

international relations

## U.S. Cold War Strategy and Regime Change in British Guiana (1961-1964)

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**Abstract:** Based on the consideration of implementing the global Cold War strategy and curbing the penetration and expansion of so-called communism in the Western Hemisphere, the United States has tried to influence the political process of British Guiana since the early 1960s. To this end, the United States has made careful policy planning and layout. At the same time, it continued to exert pressure on the United Kingdom, forcing the United Kingdom to agree to replace the Jagan government. At the level of specific policy actions, the United States instigated a general strike in British Guiana through covert methods, with the purpose of creating a political and social crisis in order to create a favorable environment for subverting the Jagan government. Environment. On the other hand, in order to help the opposition parties win the election, the United States also used political and diplomatic means to suppress Jagan and the People's Progressive Party led by him. At the same time, it used secret and public means to support the opposition parties headed by Burnham. With the help of By combining covert and overt policy actions, the United States achieved its policy goal of subverting the democratically elected and legitimate Jagan government and fostering a pro-American regime. The British Guiana incident in 1964 was an example of the United States embedding its Cold War strategy and anti-communist policies into Caribbean politics. A major event in the process, it is also a typical case of the CIA using covert political actions to seek to instigate regime change in other countries. The regime change in British Guiana showed that in the context of the Cold War, the United States would never allow the so-called communist infiltration and threat to appear in the Western Hemisphere. Even for regimes that pursue social reform, the United States will deliberately label them communist and eliminate them.

**Keywords:** Cold War strategy, British Guiana, communist covert action, trade union organization, Anglo-American relations. About

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Guyana is located in the northern part of South America. It has been under colonial rule by Spain and the Netherlands since the 15th century. In 1814, Guyana became a British colony and was called British Guiana. With the rise of the national liberation and independence movement after World War II, Guyana became a British colony. Guyana obtained autonomous status within the Commonwealth in 1953. In 1961, the United Kingdom agreed to the establishment of an autonomous government in British Guiana. However, the United Kingdom continued to retain defense and diplomatic rights until Guyana achieved fully independent status. During this period, the United States continued to monitor the situation in British Guiana. Paying close attention to the development of Guyana. In order to implement the global Cold War strategy and curb the penetration and expansion of communism in the Western Hemisphere, the focus of the United States' policy towards Guyana is to foster a pro-American and anti-communist regime. For this reason, since 1961, the United States has tried to influence the political process in British Guiana intervened in the affairs of British Guiana through a combination of overt and covert means, and ultimately achieved regime change in the autonomous government of British Guiana in accordance with the wishes of the United States. The special feature of the British Guiana incident is that the United States Intervention activities based on the Cold War strategy began when British Guiana was transitioning from internal autonomy to complete independence. This process was intertwined with the intricate relationships between the United States and British Guiana, and the United States and the United Kingdom. Since the United Kingdom still owned the defense and defense of British Guiana, Diplomatic power, the United States used covert political actions as the main means to intervene in British Guiana affairs and achieve regime change. In this sense, the British Guiana incident in 1964 was a typical example of the United States using both overt and covert political actions to achieve regime change. The case was a quasi-coup instigated by the United States to overthrow the Jagan

government and support a pro-American regime. Regarding the British Guiana incident in 1964, foreign academic circles have made corresponding discussions, and the results are relatively fruitful. However, there is no special explanation of the U.S. intervention. Compared with the 1964 British Guiana incident, the results were relatively limited. In the article "Empire's "New Frontier" in the Caribbean: The Transfer of Power in British Guiana (1961-1964)", Cary Fraser focused on the perspective of power transfer. An analysis of the relationship between the United States and Britain surround

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The policy debate and diplomatic game that unfolded over that issue. <sup>5</sup> Stephen Raab's book "American Intervention in British Guiana: A History of the Cold War" is a masterpiece on the British Guiana issue. It analyzes the United States' intervention in British Guiana from 1953 to 1969. In the article "The World's Longest General Strike: The AFL-CIO, the CIA and British Guiana", Robert Waters and Gordon Daniels discuss the AFL-CIO - CIO), the relationship between the CIA and the British Guiana General Strike. <sup>6</sup> In contrast, Chinese academic circles paid less attention to the 1964 British Guiana incident. There are almost no specialized research results, especially the lack of a system based on archival materials. This article uses declassified U.S. archives to explore the process of U.S. intervention in British Guiana affairs through overt and covert means and its relationship with the U.S. Cold War strategy from the aspects of policy design and policy actions. It focuses on examining the U.S.'s use of covert political The historical track of intervening in British Guiana affairs and achieving regime change was to further clarify the relationship between the United States and the 1964 British Guiana incident, and to reveal the hidden reasons behind the United States' secret interference in British Guiana affairs. Nature of action and policy means

#### A British Guiana election and the United States' policy response under the Cold War strategy

After the end of World War II, the national liberation and independence movements surged. The world's largest colonial empire, the United Kingdom, faced unprecedented international pressure. As an important part of the world's national liberation and independence movements, the independence movement in British Guiana was in the ascendant. In 1950 In January, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Cheddi Jagan announced its establishment and became a new force in the independence movement of British Guiana. In the face of the rising independence movement, the United Kingdom had no choice but to agree to Guyana's accession to the Commonwealth in 1953. Internal autonomy status. In the autonomous parliamentary elections held in April 1953, the People's Progressive Party led by Jagan won a majority of seats and formed an autonomous body. However, the British government led by Churchill was deeply dissatisfied with the election results and determined to interfere. For this reason, Britain and the United States deliberately promoted the People's Progressive Party as a communist party in order to create an excuse for Britain to send troops to overthrow the Jagan Autonomous Institution. With the joint intervention of Britain and the United States,

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Raab, "American Intervention in British Guiana: A History of the Cold War" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Waters and Gordon Daniels, "The World's Longest General Strike: The AFL-CIO, the CIA and British Guiana" (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Raab, "American Intervention in British Guiana: A History of the Cold War" (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 1.

The autonomous agency led by Jagan was forced to disband in October.

Despite the British backbiting, the independence movement in British Guiana continued to develop. Against this background, the British Macmillan government, which came to power in 1957, had to adjust its policies and agreed to the establishment of an autonomous government in British Guiana and the eventual achievement of independence. In August In the election, the People's Progressive Party led by Jagan won 9 of the 14 seats in the Autonomous Assembly. In the subsequently formed new British Guiana Executive Council, Jagan was elected Chief Minister of the Executive Council and took charge of the specific administration of British Guiana.

As the administrative head of British Guiana, Jagan was committed to promoting economic reform and social development. In terms of foreign relations, Jagan advocated maintaining relations with the United States and other Western countries, while seeking to improve and develop relations with socialist countries. Although Jagan was They held different views on measures to develop relations with socialist countries. However, the United Kingdom recognized Jagan's economic policies, admitted that the intervention in 1953 was a mistake, and believed that the People's Progressive Party led by Jagan was not a communist party. The United States has always regarded Latin America as the "backyard" of the Cold War and firmly believed that British Guiana led by Jagan would become a base for the expansion of communism in the Western Hemisphere. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Jagan actively developed despite the obstruction of the United States. relations with the Cuban regime, which aroused strong dissatisfaction from the United States, which believed that the development of relations between British Guiana under Jagan and Cuba under Castro would accelerate the expansion of communism in the Western Hemisphere and harm the United States in the Caribbean. It can be seen from this that since

1957, the United States and Britain have had obvious differences on the issue of British Guiana. Faced with the development of national liberation and independence movements around the world, the Macmillan government had to announce that it would British Guiana elections will be held in May and an autonomous government will be formed. With the prestige of the leader of the independence movement, Jagan is very likely to win the election and become the first prime minister of the British Guiana autonomous government, and then lead British Guiana to obtain fully independent status within 2 to 3 years.

For a detailed discussion of the joint British and American intervention, see Gerald Horne Cold War in a Hot Zone: The United States Confronts Labor and Independence Struggles in the British West Indies Philadelphia: Temple

University Press 2007 pp 188-202 Stephen G Rabe "Was Cheddi Jagan a Latin American? Competing Anglo - American Perception of Jagan in Jagan's Britain and the Growth of US Hegemony in Twentieth-Century Latin America: Competition Cooperation and Coexistence London: Palgrave 282

For a detailed discussion of the internal and external policies of the Jagan administration and its relations with the United States and Britain from 1957 to 1960, see Stephen G Rabe U S Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story Philadelphia: Temple

University of North Carolina Press 2005 pp 60 - 73 Stephen G Rabe "Was Cheddi Jagan a Latin American? Competing Anglo - American Perception of Jagan in Jagan's Britain and the Growth of US Hegemony in Twentieth-Century Latin America: Competition Cooperation and Coexistence London: Palgrave 2020 pp 282-283



Said that the United States will never allow another Castro-type regime to emerge in Latin America. To this end, the United States continues to put pressure on the United Kingdom. On August 11, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk called British Foreign Secretary Alexander Home, frankly admitting that he would let President Trump go. Root's takeover of British Guiana would be the most frustrating setback for the United States in the Western Hemisphere, and would seriously affect U.S.-British relations. Home dismissed Rusk's appeal and believed that British Guiana could achieve independence by following the Indian model. It can be seen that although the British side rejected the United States' request for joint intervention in Guyana's political situation, driven by the Cold War strategy, the United States was still determined to get involved or even interfere in the affairs of British Guiana.

On August 21, 1961, the People's Progressive Party led by Jagan won the election with an absolute advantage and formed the British Guiana government headed by Jagan. Based on the Cold War strategy of maintaining the security of the "backyard", the United States began to plan to disrupt and even subvert Jagan. Due to the special status of the British government in British Guiana's transition period to independence, the United States had to seek cooperation with the United Kingdom again. On August 26, Rusk called Home, hoping that the United States and the United Kingdom would jointly deal with the post-election crisis in British Guiana. The new situation includes taking relevant actions in the political, economic and intelligence fields. Rusk particularly emphasized that the United States attaches great importance to actions in the covert field. It is not difficult to see from Rusk's cable that the United States has initially established a response plan from political, economic and other aspects. The policy path of the situation in British Guiana proposed the policy option of covert action for the first time. The United States comprehensively The policy strategy of using overt and covert means to interfere with the Jagan government is beginning to take shape.

While seeking cooperation from the United Kingdom, the United States also intensively designed and formulated intervention plans. On August 30 and 31, 1961, the U.S. State Department submitted two memorandums to President Kennedy (referred to as the "August Plan"), starting from co-opting and subverting. The U.S. policy on British Guiana was outlined from the perspective of the United States. As for the options to win over the Jagan government, the U.S. State Department's recommendations mainly include: providing economic and technical assistance to the Jagan government, and integrating the independent British Guiana into the Organization of American States and the "Progress" "Alliance". Regarding the strategy to subvert the Jagan government, the State Department recommended the development of a covert plan that would first focus on gathering intelligence to expose communist activities in British Guiana, while also cultivating anti-communist forces in British Guiana through covert political action in order to seek to replace the Jagan government if necessary. Regarding the State Council's recommendations, Kennedy agreed in principle and requested a more detailed plan.

On September 4, 1961, the U.S. State Department notified the United Kingdom in a top-secret manner of the "August Plan" approved by Kennedy. The U.S. pointed out that Jagan and his People's Progressive Party maintained close ties with international communism. Despite this, the U.S. was still willing to work with the British to "educate" and "rescue" Jagan. At the same time, the United States insists that the United States and the United Kingdom must be prepared to deal with the "trap" in Guyana. To this end, the United States hopes to use the United States to



The United States would never provide any assistance as the government's policies led to international communist control of British Guiana. It can be seen that based on its previous policy assessment and Cold War strategy, the United States had already decided to refuse to provide assistance before Jagan's visit to the United

States. According to the arrangement, Jagan held talks with Kennedy in Washington on October 25, 1961 and made a request for assistance. In response, Kennedy responded that the United States was concerned about the political freedom and independence of British Guiana. Within this framework, the United States will consider providing assistance to British Guiana. Kennedy particularly emphasized that British Guiana's trade relations with the Soviet bloc will most likely lead to British Guiana's economic dependence on the Soviet Union, thereby giving the Soviet Union a tool for political pressure. October 26, Jagan continued to discuss aid matters with U.S. government officials, but Kennedy refused to meet with Jagan again, citing his tight schedule. The U.S. reiterated that based on the U.S. government's aid standards and procedures, the U.S. must review development plans and projects in British Guiana in advance. It can be seen that Jagan had no knowledge of the subversive intentions of the United States. Therefore, when he was invited to visit Washington, Jagan had high hopes for the United States to provide assistance. On the other hand, based on the established policy strategy, the United States only pretended to be submissive. He expressly expressed his intention to provide assistance with conditions attached, but did not make a specific commitment. Jagan left Washington empty-handed. As

of early 1962, the United States still had not provided any assistance to the Jagan government. In February, Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana, protests against the Jagan government's fiscal austerity and tax increase policies broke out and triggered riots. Burnham and Daguire, who were secretly supported by the United States, were the direct organizers of the Georgetown riots. At the same time, as the United States implemented measures against the Jagan government As part of the covert operation, the CIA used secret financial support to help intensify the Georgetown riots. The purpose was to use the political turmoil to force the British Macmillan government to delay the independence process of British Guiana. Based on this, Rusk announced on February 19 Calling Home, claiming that the United States continued to receive reports that Jagan had maintained ties with communism, and that the Georgetown riots had also proved that Jagan was not a suitable leader. Rusk reiterated that Jagan's continued power would not only damage US-British relations, but would also create problems for the Americas. The system creates trouble. It can be seen that the Georgetown riots provided an excuse for the United States to abandon its co-optation policy. For this reason, the United States stepped up its policy planning to subvert the Jagan government.

In order to take advantage of the Georgetown riots to intensify the situation in British Guiana, it is seeking to launch a new round of negotiations with the United Kingdom.

It is clear that the United States has been using various means to subvert the Jagan government in British Guiana. The Georgetown riots were a key event in this process. The CIA provided financial support to intensify the riots, and the United States used the riots as an excuse to abandon its co-optation policy and to subvert the Jagan government. This shows that the United States has been using a strategy of "divide and conquer" to achieve its goals in Latin America.











By evaluating the early penetration and personnel training, the United States believed that the conditions were ripe for launching a new round of general strikes. In order to plan a new general strike, the AFL-CIO representatives sent to British Guiana worked with the leaders of the British Guiana Council of Trade Unions. A series of secret talks and collusions were held to discuss the strike plan. With the behind-the-scenes instructions of the CIA and the secret support of American trade union organizations such as the AFL-CIO, the British Guiana Trade Union Council launched a new round of general strikes in April 1963. At this point, the "Operation Targeted Overflight" planned by the CIA was fully launched. Provoking a general strike in British Guiana became the most important political method used by the United States to subvert the Jagan government.

In order to support the general strike in British Guiana, the United States not only provided technical training and policy guidance to strike organizers, but also used the secret funding channel established by the CIA - the "Gosa Foundation", or through the American Free Labor Development Association and the Federation of Labor - The CIO and other channels provided support for the strike with funds, food and medical supplies. In a top-secret document dated April 24, 1963, the CIA admitted that without sufficient financial support, the general strike could not even last a week. For this reason, the "5412 Task Force" meeting on September 25 decided that the CIA should continue to provide secret financial support to ensure the continuation of the general strike. According to incomplete statistics, during the entire general strike, the CIA only provided information to strike organizers through the AFL-CIO. The secret funds transferred exceeded US\$1 million. Therefore, in the political action of instigating the general strike and intensifying the conflict by covert means, the covert funds provided by the CIA to the anti-Jagan government trade union organizations played a key role. In this sense "Operation Targeted Overflight" was a subversive activity carried out by the CIA using trade union organizations in British Guiana, mainly through covert political actions. It was a large-scale covert attack launched by the Kennedy administration against Jagan and his People's Progressive Party, British Guiana. The general strike in Guyana was the result of the CIA's "Operation Targeted Overflight."

In addition, in accordance with the instructions of the CIA, American trade union organizations such as the AFL-CIO also exerted pressure on the Jagan government from outside, instigating trade union organizations in the Caribbean to take joint actions to disrupt British Guiana's import and export trade, especially blocking the import and export trade of British Guiana. The import of food and oil from British Guiana has led to the increasing shortage of food and oil supplies in British Guiana, and the society has become increasingly unstable. In a sense, it is subverting the

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Stephen G Rabe uiana: A Cold War Story Chapter Hill: The Univer Site of North Carolina Press, 2005, p 110 For a detailed discussion of the role of American trade unions in supporting the US government's subversion of the Jagan regime, see Ronald Radoshy American Labor and United States Foreign Policy New York: Random House 1969 pp 39











