Complexity or inconsistency?

An analysis of the Carter administration’s human rights policy

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Abstract

Jimmy Carter established the foundation for present-day American foreign policy instruments regarding human rights. However, his foreign policy regarding human rights is widely debated. Carter’s foreign policy has been criticized as inconsistent by many contemporary authors, while modern day authors argue that inconsistency is mistakenly seen as complexity.

This master thesis has researched the intra-administration decision-making of Carter’s foreign policy regarding human rights in Central America. This study aims to give a more nuanced view of Carter’s foreign policy on human rights, since this research has used new archival material which is only declassified as recently as 2017. This study has used three case studies in order to analyse whether Carter’s foreign policy was indeed inconsistent. The new sources indicate that the foreign policy regarding human rights was indeed inconsistent, but this was due to its complex situation where the administration had to assess other factors alongside human rights. Since this study focussed on intra-administration decision-making, further research is needed to assess the influence of the Congress and domestic audience on the decision-making.

Key words: Human rights, U.S. foreign policy, Central America

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Introduction

In an address delivered to the American Chamber of Commerce in Tokyo, May 28, 1975, upcoming President of the United States (U.S.) Jimmy Carter set the tone for his future foreign policy. Carter stated that ‘the world in 1975 is a very different world from that which we knew in the 1950’s and 1960’s’, and that ‘a stable world order for the future cannot be built on a preoccupation with the old strategic issues’, which had been the U.S. longstanding foreign policy. Besides, Carter also underlined that the interests of U.S. ‘lie in protecting our national security, in preventing war, in peacefully promoting the principles of human freedom and democracy, and in exemplifying in our foreign policy the true character and attitudes of the American people’. Carter is mostly known for his dedication towards human rights as he stated that ‘we must reassert our vital interest in human rights and humanitarian concerns, and we must provide enlightened leadership in the world community’.[[1]](#footnote-1) The upcoming U.S. president was not wrong in his interpretation of the world at that moment. The foreign policy of the U.S. was based on traditional power relations between states in the period of 1945 – 1976, reaching a high point in the period of 1969 – 1977 when the goal of the U.S. foreign policy was to stabilize the world through a collaboration between the five-great Powers: the U.S., USSR, China, Japan, and Western Europe.[[2]](#footnote-2)   
 Carter’s human rights policy was combined with a foreign policy based on multilateralism and American non-interventionism overseas. In contrast to his predecessors, he had a dedication towards Latin America.[[3]](#footnote-3) In 1976, while Carter was still a Presidential nominee, he made a press statement in which he wanted to alienate himself from the previous U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America. ‘I think the Latin American nations must be treated as individuals. They must be recognized as far as their own worldwide leadership capabilities of influence. And to treat them in a paternalistic manner, or just in the hemispheric relationship, would be a mistake.’[[4]](#footnote-4) A year later during Pan America Day, Carter underlined this new relationship by stating that ‘[a]s friends and neighbors we have an obligation to help one another, in order to promote our common good and to solve the problems of each nation, and advance our mutual interest in global solutions to problems that confront all of humankind’.[[5]](#footnote-5)   
 However, at the time of his presidency and shortly after, the foreign policy of the Carter administration was criticized for its inconsistencies and ineffectiveness. His successor Ronald Reagan criticized Carter’s human rights policy by arguing that it did not promote human rights or the security interests of the U.S.[[6]](#footnote-6) Carter tried to explain the conflicts in Central America by what he termed North-South issues. As he stated, when ‘the more powerful nations exploit the less powerful, they will be repaid by terrorism, hatred, and potential violence. Insofar as our policies are selfish, or cynical, or shortsighted, there will inevitably be a day of reckoning’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Reagan on the other hand, underlined the weakness of Carter’s administration by devoting public attention to the violence in Central America and linking it with the Soviet threat. The loss of the Panama Canal with the Panama Canal treaty and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua were a result of Carter’s policy according to his critics. [[8]](#footnote-8) This is one the reasons why Carter lost office after one term, placing him in a list of one-term American presidents together with Donald J. Trump.   
 Is this critique justified by the Reagan administration? Present-day authors do not necessarily agree with Reagan’s critique. Was the human rights policy of the Carter administration in truth inconsistent, or did it only look inconsistent? Therefore, the central research question throughout this thesis is: ‘How consistent was the implementation of the foreign policy regarding human rights of the Carter administration in Central America, 1977 – 1981?’   
 As human rights are a broad concept, i.e., civil, political economic, and cultural human rights. This research will therefore focus on what Sikkink defines as repression of human rights as violations. These violations were the most common violations that human rights movements denounced in the 1970s and 1980s, and are ‘focused on the basic rights of the security of the person, including freedom from genocide, summary execution, torture and cruel and inhumane treatment, disappearances, and prolonged detention without charges’.[[9]](#footnote-9) Thus this research will focus upon how the Carter administration alleviated this repression and will examine the consistencies of the actions taken by the administration.   
 The focus of on Central America is based upon the change in the relationship between the U.S. and the region. In the 1950s there was no American human rights policy towards Latin America and the foreign policy was based on anticommunism. By the 1970s, anticommunism had led the U.S. to support arms, and train authoritarian regimes that led to the abuse human rights towards its own civilians.[[10]](#footnote-10) The basis for a new relationship between the U.S. and Central American took place during the Carter administration: Carter underlined that since John Kennedy’s presidency, the Latin American region had been ignored and that their new relationship ‘must abandon traditional paternalism’.[[11]](#footnote-11) At the start of the Carter administration, only Costa Rica held regular democratic elections in the isthmus.[[12]](#footnote-12) The region thus became the prime focus of Carter’s human rights policy.[[13]](#footnote-13)   
 To substantiate the central research question, four subsidiary questions will be used which will function as a checklist. The first subsidiary question is therefore, how did the Carter administration voice human rights in the intra-Administration relations? Through this question, the motives for policy actions can be further explained.   
 Secondly, how did the Carter administration implement human rights policies bilaterally with third countries? American foreign policy after 1976 had a multitude of ways to implement its policies bilaterally, such as private and public diplomatic discussions and statements. Information generation and dissemination was also used through the State Department Reports on Human Rights Practices. Positive rewards were used such as human rights training programs for military, police, or judicial personnel. Besides positive rewards, also sanctions were used, including trade sanctions and arms embargoes. The active promotion for multilateral human rights verification missions was executed and military intervention to pursue a human rights goal used.[[14]](#footnote-14)   
 Thirdly, how did the Carter administration attempt to promote human rights through multilateral policies? By looking at the multilateral implementation of human rights, the usage of the Organization of American States (OAS) by the U.S. can be examined. In the same address at the American Chamber of Commerce in Tokyo by Carter mentioned earlier, he underlined the importance of multilateral organizations in foreign polies. There, he emphasized that they ‘must strengthen international organizations’.[[15]](#footnote-15) A year later, in March 1976, he repeated the importance of international organizations in a presentation to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations by stressing that ‘we should make multilateral diplomacy a major part of our efforts so that other countries know in advance the importance the United States attaches to their behavior in the United Nations and other international organizations’.[[16]](#footnote-16) During the Pan American Day of 1977, Carter underlined specifically the importance for the OAS for the multilateral relationship between the U.S. and Latin America.[[17]](#footnote-17)  
 Fourthly and finally, how did this policy of promoting human rights fit within Carter’s principles of non-intervention and self-determination? This should be considered as the ‘policy [human rights] should be judged in relation to the degree to which it managed to avoid incorporation into American imperialism under another disguise’.[[18]](#footnote-18) Carter emphasized in his inaugural speech the importance of human rights in the foreign U.S. policy, while also acknowledging that the U.S. cannot solve all the human rights abuses in the world, but that they will do their best. They could achieve this by showing other nations abroad that ‘to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation’.[[19]](#footnote-19) This could be interpreted as Carter underlining the importance of non-intervention for the U.S. foreign policy. In the same speech he also accentuated this by stating that they ‘will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home’[[20]](#footnote-20)   
 The social relevance for this research is to understand the origins of this U.S. foreign policy. Although Carter’s human rights policy has been criticized for its inconsistency, it laid the foundation for present-day American foreign policy instruments. After all, the administration developed policies that became part of the human rights policies repertoire in the U.S. These were ‘aid cut-offs and reduction, voting against loans in international financial institutions, high-profile missions, arm-twisting to encourage governments to invite the Inter-American Commission.’[[21]](#footnote-21)  
 This research has academic relevance since the secondary sources display a shift in the view of Carter’s presidency. Whereas most authors near the end of the Carter presidency were criticizing him for an inconsistent foreign policy regarding human rights, while authors in the early part of the 21st century have a more nuanced view.[[22]](#footnote-22) Most of the debate is focussed on the accusations that Carter’s foreign policy was weak and naïve.[[23]](#footnote-23) This research can also bring new insights to the human rights policy of Carter, since the documents of the foreign relations of the Carter administration regarding Central America were only declassified since 2017.   
 There are broadly speaking two conceptions of foreign policy of the Carter administration. One group defines the policy of the Carter administration as inconsistent, due to his lack of world politics and political expertise, in combination with his naivete which formed the basis for his zigzagged foreign policy. The dissention between his foreign policy advisers also played a part.[[24]](#footnote-24) This disunity inside the Carter administration is exemplified in Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who thought in the line of détente, while National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski thought in terms of realpolitik towards communism.[[25]](#footnote-25) Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young argued that the problems in the third world needed to be resolved internally. When the Central American revolutions were developing more quickly, Carter chose the tactic of Brzezinski. As a result of this, the Central American revolutions heated up.[[26]](#footnote-26) Eventually, Central America became a laboratory of Carter’s human rights policy. His policy fluctuated between moral and strategic considerations.[[27]](#footnote-27)  
 Another view by this first group was that the inconsistent human rights policy of the Carter administration was based on creating moral content in the foreign policy. This moral content was based on a broad domestic consensus for the policy, which made the American people feel good about themselves. This resulted in a policy directed to the allies of the U.S., while the U.S. helped attacking pro-Western regimes by totalitarian states.[[28]](#footnote-28) Most of the critique about the inconsistency of Carter’s policies was that the policy tried to distinguish itself from the Nixon and Ford policies by terminating military aid to countries that committed large-scale human rights violations. However, at the same time, the administration proposed military aid anyway for some countries that violated these rights: these countries were El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. In some cases, exemptions were made for the funding of military aid through weapons. This was done in the hope that while giving aid, it would strengthen the relationship between the U.S. and the third country. With the relation being strengthened there was hope that the human rights would be improved. This tactic was applied to five Latin American countries, El Salvador, and Guatemala among them. According to this group, there is however no clear evidence that these exceptions improved human rights.[[29]](#footnote-29)  
 The second group of authors did not see the human rights policy of the Carter administration as inconsistent. Although the Reagan administration criticized Carter for not promoting human rights or security interests and called the foreign policy of Carter single minded. The opposite was true, as Carter cut off security assistance in eight countries, all in Latin America. Three of them were in Central America namely, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.[[30]](#footnote-30) Carter wanted to move away from a Cold War conception of the U.S. foreign policy as a zero-sum game and argued for a return of a foreign policy based on human rights. Carter therefore wanted to avoid interventions in the name of anti-communism, as previous administrations had done.[[31]](#footnote-31) Even when a failure of a non-violent transition of governments in Nicaragua was bound to happen, which could be seen as a human rights disaster, Carter’s emphasis of non-intervention still prevailed.[[32]](#footnote-32) This tenacity to his foreign policy based on human rights was still consistent in its own way, as this foreign policy aimed to create a new relationship with the Third World, while still protecting the interests of the U.S.[[33]](#footnote-33) Even when the Nicaraguan dictatorial regime of Anastasio Somoza, an ally of the U.S., was threatened, Carter did not intervene to save the dictator as he maintained his commitment to his human rights policy.[[34]](#footnote-34) While some authors viewed the cause of the confusion of Carter’s foreign policy as a result of his own inexperience and the division among his advisors, a counterargument to this criticism is that the complexity of Carter’s foreign policy is mistaken for incoherence.[[35]](#footnote-35)  
 However, some authors argue that the human rights policy of Carter was fruitless, conflicting, or even unproductive. Others, some of them victims of Latin American repression, say that Carter’s policy saved many lives.[[36]](#footnote-36) Besides this the Carter administration did not have policy that was centrally coordinated: the development of the usage of means was largely ad hoc. The Carter administration used a mixture of methods which ranged from aid cut-offs to ‘quiet diplomacy’. Multilateral fora were being used next to bilateral.[[37]](#footnote-37) Therefore, this research tries to give a more nuanced answer to question if Carter’s human rights policy was consistent or not. It must also be taken into consideration that policy can look inconsistent from the outside. However, the goal of the foreign policy must be analysed as well.  
 To answer the question ‘how consistent was the implementation of the foreign policy regarding human rights of the Carter administration in Central America, 1977 – 1981’, this research will use secondary literature to sketch the context of the different case studies. Primary sources will be used to bring new insights on whether the human rights policy was consistent or not. These are mostly documents released by the Foreign Relations of the United States dating from 1977 to 1981 about the Carter presidency regarding Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. From the same archive the documents on human rights and humanitarian affairs will be used as well in combination with the documents on the foreign policy in general. The OAS does not have its own volume within the historical archives of the Foreign Relations of the United States. Therefore, OAS will be used as a keyword search term throughout all the archives concerning Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. By analysing all the primary sources on the internal considerations, a more nuanced answer can be found on the question whether Carter’s human rights policy was consistent or not.   
 The thesis will be divided into one chapter, which will give more background information, three case studies and a conclusion. The case studies are focussed on three different Central American countries, namely, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These three countries were selected because of their highest numbers of human rights abuses.[[38]](#footnote-38) Besides this, these countries were also selected because they also received military aid while they violated human rights.

Human rights, U.S. foreign policy and Central America pre-Carter

There are broadly speaking three waves of international human rights activism. The first wave can be found in the 1940s, with the U.N. as its main actor. The second wave came around the 1970s, NGOs, instead of the U.N., were more interested in bringing human rights abuses to the public. The third wave happened in the 1980s but took off in the 1990s.[[39]](#footnote-39) At the end of World War II, human rights played an important part in the foreign policy of the U.S. Under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt as the U.S. had a great role on the forum of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Under her lead the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were established in 1948, which formed a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.[[40]](#footnote-40) The term human rights were coined during the 1940s. However, this entailed a synonym for social democracy, but the type of democracy was not made clear. With the start of the Cold War, this led to the usage of the human rights as a way for arguing for one side in the Cold War.[[41]](#footnote-41) However, human rights were not the main product of the formation of the United Nations. The concept of human rights was being used to disguise other agendas as the wartime rhetoric had shown. The usage of human rights in wartime, the Universal Declaration and the European Convention on Human Rights were not the main features of this era. Human rights were not a reaction to the Holocaust, and it was not aimed at preventing genocide. Human rights were in this period bound to international organization instead of being part of the popular dialogue, which inspired no movement.[[42]](#footnote-42)   
 However, in the period between the start of the Cold War and the end of the Vietnam War, human rights were disappearing from the U.S. foreign policy. By the 1950s the sole purpose of human rights was propaganda. In 1953 human rights in the U.S. foreign policy received a metaphorical death blow, when the Eisenhower administration refused to be a party to binding human rights agreements.[[43]](#footnote-43) Besides this, it was also hard for the U.S. to promote human rights, while discrimination and bigotry against African Americans was happening in the domestic spheres of the U.S.[[44]](#footnote-44)  
 Although Carter is most known for his dedication to human rights in the foreign U.S. policy, it does not mean that his predecessors ignored human rights completely. An example of this is the transnational humanitarian assistance which made a crucial development in the foreign U.S. policy in two periods. Through the Biafra War of 1969 – 70 and the South Asian Crisis of 1971.[[45]](#footnote-45) The Biafran War got international attention of nongovernmental activists. Because of the international attention president Lyndon B. Johnson could not ignore the situation. This led to an increase of humanitarian aid sent to Nigeria. As almost a half of the total aid was provided by the U.S.[[46]](#footnote-46)  
 Under the Nixon-Ford administration human rights abuses were never directly addressed. When Nixon addressed the subject, other values as preserving existing relationships were deemed more important. When Henry Kissinger was asked directly about their stance regarding human rights in Latin American countries which the U.S. had relationships with in 1973, he answered that if the violations are so offensive, the U.S. will not cooperate with those countries. However, this reaction took place at a time when human rights violations in Chile and Uruguay intensified.[[47]](#footnote-47) This stance regarding human rights can be explained by the worldview of Nixon. According to him the era of American predominance was over, and the U.S. would have less power to enforce overseas. Therefore, the U.S. would flourish by competing economically and cooperate diplomatically. Thus, the promotion of human rights was not one of the goals in the U.S. foreign diplomacy.[[48]](#footnote-48)   
 This can be seen in the fact that under the Nixon-Ford administration they pursued they national interests as how they saw it. They avoided public calls for pressuring Latin American countries on their human rights records. As they would not interfere in the internal affairs of another state. The Nixon-Ford administration raised military aid to friendly but repressive regimes throughout Latin America.[[49]](#footnote-49) In this period the amount foreign aid was directly related to the number of human rights violations in the recipient state. However, this pattern did not emerge under the Carter administration.[[50]](#footnote-50)   
 Although human rights played no big part for the public opinion regarding the U.S. policy towards Latin America in the 1970s, the protections of these rights still remained a subject of minor public interest.[[51]](#footnote-51) The attention to human rights in the U.S. started in the beginning of the 1970s in the left wing of the Democratic party. This was a result of a congressional revolt during the final years of the Vietnam War. Minnesota Congressman Donald Fraser started using his House subcommittee International Organizations and Movements to highlight the human rights norms and mechanisms. He used his subcommittee on Intra-American Affairs as a forum for dialogue about human rights consequences after the hearing of the Chilean Coup. The most important conclusion was that the U.N. processes around human rights could not be reformed. Therefore, the U.S. had to actively promote human rights values.[[52]](#footnote-52) Kissinger chanced his stance regarding human rights in the final years of the Ford administration as human rights gained more attention by him. For example he dedicated a full speech to the OAS about it. Nevertheless, human rights were always of secondary importance after the maintenance of world order and peace during the Nixon-Ford period.[[53]](#footnote-53)   
 At the same time, human rights were being transformed in the foreign policy of the U.S. As by 1974 the U.S., human rights were also adopted in the curriculum of American law schools. Besides this, Congress passed a law which entailed that circumscribed U.S. aid to human rights violators, and that of every recipient country of U.S. aid should get a report about their human rights conditions.[[54]](#footnote-54) However, Kissinger was heavily opposed this and refused to comply with the providing of the annual reports.[[55]](#footnote-55) Whereas Kissinger was opposed to incorporating human rights in its foreign policy, Carter gave human rights new priorities in the foreign U.S. policy. These new priorities resulted in the appointment of human rights officers in overseas embassies. In Congress human rights policy got embraced as in 1977 Tom Harkin proposed an amendment which got approved. This amendment entailed that the request for funds in the Inter-American Development Bank would be turned down if the recipients were proven human rights violators.[[56]](#footnote-56)   
 However, the origins of Carter’s emphasis on human rights are domestic rather than from concerns abroad. The future Carter administration believed that there was no longer enough domestic support for an anti-communistic foreign policy, this explains why they turned to human rights as a foreign policy.[[57]](#footnote-57) Around the late 1970s, an anti-war, anti-Nixon political movement in the U.S. Congress emerged who were against U.S. policies that favoured dictators. They demanded that the U.S. ended its support for the right-wing dictators who were engaged in suppression and brutality. They were not interested in reforming the regimes but wanted to dissociate themselves from the situation.[[58]](#footnote-58) This used Carter to unite the heavily divided Democratic Platform. While the right wing of the party favoured human rights as a policy against totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Cambodia, the left wing of the party supported human rights against authoritarian regimes in Latin America.[[59]](#footnote-59) Vietnam did not work as a breeding place for human rights ideas. The war generated momentum by congressional liberals and activists for a desire to implement liberal human rights considerations in U.S. foreign policy, as the war generated a feeling of guilt and a strong antipathy to military intervention.[[60]](#footnote-60) For most of the liberals, as human rights were a coalition within the Democratic Party, the usage of human rights by Carter meant ‘reestablishment of the country’s moral and missionary credentials in the world’. Besides this, the Democratic Party started the Vietnam War and now the human rights framework was a way of redeeming themselves.[[61]](#footnote-61)   
 Outside of the U.S. Congress were human rights for the American public more than only a slogan or diplomatic concern. It helped to redefine American identity for Americans. In the 1970s the U.S. had deal with its loss in the Vietnam War, paired with old beliefs, certainties, and standards. Thus, human rights were for Americans a way to heal the country from the legacy of the Vietnam War.[[62]](#footnote-62) On a global level the human rights dialogue emerged as a *lingua franca* after the decolonization, which became possible in the 1970s, when Portugal ceased to have their colonial holdings and after the Vietnam War.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The main difference in U.S. foreign policy between the Nixon-Ford administration and that of the Carter administration is that ‘hard-core realism’ got replaced with ‘dreamy idealism’.[[64]](#footnote-64) After the second World War, the world was transformed into one of a Pax Americana, which happened because of the estrangement between the Soviet Union and the United States. This period of tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union led to an institutionalization of the leadership of Washington of the non-communistic states.[[65]](#footnote-65) Détente shaped the foreign policy of the U.S. during the Nixon-Ford period, this began in early 1969. The main line of thought was to control the Soviet military power through coexistence, as before it was based on containment. The main goal of Nixon and Kissinger was to make a mechanism for a connection between the superpowers.[[66]](#footnote-66) American policy on human rights had almost always been linked to economics and security. Thus, it was not unusual to downgrade human rights in the name of security.[[67]](#footnote-67)  
 The U.S. had two different bureaus for bilateral diplomacy towards Latin America. The ARA (Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) and the HA (Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs). The main objective of the ARA was the maintenance of smooth relations with the Latin American governments. Under the Nixon-Ford administration the ARA used quite diplomacy, with suggestions instead of demanding change. Under the Carter administration the ARA went more aggressive to work, for example with formal protest notes and demarches. The HA was responsible for implementing U.S. policy regarding human rights in Latin America. This Bureau was relatively new as it was established in 1976. Under the Nixon-Ford administration the human rights officers, who were stationed at regional offices, had little impact. Under the Carter administration the human rights officers were expanded.[[68]](#footnote-68) Carter also appointed Patricia M. Derian, a human rights activist, as coordinator for the HA. Next to this, he used the reports about the human rights situation in recipient states as a reason to end aid.[[69]](#footnote-69)  
 Military aid played an important part of the U.S. foreign aid. Its goal was to assist friendly governments to defend themselves against threats that opposed the national security of the U.S. By the 1960s other goals were added i.e., carrying out civic actions programmes, making the military subordinate to a civilian government, and introducing a form of social organization. However, these additional objectives were later dropped for the initial goal of opposing threats against the national security of the U.S.[[70]](#footnote-70) When there was no communistic threat of subversion in Latin America during 1970s, the U.S. adopted a new reason for its military aid for the region. The new reason was to maintain access and influence within the Latin American forces. For example, the Ford administration opposed a cut in military aid based on human rights to Argentina because the administration feared that a cut in military aid would mean a decline of influence in the country.[[71]](#footnote-71) The first reasoning for giving military aid to repressive regimes in the 1970s was that there was a fear that if the U.S. did not give aid, the USSR would. The second reasoning for supplying military aid was by enhancing its sense of security of a country, and therefore it would increase the local attitude for the protection of human rights. This reasoning was mostly done by the Nixon-Ford administration in Chile. The third line of reasoning of assisting in military aid, was that cutting off aid would greatly damage the relationship between the U.S. and the recipient country. However, this last argument was almost not being used by the Carter administration in Latin America, expect when there was a threat to a strategic resource in the region.[[72]](#footnote-72)   
 Carter thought about international relations in an interdependent world, this shaped his agenda as president.[[73]](#footnote-73) Ethics and expediency were linked in the Carter administration through the classic utilitarian view that human rights for others would mean the security for oneself. The promotion of human rights was therefore also the promotion for the U.S. self-interest.[[74]](#footnote-74) Carter took a new path with his foreign policy towards Latin America, which was in sharp contrast to the foreign policy based on geopolitics by his predecessors Nixon and Kissinger.[[75]](#footnote-75) Their policy based on geopolitics led to a refusal of commitment to human rights in third world countries. Since 1959, after the Cuban revolution, the U.S. launched a regionwide networks of counterinsurgencies. The creation of these counterinsurgencies led to the establishment of repressive regimes. The U.S. also trained the security forces for these regimes to defend themselves against a communist subversion, consequently making these forces think that it was permitted to use executions, torture, and beatings.[[76]](#footnote-76) Instead of condemning human rights abuses, the U.S. mostly encouraged those countries. These encouragements happened the most in situations of civil war, guerrillas movements, or acts of terrorism, resulting in a neglect of human rights by the Latin American regimes when they tried to counter domestic terrorism.[[77]](#footnote-77) The switch in the view about the U.S. foreign policy happened already before Carter took office. Walter Mondale, before he became the Vice President under the Carter administration, already mentioned in a statement in 1975 that the U.S., ‘lost sight of the fact that we [U.S.] were contesting tyranny, regardless of its political coloration’, and with its skirmish against communism, the U.S. committed themselves to ‘the most outrageously oppressive regimes in the world’. Therefore, the focus of the new administration should be pointed at supporting states ‘who truly favor democracy, freedom, and social justice and treat with equal disdain tyrants’. Moreover, to ‘avoid the pitfalls of another Vietnam’, the U.S. should contribute ‘to reducing some of the causes of human conflict’.[[78]](#footnote-78)

The first four years under presidency of Richard Nixon, the Central American region gained little attention. This was not only due to a lack of interest in the region, but also because this period was relatively peaceful. It was a period after the Alliance for progress in the sixties and before the horrors of the bloody revolutions in the late seventies. The Soviet Union and Cuba did not pose a threat during this period as they were both divided on their strategy towards the region. Whereas the Soviet Union wanted to take a slow approach to the region in the mid-sixties and did not want to ignite a revolution before there was a large proletariat. Cuba tried to ignite revolutions, but this did not lift of the ground as they had hoped.[[79]](#footnote-79) The foreign policy of Nixon towards the region fits into the ‘Nixon Doctrine’ of 1969. This entailed that the U.S. would no longer act as the sheriff of the world, but the U.S. would work instead with selected allies who would act as policemen in the region. These were the military regimes in the Central American region, where Somoza was the favorite person of Nixon. This doctrine led to an intensification of arms sales to the Central American regimes. These sales continued even when the small nation’s budgets could not afford it. Eventually the Central American regimes began to feel the burden of the military debt.[[80]](#footnote-80) Although Nixon held onto a policy of détente with the Soviet Union, in the Western Hemisphere he still applied the Monroe Doctrine. This led to an involvement in the destabilization and overthrow of Allende’s Chile by Augusto Pinochet. This event led to an emergence of human rights. At first this mobilization, against the junta established by Pinochet, was mostly done by elite movement which participated in law schools and in Congress. One of the participants was Frank Newman, who went on behalf of Amnesty to Santiago to report the human right violations in November 1973. The report of Newman, which Amnesty published a year later, concluded with horrifying details the human rights abuses of the new government e.g., a stadium turned into a concentration camp and that interrogators had used rape, beatings, and electrocutions as tools of torture. These details were quickly adapted in a transnational dialogue on international law, human rights, and the moral obligation of foreign policy. After the coup in Chile, human rights became the central theme in the discourse of domestic ideas about U.S. foreign policy, which conflicted with the Cold War realism of Nixon. Opponents of Nixon began to criticize him, that his policy neglected human rights.[[81]](#footnote-81)  
 Although the U.S. formed a part of the cause of the repression in Latin America, the repression had also some historical domestic roots. As Latin America suffered from an already long-standing conflict between landowners and peasants, which dates to the latifundia system. This latifundia system was based on large rural estates paired with coerced labour. This system remained till the late 20th century, causing local conflicts throughout Latin America during the Cold War.[[82]](#footnote-82) In Central America these relationships persisted until the 1980s whereas successful entrepreneurs united with the aristocracy, this group became known as the coffee oligarchies. The oligarchy had control over society and politics in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. They forced small peasant farmers of their lands and built their plantations on their lands. To supress unrest, they built modern armies.[[83]](#footnote-83) Which is one of the reasons for the high number of human rights violations in the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America, as that the survival of the authoritarian governments depended on the elimination of active dissenters. With this elimination, the governments hoped that potential dissidents were intimidated into silence.[[84]](#footnote-84)  
 During his presidency, Carter tried to reduce the prominence of the US-Soviet relations and wanted to focus more on Latin America, Africa, and Asia outside of the traditional East-West context. The core of the administration’s policy was to look at the local needs, opportunities, and own benefits instead of terms of Soviet-American contest.[[85]](#footnote-85)A goal of Carter was to improve the relations with Latin America, he abandoned the Monroe Doctrine as according to him it had imperialistic tendencies. The Carter administration would threat the Latin American Republics as sovereign states. An example of this were the Panama Canal treaties, with these the U.S. restored the Panamanian sovereignty over its Canal Zone. By doing this Carter revealed his intent to improve the relationship with the Latin American region. However, this also meant that Carter would be working together with leaders of current regimes that were military dictators. Diplomatic engagement and human rights were not identical goals.[[86]](#footnote-86) The interest of Carter in the Latin American region happened of several reasons. The 1970s were a dark period for human rights in Latin America, this was due to the national security doctrine, Cold War polarization and right-wing authoritarianism. The U.S. had supported south American governments with their operation Condor in 1975, which was a transnational repression against the left. Most of the state terror came from counterrevolutionaries, as a reaction to the revolutionary forces. Besides this the Latin American military regimes wanted order and not isolation, therefore their interest was in preserving ties with the international community which made them susceptible to human rights activism.[[87]](#footnote-87)

Nicaragua

This chapter will show that the relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua was tentative and relatively weak. In the beginning of the relationship, the Carter administration rewarded Nicaragua quickly for improving their human rights situation. However, as the internal conflict in Nicaragua between Somoza and opposition parties worsened, the U.S. tried to keep a position of neutrality. This internal conflict also meant a human rights disaster, therefore the U.S. had to make Somoza resign. Eventually, the Carter’s foreign policy focussed more on the departure of Somoza than on actually implementing human rights.   
 Until 1979, he U.S. already had a rich history of supporting dictatorships in Nicaragua. The U.S. supported dictatorships that repressively ruled their country to maintain order, which prevented communism and protected the U.S. investments in Nicaragua. Therefore, the U.S. believed that the Nicaraguans were too immature for self-rule and too vulnerable of the influences of communism.[[88]](#footnote-88) By the 1970s, the Somoza family had been in power for four-decades in Nicaragua. Anastasio Somoza Debayle used his power to expand his family’s wealth and to suppress his opposition.[[89]](#footnote-89) The Sandinistas National Liberation Front (FSNL) was founded in 1961 but they were not deemed as a threat by the U.S. for the region.[[90]](#footnote-90) However, the FSNL began to challenge Somoza’s rule after the wake of the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua, as he stole from the relief funds and used his forces to crush protests. This led to unrest among members of Congress about human rights abuses by the National Guard.[[91]](#footnote-91) Opposition grew in Nicaragua and the FSNL started executing armed attacks and kidnappings on the regime in 1974. Somoza responded by increasing the repressive measures in the country. With these measures he killed Sandinista fighters, but also hundreds of civilians who were suspected of helping the insurgents.[[92]](#footnote-92) The kidnappings by the Sandinistas were interpreted by the U.S. as a result of a Cuban-supported communist group, that had to be stopped before it would topple the Nicaraguan dictator.[[93]](#footnote-93)   
 The first dialogues regarding human rights between the Carter administration and Somoza were marked with tentativeness and a weak stance on human rights by the Americans. Somoza could not be pressured as he undermined the Carter administration as he appealed on the previous Cold War relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua. This is exemplified by the source, when the U.S. ambassador in Nicaragua questioned Somoza about the involvement of the National Guard in the massacre of 86 campesinos, he denied that the massacre had taken place. Although he acknowledged some killings in the past, he blamed the FSLN. At the end of the conversation, Somoza warned the U.S. ambassador that ‘the administration’s support for human rights was acceptable if not pushed with excessive zeal’ and that pressuring human rights will lead to alienation, which would have a negative effect on the ‘commercial and strategic interests’ of the U.S.[[94]](#footnote-94) When Somoza heard that the U.S. Congress wanted to cut all economic aid to Nicaragua, he appealed to the traditional Cold War relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua, as he underlined that he was a ‘loyal friend and ally’ of the U.S.[[95]](#footnote-95) Thus, these sources show that the Carter administration did not take a firm stance towards the repressive government of Nicaragua. While the Carter administration did not try to press Somoza with negative incentives, these incentives were implemented at the behest of Congress.   
 The Carter administration tried to improve human rights in Nicaragua by providing positive incentives while suggesting further steps for improvement. This can be found in the following source. When it Somoza seemed that Somoza had improved the human rights situation, the administration tried to reward him by allowing a security assistance agreement in September 1977. While giving this reward, the administration also recommended that the government of Nicaragua (GON) should take the invitation of internationally recognized organizations, such as the Inter American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC). However, further assistance was dependent on human rights conditions, which had prevailed at that given time.[[96]](#footnote-96)   
 In January 1978, the new relationship between the Carter administration and the GON was still in its infancy, as the administration rewarded the GON scarcely with security assistance and held onto its policy of non-intervention. While the situation worsened in Nicaragua, the Carter administration hoped that Nicaragua could resolve its problems internally ‘with least possible U.S. involvement’ and therefore that the Nicaraguans knew that ‘their fate is in their own hands’.[[97]](#footnote-97) Thus this source indicates that the Carter administration was at first hesitant to provide aid to Nicaragua regarding their human rights record. The administration wanted to hold on their policy of non-intervention, which could be an explanation for the Americans’ lack of involvement.   
 On the tenth of January 1978, opposition leader, Pedro J. Chamorro was assassinated. This resulted in country-wide protests against Somoza. [[98]](#footnote-98) These protests were violently repressed by the National Guard. [[99]](#footnote-99) Due this event it became clear to the Carter administration that the cause for the human rights violations was that Somoza would continue to use repression against its radicalized opposition. The administration analysed that reforms, for democratic participation, were necessary to avoid a further escalation of the conflict. [[100]](#footnote-100)   
 Therefore, the administration came at a crossroads regarding its policy towards Nicaragua: they had to choose between taking an active role in encouraging Somoza for a national dialogue with his opposition, or to distance themselves from the ‘political maneuvering’. The administration analysed that the Somoza regime did make steps to improve its human rights situation, even though the continued amount of violations was high. Therefore, the administration curtailed arms shipments, eliminated Nicaragua from their Foreign military sales (FMS), and held up loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).[[101]](#footnote-101) Thus, this source indicates that the Carter administration tried to use sanctions as a negative incentive for the deteriorating human rights.   
 The Carter administration was trapped between their policy of non-intervention and human rights. Carter’s strategy was to give their full support for democracy, while simultaneously avoiding taking sides. Throughout this, the emphasis was laid on their policy of non-intervention. However, the administration feared that if this strategy failed it would lead to a radical regime or a civil war, the U.S. would then be ‘involved under much worse circumstances’. Moreover, by choosing this strategy, the administration feared that it could ‘encourage Somoza to react by repression and defiance’.[[102]](#footnote-102) This source thus exemplifies that, although the administration knew that doing nothing could lead to more repression, non-intervention had more value than human rights. This is also exemplified by a telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Nicaragua, where the ambassador received the instruction to ‘make clear to Nicaraguans that this issue is one of a purely Nicaraguan internal political character and one in which the U.S. will play no role’.[[103]](#footnote-103) This attitude meant a crucial challenge for U.S. policy regarding human rights. Regardless of the policy of non-intervention, the Carter administration still felt a moral obligation to help the Nicaraguans. This is exemplified in the following source, as the scenario of violence would lead ‘to a probable cost of considerable human suffering’. The administration wanted to promote human rights and political independence as they ‘look to us for support for democracy and human rights’, simultaneously they tried to avoid instability in the region. [[104]](#footnote-104) With their hands tied down by their own policy, the Carter administration tried to solve their dilemma through multilateral diplomacy. However, the U.S. had little influence in the OAS and this failed as is shown in following source. As the Carter administration tried to persuade Somoza into accepting a visit from the IAHRC. However, this visit had to be approved by the OAS and Somoza knew that it would not get approved in the OAS, as he said that ‘Brazil and the block of the dictators will not vote for a Commission visit’. He knew that the Carter administration could not impose a visit and that the U.S. had little leverage. As Somoza stated: ‘the USG has tried everything to pressure me, and the only thing left is to attempt to overthrow me’.[[105]](#footnote-105) This source also demonstrates that Somoza knew that the Carter administration would not impose human rights through an intervention. This lack of leverage is also shown in the strategy for implementing human rights by the Carter administration as there was a ‘greater emphasis on “rewards” rather than “sanctions” can lead to beneficial results’.[[106]](#footnote-106)   
 Although the violence increased in August 1978 between the FSLN and the National Guard after the occupation of the National Palace by the FSLN.[[107]](#footnote-107) The administration still saw the conflict in Nicaragua as a political one, where other interest weighed more than human rights. This can be seen in the stance of the ARA in the next source. The main objective for the U.S., according to the ARA, was to prevent harm against the political and economic interests in the region. In addition, the cause for the internal conflict in Nicaragua was due to regime fatigue, as the ‘Nicaraguans are just sick and tired of the dynasty’, and not due to its human rights record or corruption. Therefore, the only solution to the internal problems was a departure of Somoza. The ARA feared a ‘second Cuba’ and to prevent this, was by ensuing the National Guard as an institution after the departure of Somoza.[[108]](#footnote-108) This source shows that human rights played a lesser part into the considerations of the Carter administration than preventing a Marxist takeover. At the same time, it seemed that the administration wanted to strengthen the National Guard. This is paradoxical, as the National Guard violated human rights. This could indicate that the Cold War line of thought still played a role in the foreign policy of the U.S.   
 The Carter administration became more and more entangled in trying get to Somoza to leave office, which meant a decline in human rights sanctions from the administration. This can be seen in the actions of the Carter administration: In August, the Carter administration met with the Group of Twelve in secrecy to discuss the objectives of the Sandinistas. The group of Twelve consisted of influential businessmen, intellectuals, and clergy, who publicly urged for Nicaraguans to enter the armed struggle against Somoza to force him to resign.[[109]](#footnote-109) This group warned the Carter administration that the FSLN would radicalize quickly if the bloodshed by Somoza would continue. However, FSLN was not hostile to the U.S. and agreed with the non-intervention policy of the U.S.[[110]](#footnote-110) At the suggestions of the Costa Rican president Carazo, the U.S. tried to multilaterally mediate the transfer of power from Somoza with other Central American states. As the situation was deteriorating in Nicaragua due to Somoza’s unwillingness to leave office, the Carter administration wanted to use the OAS for this but according to them it could not act with ‘speed and effectiveness’.[[111]](#footnote-111) However, this source also indicates that the Carter administration focussed more on diffusing the internal conflict. One could argue that diffusing the conflict seemed as a first step for improving the human rights situation.   
 This is emasculated as the U.S. wated to get Somoza leave his position, while at the same time they wanted to prevent that the Sandinistas took the power. This is being exemplified in the sources as it seemed that the emphasis was increasingly aimed at a transition of government than at a direct solution for the continuing human rights abuses. Inside the administration there was disagreement on whether to get involved actively. The ARA supported giving Somoza ‘the word’ for transitioning the government. The National Security Council (NSC) supported replacing Somoza through multilateral action. However, both agreed that a hands-off policy was unrealistic, and that the effectiveness lied in ‘how we use our hands— directly or indirectly’. The goal form a government consisting of the moderate opposition before the Sandinistas got stronger, while still preserving the commitments to non-intervention.[[112]](#footnote-112) the Carter administration tried to circumvent their policy of non-intervention. This is shown in the following source, as they tried this by involving other Latin American countries as mediators.[[113]](#footnote-113) However, the U.S. again underestimated the influence of Somoza, just like they also did in the OAS. This is can be found in the failed mediation as ‘Somoza’s footprints’ were evident and mediating countries backed out.[[114]](#footnote-114) This mediation had created a new issue for the Carter administration, as Panama and Venezuela planned military action against Nicaragua, which would have led to an internationalization of the conflict.[[115]](#footnote-115)   
 This, in combination with no real firmness to force Somoza out, led to a strained relationship as Somoza did not want to cooperate with the U.S.[[116]](#footnote-116) The U.S. tried to pressure Somoza more, but still they were too uncommitted in pressuring him with all of the available sanctions. This is exemplified in the following source as the U.S. had already stopped all deliveries of Military Assistance Program (MAP) and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) items, held up International Military Education and Training Program (IMETP) commitments and froze all significant United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In addition to these measures, the U.S. ambassador in Nicaragua had already proposed in October 1978 to recall U.S employees, USAID, and the United States International Communications Agency (USICA) from Nicaragua until Somoza would resign. He also pleaded for encouraging other governments to also withdraw their ambassadors. For further U.S. action, the ambassador argued that the U.S. should stop all economic ties with Nicaragua, commercial as well as official. He lastly urged to freeze all private assets of the Somoza family in the U.S. This was in combination to ‘develop a “sinking ship” mindset’ among his government officials, by stimulating resignations inside the Nicaraguan government.[[117]](#footnote-117) However, these proposals were only partially implemented until January 1979, as all bilateral security assistance got withdrawn in combination with a reduction of U.S. officials in Nicaragua.[[118]](#footnote-118) With suspending bilateral aid, the U.S. had hoped that Somoza believed that there was no other option than a transition of government.[[119]](#footnote-119) This commitment led to uncertainty and restraint in the administration regarding its foreign policy. Also other non-human rights related factors played a part for this stance. This is shown in the following source as the general thought in the administration was that the timing was wrong for the U.S. to make the consequences clear to Somoza when he did not accept his resignation. The administration first wanted more international support for his resignations. Besides this, the Congressional elections were upcoming in the U.S. and the administration feared that if they gave Somoza the ultimatum, he would convey that message to the right-wing politicians in the U.S. This could be used against Carter by his political opponents.[[120]](#footnote-120) Eventually this uncommitted stance, in combination with the underestimation of Somoza led to a failed mediation as ‘the opposition accepted it but Somoza didn’t’. After this, the administration finally imposed the sanctions which had been suggested three months ago.[[121]](#footnote-121) This source thus also show that only this failure led to a more determined action.  
 In a final attempt to protect the human rights, the Carter administration tried to a multilateral solution trough the OAS, since they could not intervene by themselves. However, this failed of the little influence that the U.S. had in the OAS. This is exemplified in the sources, as the situation deteriorated quickly in Nicaragua and the U.S. ambassador noticed that there was a general climate of fear. Whereas the ‘campesino and the barrio resident both fear being caught between the FSLN and guardia’, banks and business were the target of the FSLN, crime increased, and political activists were targeted from both sides. The more Guardia National were killed by the Sandinistas, ‘the more nervous, trigger-happy, and over-reactive they become to the harm of innocent bystanders as well as the Sandinistas’.[[122]](#footnote-122) The Carter administration had hoped that they could sent a peacekeeping force via the OAS to form ‘a government of national unity’.[[123]](#footnote-123) However, this resolution of the U.S. got rejected in the OAS as most of the members favoured the Sandinistas.[[124]](#footnote-124)   
 On 19 July, the Sandinistas overthrew the government of Nicaragua. From this date until the end of the Carter administration, the human rights policy gained little attention. At first, the U.S. government was prepared to send humanitarian supplies and to ‘indicate to them that we are prepared to be very helpful in the area of reconstruction assistance’.[[125]](#footnote-125) The Carter administration wanted to show immediately its support for the reconstruction of Nicaragua and wanted to give a $10 million emergency grant.[[126]](#footnote-126) The relationship between the Carter administration and the Sandinista government had little human rights dialogues. This because the Carter administration began looking more through a Cold War lens, which is exemplified by the following source. As ‘$48 million in emergency humanitarian assistance and revitalized aid projects’ and on top of that a ‘$75 million supplemental aid’. However, this aid was not given as a human rights incentive, but it had a Cold War line of thought as motivation. The Carter administration wanted to have Nicaragua on their side and tried to prevent Nicaragua from turning to the Soviet-bloc. Therefore, they tried to outcompete Cuba, as ‘Cuba cannot compete with financial resources of this magnitude’.[[127]](#footnote-127)   
 The Carter administration did fail in its implementation of human rights in Nicaragua. Starting with the naiveite to reward of the U.S. with rewarding Nicaragua too easily for improving their human rights situations. After that as the Carter administration had tied its own hands with their policy of non-intervention, this in combination with uncommitted sanctions to pressure Somoza led to an underestimation of Somoza as the situation in Nicaragua worsened. This was due to the lack of decisiveness, as the U.S. tried to be neutral in the ongoing internal conflict. The continuation of the internal conflict led to a discourse inside the administration that was increasingly based on regime fatigue and fear of Marxism instead of human rights. In an attempt to solve the internal conflict, and thus in improving the human rights situation, the U.S. placed its faith in a multilateral solution. However, this multilateral solution failed as the U.S. could not influence the OAS members . However, this could also be explained by the new cooperative stance that the U.S. took. The human rights policy seemed to be of secondary importance as the U.S. was focussing on causing Somoza to resign. Throughout this process, the U.S. could still not act with decisiveness. In a final attempt to resolve the crisis, the U.S. tried to let go of their non-intervention policy by suggesting a multilateral action by the OAS. When Somoza was overthrown by the Sandinistas, the Carter administration adopted a cooperative attitude towards them. However, this relationship was barely based on human rights as the focus was aimed at befriending the Sandinistas out of fear of Marxist influences. Although the importance of human rights diminished in the discourse of the foreign policy of the Carter administration, the implementation was consistent throughout its relationship with Nicaragua. This is regarded consistent as the U.S. did not ‘zigzag’ from rewards to sanctions. The sanctions were gradually more severe. However, Somoza could resign earlier if the administration was more firm in its sanctions and could therefore improve the human rights in Nicaragua more rapid.

El Salvador

This chapter argues that the relationship between the U.S. and El Salvador began with a reserved stance of the U.S., while the Carter administration tried to improve human rights. As the administration became more occupied in preventing a civil war, the aid intensified which focussed primarily on stabilizing the country. Eventually, the Carter administration fell back on the traditional Cold War U.S. foreign policy. Human rights always played a part in its foreign policy, but it declined when the administration was fully entangled in persevering the incumbent government of El Salvador against internal and external threats.   
 El Salvador had been under a military regime since a coup in 1948. The military selected one of their own in their political party and let them win in a fraudulent elections.[[128]](#footnote-128) The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) was established as a reaction to an income per capita drop combined with an uneven distribution of wealth, as the top 1 per cent received more that the top 50 per cent. The PDC unified the political centre and challenged the oligarchy of military and landowners. José Napoleón Duarte, the party leader of the PDC, ran for elections and the Salvadoran army opposed him in the 1972 elections. Again, the army won the election by fraud, this resulted in a revolt by army officers who wanted to place Duarte in power. When this failed, Duarte fled the country, which eventually resulted in a split in the unified centre into multiple revolutionary parties. The Farabundo Marí Liberation Front (FML) concentrated on organizing rural areas. The second group called the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP). The third party called the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN). These groups had underlying differences but posed a common threat to the ruling oligarchy. Meanwhile, thousands of workers who joined unions disappeared or were found murdered alongside roads. As a result, in 1975, students organized a protest march, to which the army opened fire, wounding and killing more than fifty people. Between 1972 and 1977, 150 teachers who were suspected of union activities, disappeared. In 1977, General Carlos Humberto Romero won the presidency, again by fraud.[[129]](#footnote-129) Following protests were violently suppressed by the military. President Romero entered a campaign of terror against his opposition, in which he used death squads to eliminate people who were found by the ORDEN spy network, which was set up by the U.S. in the 1960s.[[130]](#footnote-130)   
 At first, the Carter administration adopted a strict attitude towards the military regime of El Salvador for its human rights abuses. The objective was from 1977 towards mid-1979 to modify the behaviour of the regime which would hopefully facilitate a transition towards democratic rule.[[131]](#footnote-131) The administration used negative incentives for penalizing human rights violations. Although the administration used negative incentives, as a reaction to the human rights violations, they still wanted to cooperate with El Salvador to improve these rights. This is exemplified in a paper prepared by the Department of State about the relationship between the U.S. and El Salvador regarding the human rights situation. The Department noticed that the situation in El Salvador had ‘disturbing human rights ramifications’.[[132]](#footnote-132) Therefore the U.S. requested El Salvador to postpone a $90 million loan in the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), otherwise the U.S. would use its veto power on human rights grounds. However, this source also shows that the Carter administration had hoped to influence President Romero into ‘more positive human rights actions’, by approaching the problems in El Salvador ‘in a cooperative, not confrontational, vein’.[[133]](#footnote-133)   
 This cooperative stance can be found in the dialogues between the Carter administration and El Salvador. Nevertheless, these dialogues were paired with restraint, but also with incentives. However, in line with the new goal towards the hemisphere, the Carter administration tried to avoid paternalism by interfering in the internal affairs of El Salvador and therefore sought a solution through multilateral involvement of neighbouring countries. The positive incentive for internal reforms is exemplified in this source as the ‘U.S. policy depends, not on the existence of the dialogue, but on actual GOES [government of El Salvador] performance on the points identified in the dialogue.’[[134]](#footnote-134) However, negative incentives were also used as the following source suggest that no ‘real and effective progress’ on human rights will ‘result in disassociation and reduction in US programs and personnel’.[[135]](#footnote-135) Another source suggests the non-interference in the internal affairs of El Salvador, as U.S. officials tried to convince Romero by suggesting that ‘internal peace and stability’ could only be achieved by improving human rights conditions.[[136]](#footnote-136)   
 The U.S. tried early on to search for a multilateral solution to improve the human rights situation in El Salvador. This early involvement of multilateral diplomacy can be explained by the idea that the U.S. wanted to avoid paternalism and also due to their experiences in Nicaragua as a mediatior. This can be found in the following sources, as the U.S. ‘should try to encourage neighboring democracies […] to help in the democraticizing of El Salvador’.[[137]](#footnote-137) However, this same source also states that the administration had its reservation about involving other countries. Furthermore, they also had some scepticism about being ‘pulled into another situation like that of Nicaragua’, in which the administration acted as a mediator between two internal groups.[[138]](#footnote-138)   
 By May 1979, the Carter administration was becoming more involved in stabilizing the country, which led to the approval of commercial sale of non-lethal military equipment. While this may seem conflicting, the approval of the non-lethal military equipment was done out of human rights considerations. This is because the Carter administration tried to reduce the loss of life by providing non-lethal military equipment, while at the same time it tried to stabilize the situation. The sale of teargas was not only done out of human rights considerations, but also out of a Cold War mentality. These points can be seen in the sources as illegal demonstrations were being organized in El Salvador to provoke government violence and at that moment ‘security forces controlling demonstrations now did so with machine guns rather than with teargas’.[[139]](#footnote-139) Besides this, the Carter administration knew that if the teargas was not bought from the U.S., then these states would turn to other sources, and it was ‘preferred that they buy from us [U.S.] rather than the Russians’.[[140]](#footnote-140)   
 Contrary to the strategy used in Nicaragua, the Carter administration used a strategy of carrot and stickism for promoting free elections, and thus improving the human rights situation. However, to avoid paternalism, the U.S. tried to incorporate the OAS as a supervisor for these elections. This can be found in the sources as in August, the U.S. urged for free elections in El Salvador by reforming the electoral law and that the OAS would be involved to ensure these free elections. In exchange the Carter administration would approve the sale of further commercial military equipment, aid programs and military training programs (IMET). This ‘would depend upon a clear major commitment and steps by the GOES, which provide obvious indication of a change in the existing pattern, including the security forces’ human rights performance’.[[141]](#footnote-141) The Carter administration tried to nudge El Salvador towards new elections, in the hope that it would improve human rights. That the Carter administration fall back on a traditional Cold War mentality is also exemplified in the next source as the fear for another leftist revolution played a part in the decision making. As the U.S. ambassador communicated in a telegram to the Department of State: ‘we may have an increased stake in bringing about reform as opposed to revolution or collapse in this country’.[[142]](#footnote-142)   
 While the situation in El Salvador was deteriorating, as the violence of the El Salvadorian government grew, including human rights violations and the chances of a coup d’état grew, the U.S. considered resorting back to intervening. Although the Carter administration had a policy of non-intervention, they still considered two interventionistic strategies as a solution to the violence. This is shown in the sources as the ‘[the U.S.] cannot expect further significant steps on the human rights front nor progress against violence from the government’.[[143]](#footnote-143) One strategy was to give full support to the PDC and ‘give them whatever is necessary to seize power’.[[144]](#footnote-144) This was considered because the administration feared that if they did not support an actor, that other opposition parties would collaborate based on anti-Americanism as the shared denominator. The second strategy was to support the creation of a junta, which would assure presidential elections. If the junta was created, the administration was prepared to support this by providing military as well as technical assistance and helping the Salvadoran army to cope with the guerrillas. However, the administration feared that this second strategy would be seen by the outside world as interventionistic.[[145]](#footnote-145)   
 However, a few days after the new strategy discussions by the U.S. officials, a coup d’état broke out in El Salvador.[[146]](#footnote-146) The Department of State described the new five-person junta by a ‘moderate and progressive philosophy’.[[147]](#footnote-147) Although human rights played a part in the foreign policy as the U.S. tried to prevent polarization, the Cold War mentality play a greater role, as the administration deemed the creation of the junta an opportunity for El Salvador to ‘emerge from the downward spiral of polarization and threat of radicalization in which the country seemed to have been caught’.[[148]](#footnote-148) Thus this source shows that the Cold War mentality again prevailed, as the administration was more occupied by the ideology of the new government then human rights. The Carter administration was prepared to give financial and security aid, and to give public support as an incentive for El Salvador implementing human rights policies. In contrast to the previous government, the U.S. was also prepared to urge other sectors of El Salvador to support these reforms. The Carter administration viewed the joint military-civilian junta as a last chance to avoid a civil war and a Marxist takeover, and therefore deemed this moment an opportunity to ‘influence the situation productively’.[[149]](#footnote-149)   
 The Carter administration was not heavily invested in El Salvador as it was in Nicaragua. This led to a shallow stance of the administration whereas the Cold War mentality had the upper hand and human rights were being placed second. This is underlined in the following sources as the Department of State in which it states that the U.S. should help the junta against the takeover by a ‘Marxist-Leninist government’.[[150]](#footnote-150) Another source underlines the emphasis on the survival of the junta and the fear of a leftist takeover instead of human rights, in which the administration was prepared to give military aid to counter this takeover. This is because the administration believed that the junta was committed to human rights and that they needed help with ‘a war against committed leftist guerrillas’, therefore the administration tried to increase the economic aid and MTTs to ‘identify their most serious problems’.[[151]](#footnote-151) The fear of a civil war was frequently repeated throughout the Carter administration. However, the policy of non-intervention still persisted, therefore the Carter administration could not intervene in El Salvador were the administration feared that the problems in El Salvador would lead to an inevitable civil war. Thus a multilateral cover was being suggested in the administration. This source further shows an explanations about why the administration was not heavily invested in El Salvador as according to Brzezinski ‘other demands on our time’. [[152]](#footnote-152) Thus, the source suggest that the Carter administration was entangled in preventing a civil war in El Salvador. They held on to their principle of non-intervention and therefore tried to find a multilateral solution. The source also illustrates that the administration could not give its full attention to the situation. A possible explanation for the only focus on preventing a civil war and not so much on improving human rights is the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis, which were developing crisis-situations at the moment.  
 The discourse of the U.S. foreign policy switched more towards stabilization than the improvement of human rights. This led to a contrary swich in providing a solution to diffusing the conflict as the Carter administration was prepared to give military aid, instead of promoting human rights by rewarding after improvements. This is exemplified in the following sources as the Carter administration now justified the military and financial aid for resolving of the conflict, without intervening in the internal affairs of El Salvador. In the rhetoric of the administration, law enforcement was not a cause of the human rights violations, but it could bring stability. Another source underlines this as Carter received a letter from the Archbishop Romero of El Salvador, who urged to halt the economic and military support to the government which, according to him, led to more repression.[[153]](#footnote-153) Secretary Vance reacted to this that the military equipment and training was to enhance the professionalism of the army to ‘fulfil their essential role of maintaining order with a minimum of lethal force’.[[154]](#footnote-154) However, he underlined that the U.S. was concerned for a possible civil war which could endanger the whole of Central America.[[155]](#footnote-155) Furthermore this rhetoric is again exemplified as the military aid, consisting of MTTs, could be used to ‘minimize the repression from the right’.[[156]](#footnote-156) However these sources also show that the foremost objective was to diffuse the situation, regardless of the ideology. Also the prospect of MTTs to the junta had prevented a military coup and persuaded the military to accept banking and agrarian reforms. Eventually the PDC and the military relied on the U.S. for mediation. The U.S. hesitated with this but went through with the plan on the condition that future aid will not continue ‘unless there is a clear sign that rightist violence would be reduced soon’.[[157]](#footnote-157) As this source shows, the Carter administration did use the prospect of MTTs as an incentive. However, the incentive was not for reducing human rights violations, but for stabilizing the country as the reasoning for providing aid was ‘to deal with the immediate political and security threats to its existence posed by the extreme left and right, and, having contained these, move on to restoration of constitutional government as rapidly as possible’.[[158]](#footnote-158) When the situation in El Salvador was in fact improving, the U.S. intensified its aid. This aid was still being used as an incentive for stabilizing the county, as the following source show that the disposal of an helicopter was ‘as instruments to persuade the military to bring an end to the right-wing violence’.[[159]](#footnote-159)  
 In the final year of the Carter administration, the Cold War rhetoric was being used instead of the human rights framework as the primary focus was aimed at securing El Salvador against internal and external threats. This is exemplified in an address by Secretary of State Edmund Muskie. He argued that a decline in aid to El Salvador would mean that the Soviets were willing to exploit the internal struggle as ‘to expand their power and to limit Western influence’, at the same time he emphasized that the ‘American people want their nation to resist Soviet expansionism’.[[160]](#footnote-160) Thus, this source shows that the Carter administration provided aid, not only for to improve human rights, but mostly out of fear against communistic influences in the region. Although the military aid increased, Carter still did not hesitate in blindly supporting El Salvador as a source shows that he, even when it was clear that the Presidential elections were lost, still first wanted to evaluate the human rights situation before providing extra economic aid and helicopters. [[161]](#footnote-161)  Nevertheless, the emphasis in the final year of the Carter administration was based on old Cold War discourse as the administration increased it assistance by providing lethal equipment. The reasoning for this approval was that the GOES was being seen as a ‘middle of the road government’, while the policy of the Carter administration was to ‘resolve long overdue inequities’ in Central America, ‘without handing the region over to Castro’.[[162]](#footnote-162) Thus, this source indicates that the presence of communistic influences affected the policy of the Carter administration. One of the final acts of the Carter administration was to provide military items to the GOES, including the promised helicopters, ‘to prevent the guerrillas from sinking that unfortunate nation into further anarchy’.[[163]](#footnote-163)  
 From 1977 to 1981, the Carter administration tried to improve the human rights situation through bilateral support. At first the instance, the U.S. was reserved. However, over time the bilateral aid intensified as the U.S. tried to give aid as an incentive for improving human rights. Due to the policy of non-intervention, which they stood by throughout their actions to El Salvador, the Carter administration had fewer options available in order for them to improve the human rights situation. This led to some decisions which may have looked inconsistent to the outside world, i.e., providing military support, but it was made with careful consideration. The administration wanted to prevent a civil war, while human rights began more being pushed to the background. Therefore, they gave military support, with the condition that reforms would be made. By professionalizing the army, the administration hoped it would reduce the armed force brutality. This stance is partly due to the fact that El Salvador was not a top priority for the Carter administration as they were more invested in Nicaragua. Also other events in the world politics could explain why El Salvador got less attention. With intervention and doing nothing out of the question, the decision for support was a choice between the lesser of two evils. However, at the end of Carter’s presidential term, emphasis was laid more on preserving the government against internal and external threats. Thus, the implementation of the foreign policy regarding human rights was not consistent, as the motives for providing aid changed over time.

Guatemala

During the Carter administration, the relationship between Guatemala and the U.S. was challenged as the Guatemalan government was not open for cooperation. The policy towards Guatemala was therefore one of little encouragements for improving human rights and marked by a disharmony inside the administration of how to execute this policy. The administration tried to please the Guatemalan government instead of taking a firm stance. However, the administration did try to continuously engage in dialogues and never drifted away from its non-intervention policy.   
 Guatemala had a long tradition of U.S. intervention, which dates back to the U.S. supported military coup of 1954 when Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown. This coup was driven by a global struggle against anticommunism and ultra-conservatism of the Guatemalan oligarchy. This overthrow by the U.S. was in ‘spirit of McCarthyism which made the presence of communists in the broad alliance that supported the Arbenz government intolerable to US leaders’.[[164]](#footnote-164) A couple of years later, in 1960, the Guatemalan civil war began and would last until 1996.[[165]](#footnote-165) The previous administrations before Carter did support Guatemala regardless of the governmental repression, which resulted in 50,000 people killed between 1966 and 1976.[[166]](#footnote-166) Encouraged by U.S. military support and equipment the Guatemalan military began to gain its own wealth in the early 70s. This resulted in an army which consisted of 14,000 forces that owned ‘a bank, an investment fund, and have launched industrial projects’. Moreover, the head of the military owned extensive areas of land. In addition, there was a longstanding established military relationship between Guatemala and the U.S., as up to 3,334 Guatemalan officers were trained at U.S. military academies between 1950 and 1977.[[167]](#footnote-167)  
 Since the start of the Carter administration, the relationship between the U.S. and Guatemala was strained. The reason behind this was the reaction of Guatemala on the mandatory annual report on human rights in Guatemala. As a reaction to this negative report, government of Guatemala (GOG) rejected future security assistance as it would interfere with their internal affairs, which was ‘totally inadmissible between sovereign states’. [[168]](#footnote-168) The human rights situation did improve in Guatemala under President Kjell Laugerud, who was president until July 1978.[[169]](#footnote-169) Due to the rejection of the GOG, a fear came over the Carter administration that other states would follow Guatemala. Therefore, the U.S. tried to make an ad hoc foreign policy solely designed for Guatemala. This is exemplified in the following source as the U.S. ambassador told the foreign minister of Guatemala ‘that both the Executive and the Congress were considering how best to proceed in the future to make our human rights policy a constructive one.’ [[170]](#footnote-170) Because of the Guatemalan reaction on the human rights report, the U.S. tried to place human rights at the background of its policy. This is exemplified in a memorandum for the approval to sell ammunition to Guatemala as a gesture of ‘confidence in Laugerud’s responsible behavior’.[[171]](#footnote-171) Thus, by approving to sell ammunition without a human right prerequisite, the administration tried to lay the foundation for a new relationship with Guatemala. This can be explained with the policy towards Latin America for encouraging a ‘constructive bilateral relationships’.[[172]](#footnote-172) Thus, the administration tried to repair the relationship with Guatemala as it already took a hit with the Guatemalan reaction on the report. In line with one of the goals of providing military aid, the Carter administration tried to use their longstanding military relationship ‘to influence these governments on human rights and other matters’.[[173]](#footnote-173) Thus, this may indicate that the administration tried to cool the tension between the GOG and the U.S., only to implement human rights later.   
 In July 1978, Lucas Garcia became the new President of Guatemala. His presidency, from 1978 – 1982, was accompanied by structural violence, torture, and murder as a mechanism against its opposition. ‘Whoever was considered not a hundred percent government loyalist was regarded as an enemy, an insurgent, a criminal, and thus a communist.’[[174]](#footnote-174) Therefore, Congress stopped all military aid from 1978 until 1981. As also the case had been in Nicaragua, the U.S. did sanction Guatemala. However, these sanctions were too uncommitted as Guatemala still could buy military equipment and technology through commercial sales from the U.S. The State Department did stop some of these export licenses from 1980 onwards. However, the State Department did not stop any economic aid or imposed trade sanctions.[[175]](#footnote-175)   
 Despite the fact that Congress blocked all military aid to Guatemala, this did not mean that the Carter administration spoke with one unified voice regarding human rights. Within the Carter administration, there was a disharmony between the ARA and the HA. Most of the choices that were being made, were aimed that it would hopefully contribute to future human rights dialogues. For example, the decision to approve the sale of tear gas to the police force of Guatemala had not the same intentions as was done by the approval of tear gas in Nicaragua i.e., to save human lives. According to the HA, the request was being made by the GOG as a demonstration of public U.S. support for the new government. Although HA opposed the sale, the administration still went ahead, since refusing the sale would damage the newly established relationship with the GOG considerably. Also, the refusal of this commercial sale could hurt the ‘access to and leverage with the GOG’, which would consequently hurt the advancement of the human right goals of the U.S. The policy at that moment was to ‘allow the export of equipment including bullets to the military, but to deny the export of all equipment including tear gas, for police use’.[[176]](#footnote-176) Thus, this source indicates that human rights considerations were placed second after the objective to create a good relationship with the GOG. This sale is even more striking as the same source further exemplifies that the administration knew that the human rights record in Guatemala was poor, as the security forces had a ten-year record of ‘arbitrary arrest, killing, and torture’.[[177]](#footnote-177) Another source shows that while the ARA and HA were once again divided on the issue, the administration chose the proposal of the ARA to fund the IMET. The HA repeated the same reasons as they did before and added that, although there was a ‘decrease in death squad operations urban areas’, the, ‘disappearances in which military and other government officials are involved’ did increase in the rural areas.[[178]](#footnote-178) According to the ARA, the Guatemalan military was not involved in most of the human rights violations. Nevertheless, the violence was a result of political warfare between the extreme left and right, and the military had a key role in containing that violence. Therefore, the funding of IMET would have led ‘to strengthen the professionalism of the Guatemalan military’.[[179]](#footnote-179) At the same time, Guatemala was ‘lending full cooperation and support’ as mediator during the crisis in Nicaragua. By denying the IMET, the ARA feared that it could have negative repercussions on Guatemala’s mediation role. The disharmony between the two bureaus in the Carter administration came to light when the HA openly questioned if there were others interests at stake, because they did not believe that the IMET would be justified due to the involvement of the military in violations.[[180]](#footnote-180) Thus this source indicates that although there was clear evidence of human rights violations, the administration still tried to please the GOG as they feared it would negatively impact the mediation with Nicaragua. Therefore, human rights were once more placed second in Carter’s foreign policy.   
 The Carter administration saw the importance of human rights in its relationship with Guatemala, but they took an uncommitted stance against the GOG. This uncommitted stance can also be found in the types of measures that the Carter administration took towards Guatemala. Instead of implementing hard measures, the administrations tried to persuade the GOGO into human rights improvements. This is exemplified in the following sources, as the official policy of the administration was to have ‘cool but correct relations with repressive governments’.[[181]](#footnote-181) This is contradicting as the administration approved the funding for the IMET to improve the relationship between the U.S. and Guatemala. instead of taking hard measures, as the Carter administration analysed that the GOG used military repression to avoid a communistic takeover, they tried to persuade the GOG in making reforms to improve their human rights situation. They hoped to implement fundamental changes under the guise of defeating ‘the Communists at their own game by changing society and promoting development’.[[182]](#footnote-182) Not only internally the Carter administration acted in disharmony, but they also acted in discord to the public. This is exemplified by a conversation between representatives of the U.S. and Guatemala, whereas the U.S. tried to placate Guatemala. As the foreign minister of Guatemala expressed his concerns about the cuts in aid an MTTs, Brzezinski explained that his was due to a ‘very highly decentralized system of government’, in which ‘the Congress doesn’t always do what we request it to do’.[[183]](#footnote-183) Thus, in this source it is exemplified that although the administration knew that Congress would not approve military aid to Guatemala based on its human rights record, they still tried to communicate towards the GOG that the administration wanted to support them. Paradoxically, this was the same Congress that Deputy Secretary of State Christopher praised a year before that it is ‘overwhelmingly committed to the cause of human rights’.[[184]](#footnote-184)   
 The uncommitted soft stance of the U.S. led to a situation where the Carter administration could do little to improve the human rights situation in Guatemala, besides proposing suggestions. As it was clear to the Carter administration that the GOG was reasoning in a traditional Cold War lens, according to them it was a choice between ‘democratic capitalism or communism’. Brzezinski, however, explained that Guatemala could succeed in counterbalancing the communist threat by implementing reforms.[[185]](#footnote-185) Thus, this source shows that the Carter administration did not have much leverage on the GOG for improving human rights, since they only could suggest solutions. This impotence is further exemplified in the following source as the policy was subject to the outcome of the situation in El Salvador and the Presidential elections in the U.S.[[186]](#footnote-186) Even when the administration made an assessment of the situation in Guatemala, in which they concluded that there were multiple causes for human rights violations in Guatemala as the GOG relied ‘on intimidation and both official and private repression’, while the extreme left used political pressure and violence to provoke violence by ultra-right and security force. The ultra-right, which consisted of middle class and the wealthy, had connections with the rural militias, police, and the military. The ultra-right had adopted a strategy for survival ‘based on annihilation of “the enemy” without regard for due process’. These different factors led to the conclusion that ‘Guatemala’s already poor human rights record is thus worsening’.[[187]](#footnote-187) As a repeated pattern the U.S. had little leverage to improve the situation, as they tried to find an opening for dialogue and tempt the GOG with security assistance. This is exemplified in the source, as through the new dialogue the administration still emphasized their support for ‘human rights and other reforms’ and wanted to explain the GOG that repressive policies led to the ‘revolutionary conditions’ what they tried to prevent. The administration additionally tried to persuade the GOG that they were not hostile and were open for cooperation by adopting a low-level exchange of military and civilian visits. Specific measures regarding security and economic assistance were not included, but it ‘could evolve once the GOG’s response and performance is evaluated at a policy level at year’s end’. The idea behind this was that security and human rights interests were balanced and that, if successful, it would create ‘an opening wedge toward having greater influence over Guatemalan security and human rights policies’.[[188]](#footnote-188) Thus, this source suggests that the Carter administration wanted to reduce the political violence as a solution for human rights violations. Therefore, it seems contradicting that the administration wanted to approve security assistance to Guatemala. An explanation for this is that the security assistance or IMETs were also being used by the U.S. ‘to promote increased observance of basic human rights’.[[189]](#footnote-189) However, this proposal got rejected by president Lucas as he was at war with ‘subversive leftist forces’ and it was impossible to defeat them in a ‘clean and legal manner’.[[190]](#footnote-190)   
 After the failed plan for opening a new dialogue, there was little hope that the administration could do something about the repression before the Presidential election in November as Lucas expected a victory by Reagan. Therefore, the administration thought it would make ‘less sense for us to abandon our human rights policy, […] before the election when it is clear that there is no imminent Communist threat to the Lucas regime’. Therefore, the new policy would be to remain ‘a steady course’, and not to drift away from that course to not look inconsistent.[[191]](#footnote-191) Thus, this indicates that the administration that the administration did not actively try to pursue their human rights policy due to the non-cooperative stance of the GOG.   
 Throughout the relationship between the Carter administration and the GOG, the administration tried constantly not to abandon Guatemala regarding human rights. This is exemplified in a telegram from the Department of State to the embassy in Guatemala as ‘piece-meal progress can be made’, which ‘could add up to a great deal’.[[192]](#footnote-192) This source suggests that the Carter administration had the willingness to constantly try to engage with human rights violators to improve the situation. In the last meeting between the Carter administration and the foreign minister of Guatemala, the administration tried persuading the GOG to improve their human rights. As the source indicates, the administration emphasized the restrictive effect which the human rights violations by Guatemala had on the relationship between both countries. However, the GOG did not position itself cooperatively and reacted that ‘the US had nothing to teach Guatemala about human rights’.[[193]](#footnote-193) Therefore, this last meeting indicates that the U.S. had little to none leverage on the GOG for improving their human rights situation, contrary to the argumentation of the ARA at the start of the relationship.   
 The Carter administration failed in its human rights policy towards Guatemala, because of their lack of a decisive and unanimous policy. From the start, the GOG did not position itself cooperatively. The administration tried encouraging the GOG at the start of the relationship. However, since July 1978 when Lucas Garcia became president, the repression in Guatemala reached new levels. As Congress stopped all military aid towards Guatemala, it did not let the Carter administration speak with one unified voice. There was a lot of disharmony between different departments within the administration about the strategy towards the GOG. Against its policy the administration tried to give the GOG military support as a way of pleasing the government into future human rights dialogues. Although the administration did know what the cause of the repression was, they did not act firmly to handle it. Most of the bilateral actions that the administration undertook were suggestions. Although the repression was very high in Guatemala and that the administration could not persuade the GOG to not view its problems through a Cold War lens, it did stick to its policy of non-intervention and made continuously efforts for entering dialogues with the GOG. This lack of leverage led to a negative effect on improving the human rights situation in Guatemala. one of the consistencies in the policy was that the U.S. always positioned itself cooperatively. This stance can be explained by the fact that the U.S. had almost no leverage on the GOG. Overall, the American human rights policy was marked by different strategies in the hope that it would improve the situation. However, these strategies failed, just as the improvement of human rights.

Conclusion

By looking at the primary sources and the case studies, the implementation of the foreign policy of the Carter administration regarding human rights in Central America in the period of 1977 – 1981 was overall not consistent. The Carter administration used in the different cases different strategies.   
 In Nicaragua, the administration sanctioned more than it rewarded the GON for its human rights violations. However, this was done consistently throughout. When human rights seemed to be improving, the Carter administration rewarded this by providing aid. When the GON violated human rights, the administration sanctioned this by reducing aid. Throughout the relationship between the U.S. and Nicaragua, the U.S. did not intervene to improve human rights. Instead, the Carter administration wanted to safeguard human rights through a multilateral solution, i.e., the OAS and a mediation group consisting of other democracies. However, as the internal conflict in Nicaragua deteriorated, human rights were placed second on the discourse in the administration as trying Somoza to resign became the top priority.   
 In El Salvador, the Carter administration used a different strategy than in Nicaragua. As the administration tried to give incentives in the form of aid, with the prerequisite that human rights would be improved. However, this aid intensified over time as by end of the Presidential term, the administration approved lethal military equipment and helicopters, while there were still human rights violations. However, these approvals were made with careful consideration. Over time, the motives for providing aid changed. First, it was as an incentive for improving human rights. At the end, the Carter administration laid the emphasis on preserving the GOES against internal and external threats. Thus, the implementation was consistent, but the motives were not. However, when only considering the motives, the implementation was not consistent.   
 In Guatemala, the Carter administration had a strained relationship with the GOG from the start. This is due to the non-cooperative stance of the GON. However, inside the Carter administration there was a lot of disagreement between different departments of approving aid regarding the human rights policy towards Guatemala. This resulted in a policy that more based on pleasing the GOG by approving aid, in the hope that it would help into future human rights dialogues. Nevertheless, this did not happen as repression remained high in Guatemala. Throughout the relationship the administration did try to enter dialogues with the GOG. In conclusion the overall foreign policy regarding human rights towards Guatemala was marked by different inconsistent strategies. Therefore, the implementation is also regarded as inconsistent.   
 However, it must be stressed that the sources demonstrate that the implementation of human rights was complex, as it always had to be contemplated with other interests in the region. As with the cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador, human rights violations became entangled with internal struggles and the fear of a civil war. Throughout Carter’s presidency, the administration had to make a comparative assessment between multiple factors alongside human right e.g., the avoidance of paternalism or interventionism, promoting democracy and freedom. The administration was the first to implement human rights in its foreign policy. Therefore, they had to gather all the tools for the human rights toolbox by themselves, as they could not lend a human rights policy from the previous administration. During this creation of a foreign policy interwoven with human rights, the administration entered some complex situations without a direct solution. Thus, to conclude, it is true that the implementation was inconsistent, but the situations were complex. Therefore, the foreign policy regarding human rights can be best described as inconsistent due to its complexity.   
 This thesis has researched the intra-administration decisions and execution of the foreign policy regarding human rights. This study was therefore done from the point of view of the Carter administration. To assess the inconsistency of the policy more completely, more research on the influence of the Congress and the domestic audience on the decision process for the foreign policy could be considered.

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