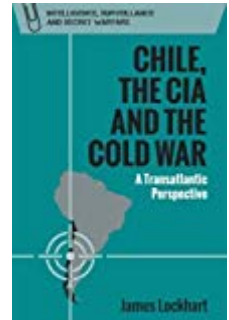


James Lockhart. *Chile, the CIA and the Cold War: A Transatlantic Perspective.*
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There seems to be no shortage of books and articles on US-Chilean relations during the government of Salvador Allende Gossens. One historian friend of mine mused that there is one book for every day Allende was in power (about one thousand days), but I think that is as low estimate. And almost certainly there will be more. Interestingly, of the three major Cold War “flash points” in South America, the others being Brazil in 1964 and the Argentine “dirty war” in the late 1970s, much more attention has been paid to the Chilean case. This is in part due to the fact that Allende was the world’s first elected Marxist and US leaders’ intense focus on undermining his government. In addition, after Allende’s downfall, Chile, one of the oldest and sturdiest democracies in the region, was ruled by a brutally repressive military government for sixteen years.

The historiography seems to break down along three general lines. First, there are authors that emphasize US power and culpability for the decline and fall of Allende.[1] Second there is the transnational/transatlantic interpretation, best

exemplified by the award-winning 2011 book by Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Haslam’s book partially fits in this category as well). Third, there is the “Chilean agency” school, best exemplified by Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intent: U.S. Covert Action in Chile, 1964-1974* (2007). And now, James Lockhart has weighed in with an impressive study that straddles the second two schools of thought but is more situated in the “Chilean agency” school.

Lockhart’s well-written book uses an impressive array of multilingual sources from a number of countries. He does a fine job of situating US-Chilean relations not only chronologically (in the broad sweep of the twentieth century) but in a transatlantic fashion as well. The information on the Chilean setting is important and well presented. It includes topics often overlooked, such as the many twists and turns of Chile’s leftist parties, in particular the Chilean Communist Party, before 1970, and the history of Chile’s incipient nuclear program. Although the program never came to fruition because of bureaucratic wrangling and

the Allende government's lack of interest, it is nonetheless an interesting case study of modern Chilean history.

Although books on a contentious topic such as US-Chilean relations in the early 1970s have a notable, but unsurprising, historiographical edge, I would argue that Lockhart's needed to include more information on US intervention during these fateful years in Chilean history. In some instances, Lockhart overemphasizes Chilean agency. For example, at the beginning of chapter 7, "Plan Alfa," in which the story of the covert action in Chile begins to unfold, Lockhart states that the US and Chilean covert action to undermine Allende was "Chilean in conception, planning and execution" (p. 188). But a few pages later he quotes the United States National Security Council (NSC) that "higher authority [President Richard M. Nixon] had no intention of conceding" (p. 193) and allowing Allende to remain in power. Even though the US covert effort to undermine Allende had a Keystone Kops feel to it, the US intentionality, and ultimate intervention, has been clearly documented.[2] Lockhart describes Nixon's refusal to accept Allende's victory as "churlish" (p. 188), but "churlishness" seems a poor choice of words here—as amply documented in the State Department's *FRUS* volume on Chile, 1969-1973, US officials perceived Allende as a dangerous Cold War threat.[3] Only ten days after Allende's election, Nixon met with some of his top foreign policy officials and made it clear that he wanted the US government to immediately begin a process of "destabilizing" (the word was coined about this time) Allende's government. Nixon supposedly said that \$10 million was available for this anti-Allende policy, and he wanted to "make the economy scream." [4]

It is important to note that the US government (mostly by means of CIA, programs) secretly gave over \$6.6 million to anti-Allende political groups in the early 1970s, sharpening the already existing conflict-ridden Chilean polity.[5] This expansive and expensive investment in Chile is a direct result

of Nixon's perception of Allende as a serious threat and determination to undermine his government. Lockhart's work could have investigated this US covert action in more detail.

As Lockhart notes, US officials feared that Allende would shut down democracy in Chile; thus the US effort to undermine his government could have had a pro-democratic side to it. However, the US government's covert funneling of assistance to the anti-Allende groups was mainly to destabilize Allende so that any future Chilean leader would be strongly anticommunist. And destabilize it did. By mid-1973 some observers thought Chile was teetering on the brink of civil war.

Lockhart does cite the most important and relevant US sources, such as State Department, CIA, and National Security Council documentation. However, to get a more fleshed out picture of US plans and their implementation, he might have included the Nixon Presidential Tapes, and, more useful, the Kissinger Telephone Transcripts. Another useful source of US government information not referenced in this book is the Chile Declassification Project. This is a special, late 1990s US government declassification project that provides a wealth of information on US-Chilean relations from the late 1960s through the 1980s. Some of these collections are available online through one of the Department of States Freedom of Information Act pages: <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Collections.aspx>.

I would conclude by noting that situating the crisis-filled Allende years in a Chilean, and transatlantic, context significantly contributes to our understanding of both US-Chilean relations and US-South American relations more generally. But it is important as well to place US-Chilean relations in the overall sweep of Cold War US-Latin American relations, in which the United States has acted forcefully at times (Guatemala, Cuba, Guyana, Nicaragua, Brazil) to maintain its security (anti-communist) interests in the hemisphere.

Notes

[1]. Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: The New Press, 2003); Lubna Z. Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende--U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); Jonathan Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: A Case of Assisted Suicide* (London: Verso, 2005).

[2]. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. 21, Chile, 1969-1973, ed. James McElveen and James Siekmeier (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), documents US policy in this period.

[3]. Ibid.

[4]. "Editorial Note," *ibid.*, Document 90.

[5]. "Memorandum from Director of the CIA Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," September 16, 1973, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. E-16, Documents on Chile, 1969-1973, Document 145, accessed December 31, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve16/d145>.

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