has also been found that much of the work that needs to be done in the villages of developing nations does not require the services of skilled technicians; "experts" often feel frustrated or wasted at the grass roots level. An English major, on the other hand, who is trained to converse in a local language and can master one useful skill (poultry raising, basic construction, the organization of a credit cooperative), can supply a good deal of stimulus at the initial stage of development. They stick to the mission and are more-often-than-not proud of their involvement. The management of the process disillusion many given various disconnects between the volunteers and upper management, yet they hold true to their position and the Peace Corps mission.

The third director of the Peace Corps, Joseph Blatchford once commented on the contentiousness of the PCVs, referring to the fact that most of them were "just out of college with strong, liberal views." This is intentional, to maintain mission integrity. The social make-up of the volunteers is meant to reflect the gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, racial, and socio-economic make-up of the people of the United States, though the actual numbers do not always confirm this. The type of work a PCV does is determined by the needs of a host country.
There are many positions for volunteers but most fall under one of the following general categories: Education, Youth and Community Development, Health, Business Development, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Agriculture, Environment, HIV/AIDS, Food Security and Earth Day. The general focus of Peace Corps programs is about development, community and infrastructure. Most programs are in the area of education, as seen in Figure 2. Youth development programs represent a recent trend in program initiatives as well. As volunteers at the ground-level concentrate on their projects and mission, the Peace Corps’ executive administration’s strategy does not affect their work and remains difficult to detect by host nations, allowing the Peace Corps to keep all goals in focus.
It is important to keep the agency facts and volunteer profiles in mind when examining the Peace Corps mission to serve as an a-political agency of human development and to promote public diplomacy, and as a goal of United States strategic foreign interests. Understanding the logistical aims of the executive management facilitates the determination of when these goals compete and the conditions under which one goal takes precedence over the others.

1.4 Research Objectives

The Peace Corps’ main goals are in human development, public diplomacy and foreign policy. My hypothesis is that there are patterns that explain the Peace Corps’ activity in Central America; the discovery of these patterns will illuminate how each of the aforementioned goals compete against one another and when one holds more weight than the others leading to the use of Peace Corps as a foreign policy mechanism. The main factors that affect decision-making at the highest level, beyond the Peace Corps’ stated mission, can be viewed through a lens of ideological foreign interests.

Through qualitative methodology such as interviews, and contextual anecdotes one can see how these concerns have directly affected the decision-making process of the Peace Corps. I will run regression analyses on the Peace Corps activity in Central America using quantitative data to illustrate patterns of the Peace Corps involvement; that a nation’s political disposition, democratic institutional presence and “pro-America”
United Nations voting records contribute to their likelihood of gaining Peace Corps favor. Additionally, as the U.S. administration in the White House changes, so do opinions regarding the Peace Corps' utility and thus patterns will emerge according to who is in office at the time. This paper will analyze these patterns, to gain better understanding of the Peace Corps' motivations over the last fifty years, focusing mainly on the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, highlighting the case studies of Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.
CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH PARAMETERS

This chapter will discuss the areas of focus for this study and will walk through the various doctrines that have propelled U.S. foreign policy and intervention in the Latin American region. It will also specifically outline the activities of the Peace Corps in Latin America and more specifically Central America, to help set the stage for my argument that the Peace Corps has competing goals. Examining the activities of the Peace Corps in Central America helps illustrate how and why patterns emerge and supports my hypothesis that certain conditions tend to attract the Peace Corps’ participation.

2.1 Areas of Focus

The research parameters for this analysis have evolved over time. My initial plans for this study were to focus on the entire Latin American region, throughout the entire fifty years of the Peace Corps. Beginning with Latin America and narrowing it down led me to focus on six Central American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. South America was originally included, though is very different from Central America and had anomalous Peace Corps activity. Central America is where consistent and strategic activity took place. Therefore I limited my statistical research and dataset to Central America, though I predict that my hypothesis would hold true throughout the entire Latin American region. My qualitative research and comparative studies focus on Honduras, Guatemala and the case of the Dominican Republic, with mentions of Bolivia, Costa Rica and El Salvador. The years
analyzed will be from 1961 to 2011, however because of changes in format and Peace Corps reporting inconsistencies¹, my regression analysis panel will be conducted on the years between 1973-1999.

It is important to note that the scope of my research is focused on the executive direction of the Peace Corps and is not related to the actual work of the volunteers on the ground. This paper makes no implications regarding the will or enthusiasm of the volunteers themselves or the work they perform. As previously mentioned, the selection and profile of the volunteers are significant to understanding the goals of the Peace Corps from a top-down approach, however the volunteers themselves are excluded from this study. My research was conducted as a pure academic endeavor, the presentation of my findings is not meant to insight conspiracy theory, or to disparage the Peace Corps in any way.

2.2 Doctrines, Corollaries and U.S. Intervention in Latin America

Following a doctrinal evolution throughout the 19th and 20th century essentially paves the way for the justification of U.S. Intervention in Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine began this path with the United States prohibiting European colonization in North or South American independent nations. The Roosevelt Corollary further extended U.S. rights to military invention and the impediment of European activity. The

¹ Due to constant turnover within the agency, there have been many changes in the formatting and presentation of data over the years. 1973-1999 was a prolonged stint of time in which my sources all presented consistent data.
Truman Doctrine addressed global idealism competition by offering aid to nations committed to resisting authoritarian regimes, mainly communism, in efforts to contain Soviet expansion. Various corollaries followed: Nixon’s focused on activity in Vietnam and peace with American allies, and George Kennan’s (the “Father of Containment”) Corollary, which asserted that Communism was a function of Soviet power, that the United States had no choice but to eradicate Communist activity wherever it turned up in Latin America by any means necessary, even if it meant buttressing oppressive dictatorial regimes. Reagan Doctrine identified the need to support anti-communist guerillas, working together against Soviet-backed regimes or potential communist threats. All of these doctrines laid the groundwork for future ideological employment of the Peace Corps in Latin America.

It was the 1984 Kissinger Commission that finally capsized Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. The U.S. asserted that the Soviet Union was exploiting Central American economic distress and civil unrest, and this was a threat to U.S. security interests. This was a cue to extend military assistance to pro-U.S. regimes in order to defeat possible externally funded insurgencies.

### 2.3 Peace Corps involvement in Latin America

The Peace Corps in Latin America has been distinctive. The Latin American programs were affected by United States foreign policy far more than other Peace Corps programs. In the first two decades, more Volunteers were sent to Latin America
than any other region to keep the Peace Corps programs in accordance to President Kennedy’s emphasis on Latin America and the start of the Alliance for Progress, or what looked like the Marshall Plan in Central America.

The United States’ involvement in Latin America has historically been highly politicized, and has been especially so since the onset of the Cold War. Central American volatility during the establishment of the Peace Corps in 1961 led to ideological battles that have undoubtedly affected U.S. involvement in the region. The creation of the Alliance for Progress, signed in Punta del Este, Uruguay, is a palpable example of the United States having and exercising an agenda in Latin America. It was “all Castro” according to author Stanley Meisler. Some nations resented the superpowers for making their aspirations into a sideshow of the Cold War, but many Latin American developing and decolonizing countries used the threat of communism to gain political and financial support from the West (Cobbs, p.123).
In 1965 the Peace Corps had programs in all Central American countries and much of South America. In the 1970s and 80s not all Latin American nations programs continued. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela are among the list of non-hosting nations in 1985. Yet the funding and manpower available to the participating nations was considerably high as shown in Figure 3 (Appendix A). As strategic foreign interests in the region increased, so did Peace Corps funding.

The following is a breakdown of Peace Corps activity in Central America through 1973-1999: Costa Rica was a continuous democracy and varied between right and left-leaning political disposition; it consistently had Peace Corps programs throughout those years. Guatemala had a four-year span without democracy (1982-1986), also varied between right and left-leaning governments and, like Costa Rica, always had Peace
Corps programs. Honduras, which was not listed as a democracy until 1983, had a right-leaning government beginning in 1982, and also always had programs. On the other hand, Nicaragua was not a democracy until 1984. It did have programs while the right-leaning government was in power through 1979. When power changed to the left, the Peace Corps left. They returned in 1991 when the left-leaning government lost control and democracy had been restored. El Salvador similarly was not a democracy till 1984, yet hosted the Peace Corps while a right-leaning government was in power through 1979 (with a one year differential). In 1979 power shifted and the Peace Corps withdrew. The Peace Corps returned in 1993, three years after a right leaning government came back into power. Panama was not a democracy until 1989 but did host the Peace Corps from 1963-1971 while a right-leaning government was in power. The Peace Corps left in 1971 after power shifted and they did not return until a right-leaning government did in 1990.

2.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter constructed the foundation for my hypothesis, showing that the United States was interested in Latin America for strategic purposes and had domestic justification via numerous doctrines and the Kissinger Commission. It also outlined the Peace Corps' basic activity in Central America from 1973-1999. Working on containment and expanding U.S. ideals was a fundamental mission of the U.S. foreign relations committee, therefore was a function of the Peace Corps by fostering right-wing governments, with direction coming from the very top. Chapter 3 will next outline basic
theory that was a driving force in the activities of the Peace Corps in Central America to further illustrate how competing conditions can attract Peace Corps programs.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter breaks down the working psyche of the United States' foreign policy objectives in Latin America during the studied years. Given the Cold War era and geopolitical context, the methodology of my research is based on the basic framework of two political theories: Domino Theory and Securitization Theory. As previously mentioned, after the Cold War, the perceived enemy threat of non-U.S. allied nations shifted from the communist to a more general ‘rogue’ description. However, the Domino and Securitization theories transition seamlessly throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, and are embedded in the strategic goals of U.S. foreign policy and the Peace Corps.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The Domino Theory, originally coined by Ross Gregory, became an idiom for describing the potential disintegration of political institutions to fall like dominoes as they succumb to communism. Though its origins began in Asia, Domino Theory sums up the United States’ fear of the spread of communism. As Richard Nixon explained in the article *Asia after Viet Nam*, he channeled this theory by explaining his belief that all of Asia would look much different had the United States not intervened in Vietnam. He proposed increased relations with China and discussed his intention to continue to fight to contain communism. In President Reagan's 1986 speech on Central America, he said that if the U.S. were to "ignore the malignancy in Managua," it would "spread and

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become a mortal threat to the entire New World. These two Presidencies were perfect examples of administrations operating their foreign relations strategies under the Domino Theory.

The Copenhagen School’s Securitization Theory takes the Domino Theory one step further by illustrating the United States’ bellicose approach to communism containment. This theory is based on the ideas of sovereignty, society and security, maintaining them and exercising measures to keep them intact. When the United States perceived left-wing regimes as a threat they not only took speech-act measures to counter such regimes, they also conversely took measures to foster relationships and support right-wing regimes.

A possible critique, as Gaddis Smith surmised, is that in some instances the U.S. condemned oppressive right-wing governments, and claimed to support only those committed to democracy. This claim may hold true beyond the scope of this study but for the purpose of this investigation, my research found that in Latin America the Peace Corps was more present in democracies than non-democracies. As seen in the Figure 4 below, only 6.6% (or 19 of 288 total observations) of democracies during the years of 1961-2008 in Central American countries went without the Peace Corps. This supports my assertion that Peace Corps favors regimes based on democratic institutions. With 61.5% of overall observations of Peace Corps programs in democracies, this also challenges the notion that the Peace Corps were present to plant seeds of democratic

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ideals in Central America, perhaps they were there to nurture them. My research suggests that both, democratic presence and right-leaning governmental positions are favorable conditions for Peace Corps program activity.

![Figure 4: Peace Corps Presence in Central America](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central America: 1961-2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(6 countries, 288 observations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy + Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, no Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps, no democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3 countries, 144 observations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy + Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, no Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps, no democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3 countries, 144 observations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy + Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, no Peace Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps, no democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear divide between nations that spent more history with right leaning governments (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras) and those who historically had more volatile governments with left-leaning uprisings in the late 1970s and through the 1980s (Panama, El Salvador, Nicaragua). However, through both subsets one can see that the presence of democratic, right-leaning institutions have been historically far more attractive to the Peace Corps than other types of regimes$^m$.

---

$m$ Panama, El Salvador and Nicaragua democratized in 1984, two-year lag time for Peace Corps to arrive.
3.2 Quantitative Evidence

The following section discusses my sample, variables, analysis methods and will ascertain what specific conditions affect the likelihood of Peace Corps presence in Central American host nations, while controlling for a variety of economic, human development and political control variables. I collected data for six Central American countries from 1973 through 1999.

This study began with research of the Peace Corps archives and the creation of an extensive dataset. The dataset contains information from various sources including the Peace Corps’ archives, the World Bank, U.S. Census Bureau and UNDP websites. The dependent variable used is the Peace Corps’ Appropriated Budget Values. I used Volunteers On Board and Trainee Input in early stages of analysis however due to gaps and inconsistencies in the information available, budget was the most comprehensive, viable option for the dependent variable. The majority of the Peace Corps data was mined by the author from the Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justifications, Annual Reports and Agency Assessments reported from 1961 to present.\(^n\)

Preliminary regressions suggested that there were correlations with Peace Corps activity and the democracy levels of each host nation though further research was necessary. This alone was not sufficient evidence to support my hypothesis as security had to be considered; Peace Corps programs systematically abstain from and suspend activities from areas that could subject volunteers to danger, which could offset results.

\(^n\) See: http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=about.policies.docs
This analysis examines the relationships between the dependent variable: Peace Corps appropriated funding; and independent variables: government positioning (right or left), constraints on the executive government, host country United Nations voting records inline with those of the United States, population, civil war, GDP and life expectancy. I used time-series cross-sectional regression analysis for continuous data, both fixed and random effects models, at a 95% Confidence Interval.

I conducted my analysis in three separate stages: the first including right-leaning governments⁰, constraints on host government executives and UN voting records; the second stage included population and civil war; and the third included GDP and life expectancy. I performed these in three stages to monitor the effects that each independent variable has on the dependent variable separately. In the first stage, the standardized coefficient for the right-leaning government variable shows a relative impact of 1.749 to the dependent variable. The effect remains significant in the second stage, the coefficients drops to a 1.27 impact, (with alpha < .05). In the third stage the standardized coefficient is 1.29; the p-value is 0.00 in all three stages. To explain the results, for every increase in right-leaning government disposition, an impact increase in Peace Corps appropriated funding at approximately 1.79, with a standard error of .35 is predicted, holding all other variables constant. The t-stat ratings range from 3.58 to 4.92. In the competition of conditions that attract Peace Corps programs, this variable wins.

The secondary positive relationship that takes precedence is constraints on the host country’s executive government. The standardized coefficients for the government

⁰ World Bank Database of Political Institutions: http://go.worldbank.org/2EAGGLRZ40
constraints variable were not as high as those of right-leaning governments, though it was just as consistent and had equally high t-statistic ratings across the board. UN voting inline with the U.S. also showed a very high positive relationship with Peace Corps funding, in all but the third stage of a standard regression ran. It is also difficult to judge whether Peace Corps participation was a product of host nation UN voting records, or vice versa.

In contrast, the presence of civil war showed a significant negative relationship, which was predicted. With a t-stat rating of -5.1 and p-value at 0.00, the data suggest that the presence of civil war predicts less Peace Corps participation, with a highly negative relative impact. Life expectancy also had a negative relationship, but was not as consistent as civil war in all regressions. This offset is most likely due to the inclusion of Costa Rica, with considerably higher life expectancy than neighboring countries and continuous Peace Corps programs throughout the 1973-1999 timeframe.
**Figure 5: Peace Corps Appropriated Funding: Fixed Effects\(^p\) Regression Analysis**

| PC Funding                     | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| | Coef.  | Std. Err. | t     | P>|t| |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|------|--------|-----------|-------|------|--------|-----------|-------|------|------|
| Right-leaning Government     | 1.749  | .3555     | 4.92  | 0.000| 1.272  | .3549     | 3.58  | 0.000| 1.293  | .3572     | 3.62  | 0.000|
| Constraints on Government    | .4246  | .0886     | 4.80  | 0.000| .2986  | .0857     | 3.48  | 0.001| .3335  | 0.097     | 3.43  | 0.001|
| UN Voting US friendly        | 6.557  | 1.259     | 5.21  | 0.000| 3.747  | 1.480     | 2.53  | 0.012| 3.423  | 1.589     | 2.15  | 0.033|
| Population\(^q\)             | -8.08  | .0002     | -0.04 | 0.966| -       | -        | -    | -    | -      | -        | -    | -    | -    |
| Civil War                    | -2.993 | .5865     | -5.10 | 0.000| -2.962 | 0.583     | -5.08 | 0.000| -      | -        | -    | -    | -    |
| GDP                           |        | -        |       |      | 1.251  | 6.901     | 1.81  | 0.072|        |          |      |      |      |
| Life Expectancy              |        | .0881    | -1.20 | 0.232|        |          |       |      |        |          |      |      |      |

Number of observations = 162, F(6,150) = 20.91, Prob>F = 0.0000  
Overall R-squared = 0.3476, corr(u_i, Xb) = 0.0040

Though many of the predictor variables show a high significance, they do fluctuate. The combination of right leaning government disposition and governmental constraints consistently resulted in robust positive relationships with extremely low p-values. Together, these two predictor variables support my hypothesis in that the greater their presence, the more attractive their host nation is to the United States Peace Corps. Left leaning systems as an independent variable was also tested using both standard regression and with fixed effects, as a counter possibility and showed a robust negative relationship, to further support my hypothesis (See Appendix C). GDP

\(^p\) I use a country fixed effects model to account for heterogeneity across the countries in my sample.  
\(^q\) Through running various regressions the population variable showed results as incidental, due to low variation of population throughout regional observations. I removed population from the third regression set for this reason.
and life expectancy have positive relationships, though they are not highly significant.

This can also be explained by the Peace Corps’ constant presence in Costa Rica, which had particularly higher Human Development Indices (per the UNDP) than neighboring Central American countries throughout the years studied. I ran regressions with and without a generated logarithm\(^7\) applied to the dependent variable to normalize dependent variable data (Appropriated Funding). The results of my findings were similar.

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**Figure 5: Data Description and Source Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PC Funding (apfun)</strong></td>
<td>Appropriated Funding per country, obtained from Annual Congressional Budget Justifications, two years after actual year. (Except for 1983, estimates were used as final totals were not published)</td>
<td>Peace Corps Archives, 1963-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right-leaning (right)</strong></td>
<td>Database of Political Institutions: Right, center or left leaning government position(^6)</td>
<td>World Bank, 2010, Thorsten, Clark, et al.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints on Government (xconst)</strong></td>
<td>The Constraints on Chief Executive: institutional constraints on the decision-making powers of the chief executive</td>
<td>Marshall and Jaggers, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population (pop)</strong></td>
<td>Population per country</td>
<td>UNDP, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil War (cwar)</strong></td>
<td>Presence of civil war</td>
<td>Fearon and Laitin, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GDP (gdp)</strong></td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product (US$)</td>
<td>World Bank, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life Expectancy (lexp)</strong></td>
<td>Life Expectancy</td>
<td>World Bank, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^6\) Stata command used to generate logarith: \(\text{log}(\text{depvar}+1)\)

\(^7\) Party orientation describes economic policy, coded based on the party using the following criteria: Right: for parties defined as conservative, Christian democratic, or right-wing. Left: for parties defined as communist, socialist, social democratic, or left-wing; Center: for parties that do not define themselves as either right or left, 0: for parties which do not identify themselves on the political spectrum or no information was available.
3.2 Qualitative Methodology

Additional research beyond the empirical data collection and analysis consists of readings and an interview with Peace Corps expert, Stanley Meisler. The readings represent a wide variety of books, journals, articles and online sources. A main source of information was the Peace Corps itself, particularly their Congressional Budget Justifications and Annual Reports, available either in the online archives or through the Peace Corps or through the Information Library Department. These sources have helped shape the anecdotal stories to supplement quantitative research findings. Chapter 5 elaborates on the case studies in detail as well as presidential preferences.
The results of the data analysis suggest that there is definite correlation between Peace Corps activity and the presence of right-leaning, democratic institutions; this was suspected given the stated mission and external criteria for motivations. The most conclusive findings research produced were from statistical analyses using various economic, human development and political variables from the region through the time period of 1973-1999. The results of regression analysis ran suggested a robust relationship between right-wing regimes and Peace Corps funding, including governmental constraints (xconst) as well. Another independent variable with a positive relationship was United Nations voting records in relation to those of the United States.
Programs with World Bank, IMF and aid (tied and untied) with the United States were also considered as indicators.

Regression analysis suggests that right-wing governments were far more likely to receive Peace Corps programs and funding. The countries included were Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador from the years of 1973-1999, resulting in 162 observations total (6 groups, 27 observations per group). By examining the external factors beyond the stated mission of the Peace Corps, using panel data for six Central American countries over the period 1973-1999, I was able to determine when the Peace Corps goals compete and the conditions under which one goal takes precedence over the others. My results indicate a robust positive relationship between right-leaning government disposition, democratic institutional presence and the amount of Peace Corps activity a host country experiences.

Chapter 5 will detail the Peace Corps participation in specific countries within Central America, including a supplemental discussion about the Dominican Republic, to demonstrate how the United States followed a particular pattern in the allocations of Peace Corps funding and programs. Special situations regarding nations, their leaders and a social dynamic that may escape patterns will add historical context and personal light to illustrate Peace Corps activity. A closer look at Honduras shows how a country can be a recipient of Peace Corps programs for purposes beyond the three stated mission goals, serving as a mechanism for United States strategic foreign policy.
CHAPTER 4: ANECDotAL COUNTRY CASES

Because Kennedy planted the seeds of the Peace Corps in 1961, the tenets are deeply rooted in the Cold War mentality. The Alliance for Progress was made inline with the anti-Castro U.S. agenda and the Peace Corps was used in Latin America for strategy, a Marshall Plan for Central America.

**Figure 7: All-Time Host Country Manpower 1961-2009**

To date, the region still has some of highest participation numbers. The Philippines, as a vestige of defeated American imperialism was a main player in the
Peace Corps’ early ‘numbers game.’ The Philippines was of great interest to the U.S. for a large part of the early twentieth century. Given the geo-political context coupled with the Philippines’ right-wing tendencies and geographic location, one can see why after its independence, the U.S. remained highly involved. As evident in Figure 7, the Peace Corps activity there reflects this. Thailand was also a hotbed for passive U.S. activity during the Vietnam War. Thailand was the U.S.’ right-wing landing pad. Ecuador also has a very high number of PCVs and funding historically. Ecuador has hosted the Peace Corps from 1962 to present and started its tenure with decidedly high, ‘numbers game’ troops as well. Ecuador represents the longest Peace Corps presence in all of South America, and was a strategic stronghold in the region throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Honduras, a relatively small country, takes third place and was a very strategic post for the Peace Corps. A deeper look at a few specific cases, including that of Honduras, will help to set the stage for a contextual understanding as well as break down case studies to illustrate how the United States has supported right-wing governments in Latin America, and uses the Peace Corps as an apparatus of support.

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1 The early stages of the Peace Corps were heavily criticized for sending excessive numbers of volunteers. Many referred to this as the ‘numbers game’ where Shriver was more concerned with the quantity rather than the quality of volunteers.

2 1916, the United States granted the Philippines autonomy and promised eventual self-government, which came in 1934. In 1946, following World War II, the Philippines became independent.
4.1 Central America – Honduras and Neighbors

**Figure 8: Peace Corps Participation in Central America**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total PCVs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
<td>3,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
<td>4,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
<td>5,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1968-1979; 1991-Present</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1963-1971; 1990-Present</td>
<td>1,928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8 illustrates the basic history of the Peace Corps' presence in Central America. Figure 9 below displays how the Peace Corps pulled out of some countries while increasing funding in others, especially U.S.-friendly Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica. Costa Rica\(^v\) has had uninterrupted democracy since 1949, and uninterrupted Peace Corps activity since 1963.

\(^v\) In 1997 The Peace Corps began joining the funding totals of Costa Rica and Nicaragua in annual report due to transnational programs. Consequently, Figure )(*)* shows that as the Costa Rica funding drops in the last two years, the Nicaragua funding rises slightly. Note that the Peace Corps was present in both.
Honduras is a highly relevant case study and perhaps the best example to show how the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee used the Peace Corps as a mechanism of foreign policy. Honduras has seen little mass rebellion or warfare historically. It also never had extreme elites like Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Crops like coffee came much later to Honduras than neighboring countries, so riches did not accumulate, nor did great social classes (Booth p. 134). Once the banana industry arrived it was foreign investors, not Hondurans, who reaped benefits. This opened the door for the relationship between the U.S. and Honduras. The U.S. began an anti-communist campaign in 1950s in Honduras, by training and equipping armed forces (Booth p. 135).
From the early 1950’s to 1979 over 1,000 Honduran personnel received U.S. tactical training. By 1986, U.S. funding accounted for 76% of the Honduran military budget (Meisler, p. 155). Honduras practiced similar policies to Costa Rica, which also had uninterrupted democracy and Peace Corps presence. During that time U.S. aid rose dramatically to Honduras, especially in military funding and assistance. Honduras converted their policies to “harmonize with neo-liberal rules of the international economic game.” (Booth p.133)

During the Contras situation, the United States set up a military base in Honduras in order to try to gain control and eventually put down the Sandinista uprising in neighboring Nicaragua. As a result, Honduras has seen a large, consistent amount of funding and support through a number of U.S. avenues including the Peace Corps. During the height of their participation in the mid-1980s they had the most on-board volunteer population of Peace Corps members in the world. To this date they have the most in Central America, the second to Largest in Latin America behind Ecuador, and the third Largest in the World, behind Ecuador and the Philippines. The Peace Corps arrived to Honduras in 1963 and has never left (see Figure 10). To date 5,682 volunteers have served in Honduras.
There are numerous reports of volunteers complaining of being a piece of the U.S. government’s puzzle in Honduras during the mid-1980s. One volunteer expressed his concern during a Peace Corps training in 1985, suggesting that they were “a window dressing for intervention.” The Peace Corps and additional U.S. funding helped launch Plan Alfa, to teach illiterate Honduran peasants to read. This was, according to Stanley Meisler, “and obvious attempt to match the successful Sandinista literacy program in Nicaragua” (Meisler p. 156). The Reagan administration viewed Honduras as the “key bastion against Sandinista expansionist aims in Nicaragua” (Reeves p.149). Honduras

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*PCV Bill Mabie, whose post was twelve miles from the Nicaraguan border, near Contra staging territory.*
at the time received far more than any other nation in history and clearly was an example of the Peace Corps being used as a foreign policy tool, under the auspices of President Reagan. This is not to say that the Peace Corps did not accomplish its mission in Honduras, it did. It remains as a very successful post that returned volunteers and Hondurans view with favor.

Guatemala provides an interesting counterpoint to the arguments that safety is the main concern of Peace Corps directives. While Honduras was relatively peaceful, Guatemala was not. In El Salvador in 1979, the Peace Corps reporting that it was pulling volunteers out because of instability in the region, which jeopardized safety. However, history saw quite a bit of instability and blatantly dangerous environments in Guatemala during times of heightened Peace Corps activity, yet the volunteers remained. This suggests that the Peace Corps responds more to administration clashes than on-the-ground clashes, furthering my argument that under certain conditions the Peace Corps is attracted to participate in Central America. The right-leaning governments of Honduras and Guatemala were the attracting factors.
Guatemala endured a civil war from 1960 to 1996. Murder and kidnappings escalated with the conflict in late 1970s and throughout the 1980s alongside Peace Corps funding and programs (see Figure 11). Deregulation policies were underway which were a great priority for Reagan. Tens of thousands were disappeared and many more were reportedly killed during this battle. CIA operatives, bolstered by United Fruit company concerns, supported the stifling of left-wing insurgencies. By funding and facilitating the 1954 coup of Colonel Jacobo Guzman, the U.S. invested in keeping the Guatemalan government right of center.

Honduras received substantial economic and military aid, as did Guatemala, but both were behind El Salvador in numbers (Booth p.218). El Salvador received extensive
funding and hosted the Peace Corps until the civil war broke out in 1979. Additionally Reagan winning the elections in 1980 had a drastic effect on U.S. foreign policy in El Salvador. Reagan, favoring Communist containment efforts in Central America, viewed the El Salvador military government as a potential barrier against Communism. The Reagan administration substantially increased both military and economic aid to El Salvador. Yet the Peace Corps stayed out. The dangers in El Salvador and Guatemala at the time were ostensibly the same, the only difference empirically was that El Salvador was under leftist FMLN\textsuperscript{x} rule, and Guatemala was to the right.

4.2 Case Study: Johnson and the Dominican Republic

"Even during times of political tension, strong personal bonds have been maintained. It is notable that the Peace Corps remained in the Dominican Republic during the suspension of diplomatic relations in 1963 and the civil war of 1965."

(Peacecorps.org, 2011)

The Dominican Republic\textsuperscript{y} presents an interesting case study, given its history, culture and most important, proximity to Cuba. The Dominican Republic is where the Peace Corps first became politically involved (Meisler, 2011). A “glowing moment in Peace Corps history” was when Peace Corps Volunteers were the only Americans welcome by the people (Meisler p.69). President Lyndon Johnson was very clear that the Peace Corps was to be an “instrument of policies” (p. 71). According to Stanley Meisler, “he tolerated the Peace Corps because it served to show the soft side of a

\textsuperscript{x} Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
\textsuperscript{y} The Dominican Republic is by some accounts considered to be part of Central America. In the scope of this analysis it is used as a relevant anecdotal case study.
harsh, bellicose United States.” After long-time dictator Rafeal Trujillo was assassinated, Juan Bosch Gaviño was elected democratically. A right-wing coup d’état by military generals immediately followed. A counter-coup attempt by the next-ranking colonels caused the President Johnson to send 20,000 troops, to “preserve neutrality” against “Communist atrocities.” Santo Domingo was rife with instability (Mankiewicz, Viorst p. 146). This was a considerably strange situation, with U.S. Marines on the side of the generals and Peace Corps volunteers on the side of the rebels. Volunteers assumed the U.S. would be on side of colonels (known as constitutionalists). Both Johnson and the embassy were afraid to support the return of the elected president; they did not want “another Castro” in Colonel Camaño who was leading the opposition (Meisler, 2011). Johnson sent in soldiers and marines to put down the rebellion, yet refused to pull the Peace Corps. In fact, they considered adding more volunteers.

Reporters asked and volunteers were reported making statements about the absurdity of the U.S. position and how the people wanted the rebellion. This was the first conflict involving the Peace Corps, where the White House got involved and showed that the Peace Corps was not completely independent. The White House was concerned that pulling all volunteers would cause too much trouble as they would talk to their hometown newspapers. So they “shut them up, and threatened the end of Peace Corps,” states Meisler. Negative comments eventually died down. Claims from the ground were that most Dominicans were wholehearted fans of the Peace Corps volunteers. The rebels reportedly had signs that read: “Yankees go home, but not the Peace Corps.” McGeorge Bundy, who was US National Security Advisor was there at the time and was extensively involved in Peace Corps planning and logistics. He sent
many messages to the White House suggesting that more PCV’s were needed, not more Marines.

Frank Mankiewicz was the head of Latin America operations for the Peace Corps at the time. He was the main advocate for community development, Meisler states, “it was his baby.” He did not support it for political reasons, he truly believed in it. However, after the incident in Santo Domingo, he was disillusioned. Mankiewicz had optimistic ideals of Peace Corps, and when reflecting on the missions of the Peace Corps he said that perhaps the Peace Corps was not meant to be used for the U.S. agenda, but it certainly could not be positioned against it.

“All almost every action of the Americans, ostensibly there to save lives, served to hurt the rebels and strengthen the right-wing junta.” (Meisler p.75) The Peace Corps was not there to get involved with the suppression, but the fact that Johnson would not remove them as expected due to his fear of them talking and strengthening the insurgency, indicates that they were a part of the strategy. This is the most striking example of when foreign interest conditions are competing, which one wins: a right-wing government trumps democracy. Johnson, who admittedly used the Peace Corps as a tool, chose to support the right-wing military faction, even though they had overthrown a democratically elected leader. He kept the volunteers there, as they were the only Americans on decent terms with the Dominican people, and bringing them home would expose the details of U.S. involvement. This incident displays the spectrum of contending Peace Corps goals; the consistent victor is the right-leaning government disposition.
4.3 Chapter Conclusion

Figure 12: Summary Chart: Central American Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY CHART</th>
<th>Dominican Republic</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps Activity:</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
<td>1963-Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government:</td>
<td>Volatile, right-wing</td>
<td>US-friendly, right-</td>
<td>Oppressive right-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>military coup</td>
<td>wing regime</td>
<td>wing regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances:</td>
<td>Peace Corps present during U.S. invasion</td>
<td>Peace Corps stations alongside military stations</td>
<td>Peace Corps stayed throughout violent civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications:</td>
<td>Used as tool during invasion, while thwarting left-wing counter-coup</td>
<td>Was one of the highest recipients of Peace Corps funding/manpower to date; government disposition was draw to Peace Corps</td>
<td>Peace Corps was there because of US-friendly right-wing government despite human rights violations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These case studies are examples of when the Peace Corps’ motivations extend beyond their stated mission by acting in the interest of U.S. foreign relations in Central America. Figure 12 shows a brief summary of each case. One might contest that the Peace Corps was independent of communism containment activity, however as an arm of the U.S. government they were used to advance the executive goals of U.S. foreign policy. During volatile, sanguine internal struggles in Guatemala, Honduras and Honduras the Peace Corps remained while programs in El Salvador, Panama and Nicaragua were suspended. It was the central government’s right-leaning position that
kept the Peace Corps on the ground in Guatemala during tumultuous times. This coupled with U.S. determination to prevent the spread of communism throughout Latin America were reasoning behind such extensive program support in Honduras and Guatemala.

Without the information on whether host-nation program requests are denied, or whether only right-leaning governments request the Peace Corps I cannot claim that the relationship is merely one-way. It is plausible that left-leaning governments are less likely to request the Peace Corps as well. This analysis only suggests that there is a robust relationship between right-leaning governments and Peace Corps participation.

A possible critique is that if the Peace Corps actions were based on the Cold War, there would be a drastic change in activities after 1992. I do not suggest that it was based on the conflict, rather the Cold War provides a context of the ideological battle; the United States was interested in communism containment. This mentality did not necessarily dissipate as the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union dissolved. The post-Cold War U.S. antagonist shifted from communist to ‘rogue.’ This can be seen in the U.S.-Cuba relations. In 1996 Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act bolstering the thirty-five year old sanctions on Cuba (Litwak p.5). The U.S. still perceived left-wing politics as a threat after the Cold War ended. Post regime changes often lead to the opening of new posts, almost always left to right (and vice versa for cancellation of posts). One obvious change that occurred post-Cold War was seen in Eastern Europe as soon as the Cold War ended. It was the first time programs were sent to non-developing cities like Prague and Budapest. This trend did not catch on as it was heavily criticized.
Concrete evidence found in my analysis and in the case studies of Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic fully support my initial hypothesis; patterns do exist in Peace Corps participation in Central America. When the goals compete, the conditions under which one goal takes precedence over the others is made clear through these case studies. When host nations receive favorable treatment from the Peace Corps, the main draw was democratic, right-leaning governments.
CHAPTER 5. PRESIDENT EFFECT ON THE PEACE CORPS

If each president has his own foreign policy ideas, and the Peace Corps is a function of U.S. foreign policy as I suggest, then the personality of each president should have an effect on not only the competing conditions which lead the Peace Corps directions, but on the directions themselves. Especially when presidents are in favor of democratic, right-wing governments. This chapter addresses the question of how factors external from the Peace Corps’ executive management could have an influence on its direction, such as who is in the White House at the time. Though it is not a predictor variable used in my panel analysis, the personality of the president and his current administration can have an effect on the direction and decision-making process of the Peace Corps. Some presidents had personal affiliations with or against the agency, some used it to counter their fears of communism, some to promote humanitarian intervention, and some saw it as a tool to foster public diplomacy in Latin America. It is not the ultimate influential factor, but is worth considering as an element that factors into the competing conditions that predict Peace Corps activity. Examining the presidencies of Johnson, Nixon and Reagan will lend some insight to the kind of effect a commander-in-chief can have, showing how their preferences and goals became those of the Peace Corps and contributed to the Peace Corps having a higher rate of participation in right-leaning, democratic nations.

The president in office appoints the Director of Peace Corps, and since Kennedy’s anti-bureaucratic clause prevents any agency employee for staying beyond five years, this is extremely relevant. The director reports directly to the president, and
can be seen as an immediate extension of the president’s power and preference regarding the agency. The administrations throughout the years, concerned with relations with the rest of the Americas, have on occasion used the Peace Corps according to their personal concerns in the region.Though not one of the main predictors, presidential personality is a factor to consider when analyzing the competing conditions that influence Peace Corps activities.

5.1 Administration Schedule
Figure 14: Overall Peace Corps Funding Adjusted for Inflation Funding by President

Figure 15: Overall Peace Corps Funding and Government Spending as % of GDP

5.2 The Main Presidential Players: Johnson, Nixon, Reagan

Each president handled the Peace Corps differently, often reflecting how they dealt with foreign policy in general. After Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson carried the Peace Corps torch. As vice president he was the Chair of the Peace Corps Advisory Council and one of the agency’s staunchest independence advocates. He liked to get involved and was open about his belief in the use of the Peace Corps as a tool. Johnson saw the foreign policy tool. Johnson felt he “owned the PC just the way he felt he owned all of Washington — the Congress, the press, the military, etc.” (Meisler, 2011) The case of the Dominican Republic illustrates this. As evident in Figures 13-15, numbers dropped during Johnson’s tenure for two reasons: it was natural as the zealfulness of the first few years needed to be quelled, and 2) due to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, volunteering for the Peace Corps had lost its allure in some aspects. Figure 15 shows that Johnson government spending went up slightly, but Peace Corps funding decreased dramatically. As the first president in office after Kennedy his methods and regard of the Peace Corps were decidedly different than those of Kennedy. The one thing they had in common was the Cold War; there was still an enemy to consider in foreign policy strategy. Though his personality may not be reflected in the numbers or statistics, Peace Corps history definitely has Johnson’s fingerprints on it, most notably in the Dominican Republic conflict. Numbers decreased while under the Johnson administration but the Peace Corps numbers followed right-leaning regimes, holding true to my hypothesis.
President Richard Nixon reportedly despised the Peace Corps. From the onset of Kennedy’s proposal, Nixon began criticizing the agency, repeatedly accusing it of being a “haven for draft dodgers.” According to Meisler, he wanted to abolish it without appearing to. This was personal to Nixon. Some say because it may have been what drove Kennedy’s election results towards victory, or perhaps because Nixon was planning on proposing a similar idea. In July 1971, President Richard Nixon attempted to bury the Peace Corps merging with domestic volunteer programs (VISTA) into a new umbrella agency, ACTION. Nixon pulled funding whenever and wherever he could. Nixon’s presidential tenure was plagued with turmoil, and the Peace Corps was no exception. Complications in Vietnam, protests over orders in Cambodia and the Kent State shooting all led to unrest among volunteers. In 1970, volunteers took control of the Southeast Asian floor of the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington for 36 hours in protest. Funding continued to drop drastically under the Nixon administration. Nixon’s case had the effect of reducing the size of the Peace Corps and burying it in another agency. This exemplifies how the president can have an effect on the Peace Corps activities.

After a proposed Peace Corps budget cut, and upon returning from a diplomatic trip to Fiji, President Ronald Reagan restored the budget saying, “Don’t cut the Peace Corps, It’s the only thing I was thanked for last week.” (Meisler p.154) President Reagan realized the value in keeping the Peace Corps alive, knowing he could use them as a friendly force in his foreign policy strategy. During the Reagan years, the Peace Corps numbers increased throughout Central America, especially in Honduras. This was by in large a direct response to the Kissinger Commission report, which endorsed both
increased economic aid to Central America and increased military aid. Reagan, according to Stanley Meisler, used this as a “rationale for increasing the military aid,” knowing that he would have to increase the economic aid as well or he would hear complaints from Congress. This came at the same time that the Peace Corps Director Loret Ruppe expressed her desire to make the Peace Corps "relevant." She had even testified before the Kissinger Commission about how useful the Peace Corps could be in Central America, and by many accounts Ruppe wholeheartedly believed this. The number of volunteers dropped to 5,380 after funding cuts in the early 1980s. This was the lowest level of PVCs since the agency’s beginning. Funding began to increase under Ruppe in 1985 and Congress passed an initiative to raise the number of volunteers to 10,000 by 1992. One can see in Figures 13-15 the increases in the size of the Peace Corps programs according to concurrent Reagan policies. He reportedly said in a U.S. Institute of Peace meeting, “In the real world, peace through strength must be our motto.”

Many surmise that the Peace Corps became a portion of payment to friendly governments and part of the economic aid cover for exorbitant increases in military aid to suppress left wing insurgencies in Latin America and other parts of the world. There are a number of examples but the most relevant to this analysis is from the Reagan era, when Honduras had the largest Peace Corps program in the world as a reward to Honduras for sheltering the Contras in the struggle against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Meisler asserts that under Johnson, Nixon and Reagan, that “Peace Corps was a willing victim.” It was to gauge who was leading whom, there were instigation in both arenas but as the director is freshly appointed by the president, the decision-
making process usually reflects the desires of the president in office. What is certain though examining presidential effect is that the Peace Corps’ independence is sometimes dependent on who is in the White House.

### 5.3 Chapter Conclusion

#### Figure 16: Summary Chart: Central American Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY CHART</th>
<th>Johnson</th>
<th>Nixon</th>
<th>Reagan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy:</td>
<td>Simplistic, Anti-Communist, reactionary</td>
<td>Anti-Communist, aggressive strategies,</td>
<td>Anti-Communist, preemptively aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aggressive strategies</td>
<td>Kissinger highly involved</td>
<td>strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Corps approach:</td>
<td>Used the agency to favor right-leaning</td>
<td>Buried Peace Corps in ACTION</td>
<td>Used Peace Corps as reward, piggy-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coup in the Dominican Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td>backed forceful support of right-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>leaning governments in Honduras and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending record:</td>
<td>Peace Corps funding decreased overall but</td>
<td>Peace Corps funding decreased overall but</td>
<td>Peace Corps funding increased overall and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased in Central America, Government</td>
<td>increased in Central America, Government</td>
<td>increased in Central America, Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spending increased</td>
<td>spending increased</td>
<td>spending increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications:</td>
<td>Johnson had a hands-on approach with the</td>
<td>Nixon had a personal aversion to the Peace</td>
<td>Reagan used the Peace Corps as a positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peace Corps and admittedly used it as a</td>
<td>Corps and aimed to reduce its presence as</td>
<td>reinforcement mechanism to supplement his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foreign policy tool</td>
<td>much as possible</td>
<td>military agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
Beyond the stated mission there are clearly other factors that explain Peace Corps motivations. Budget and security are examples of major concerns that might affect Peace Corps activities. These are understandably given, however they do not always seem to take precedence. Presidential administration does matter when it comes to decision-making and appropriating funding for the Peace Corps. When asked if the personalities of presidents had an effect on the Peace Corps, expert Stanley Meisler states, “there is no doubt, mainly in determining where Volunteers went.” Each presidents’ set of objectives coupled with the host country profiles were the driving forces behind changes in Peace Corps activity. The president effect is a factor to consider when contemplating what competing conditions lead to Peace Corps activity in Central America.
CHAPTER 6. FINAL OBSERVATIONS: PEACE CORPS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

As the Peace Corps recently celebrated its fiftieth birthday, there is no question that its integrity and original mission are still intact. An in-depth analysis of the Peace Corps’ activities, particularly focused on Central America sheds light on why this 50-year-old agency behaves the way it does. It helps to mitigate some theories and support others, meanwhile allowing for a better understanding of the Peace Corps. Perhaps this study will even help in efforts to reform the agency in troubled areas. My ultimate goal in this analysis was to examine the duality of the Peace Corps mission to serve as an apolitical agency of human development and to promote public diplomacy, as well as consider a third, external goal of United States strategic foreign interests. Through investigation on whether external factors beyond the stated mission lead to host nations receiving favorable treatment from the Peace Corps, I was able to determine when these goals compete and the conditions under which one goal takes precedence over the others. Using panel data for six Central American countries over the period 1973-1999, my results indicated a robust positive relationship between factors such as right-leaning government disposition, democratic institutional presence and the amount of Peace Corps activity a host country experiences.
6.1 The La Paz Incident - Revisited

In the full Peace Corps statement after the Bolivia incident released to ABC News, Amanda H. Beck, Press Director, Peace Corps stated, “Any connection between the Peace Corps and the intelligence community would seriously compromise the ability of the Peace Corps to develop and maintain the trust and confidence of the people in the host countries we serve…that Peace Corps Volunteers work on community service and nothing else.”

Since the Chapare uprisings and the Vincent Cooper outrage, attitudes and conditions have changed in La Paz and in Washington. Relationships between the United States and Bolivia have improved. Leadership has also changed hands in both the White House and the Peace Corps. Barack Obama appointed Aaron Williams as the Director in 2009. According to the Carter Center, after meeting with Jimmy Carter the same year, Morales said he would consider a return under the conditions that Carter stated: a-political. It will be interesting to see what the conditions will be necessary allowing the Peace Corps to return to Bolivia.

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6.2 The Future of Peace Corps

In his last State of the Union address, President Kennedy said, "Nothing carries the spirit of American idealism and expresses our hopes better and more effectively to the far corners of the earth than the Peace Corps." New branches and projects continue to spawn, serving as evidence of the passion and drive of the volunteers. The recent creation of a “Peace Corps Foundation,” a private charitable non-profit corporation, independent of the US government, provides support and funding for activities by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Other changes are also in the works; Barack Obama’s Open Initiative will improve transparency for the agency, and hopefully lead to less speculation regarding the Peace Corps’ intelligence agenda. The nascent case of Mexico, a tailor-made program consisting of specifically trained, advanced degree holding volunteers have joined forces with Mexican academic and innovation institutions, could serve as example of the Peace Corps possibly moving in a new direction. As democratic challenges persist throughout the world, the United States still seeks to spread message of peace and friendship, and the benefits of democracy. After fifty years, there is still a need for the Peace Corps. It is my hope that my research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the Peace Corps and lends some insight into United States foreign relations, to improve the future of peace and democracy promotion.

According to my model, Peace Corps will likely continue to follow the pattern by participating programs in right-leaning, democratic and non-civil war nations. As the world continues to democratize and shift towards right-leaning governments, the Peace
Corps presence will likely grow accordingly. Sargent Shriver once said, “When the Peace Corps goes abroad, it spreads the ideal of a free and democratic society.” (Viorst, p.21) In addition to the presence of certain host country conditions, this is was true in Central America throughout 1973-1999, as it was the day the Peace Corps began and perhaps still is today.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
APPENDIX B

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
APPENDIX C: LEFT-LEANING GOVERNMENT REGRESSION, FIXED EFFECTS

\[ . \quad \text{reg lapfun right xconst inl cwar gdp lexp} \]

\begin{verbatim}
Source | SS df MS
-----------|-------|-----
Model | 817.163622 6 136.193937
Residual | 849.305288 155 5.47938896
Total | 1666.46891 161 10.3507386
-----------|-------|-----
\end{verbatim}

\[ F(6, 155) = 24.86 \quad \text{Prob > F} = 0.0000 \]

\[ \text{R-squared} = 0.4904 \]

\[ \text{Adj R-squared} = 0.4706 \]

\[ \text{Root MSE} = 2.3408 \]

### Lapfun

| Coef.   | Std. Err. | t    | P>|t| [95% Conf. Interval] |
|---------|-----------|------|------|-----------------------|
| right   | 1.443893  | .3999344 | 3.61 | 0.000 | [0.6538681, 2.233919] |
| xconst  | .6477353  | .0976315  | 6.63 | 0.000 | [.4548753, .8405953] |
| inline_usa | 3.282699 | 1.71657  | 1.91 | 0.058 | [.1081905, 6.673589] |
| cwar    | -.2642568 | .5863172 | -4.51 | 0.000 | [-3.800772, -1.484365] |
| gdp     | 3.07e-10  | 5.93e-11  | 5.17 | 0.000 | [1.90e-10, 4.24e-10] |
| lexp    | -.2840675 | .0496484  | -5.72 | 0.000 | [-.3821423, -.1859927] |
| _cons   | 20.72511  | 3.671748  | 5.64 | 0.000 | [13.47199, 27.97823] |

\[ \text{xtreg lapfun right xconst inl cwar gdp lexp }, \text{ fe} \]

Fixed-effects (within) regression

| Coef.   | Std. Err. | t    | P>|t| [95% Conf. Interval] |
|---------|-----------|------|------|-----------------------|
| right   | 1.293081  | .3572352 | 3.62 | 0.000 | [0.5872181, 1.998944] |
| xconst  | .333519   | .0972201  | 3.43 | 0.001 | [.1414213, .5256167] |
| inline_usa | 3.42265  | 1.589596  | 2.15 | 0.033 | [.2817579, 6.563541] |
| cwar    | -2.961552 | .5825187 | -5.08 | 0.000 | [-4.112554, -.81055] |
| gdp     | 1.25e-10  | 6.90e-11  | 1.81 | 0.072 | [2.61e-10, 2.61e-10] |
| lexp    | -.0880596 | .0738329  | -1.20 | 0.232 | [-.2330572, .056938] |
| _cons   | 9.301981  | 4.971775  | 1.87 | 0.063 | [-.521775, 19.12574] |

\[ \text{sigma_u} = 2.0606558 \]
\[ \text{sigma_e} = 1.8510941 \]
\[ \text{rho} = .55341906 \] (fraction of variance due to u_i)

F test that all u_i=0: \[ F(5, 150) = 19.57 \quad \text{Prob > F} = 0.0000 \]
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