

A 9-Step Guide to Regime Change



by the US Empire



In 1951, Jacobo Árbenz was elected as president of Guatemala.

In 1954, he was overthrown in a US-backed coup. His crime?

Expropriating unused land owned by the United Fruit Company



(known today as Chiquita ) and re-distributing it to poor peasants.

Such modest land reform was unacceptable to the United Fruit company and its powerful backers in the US government, some of whom, like CIA Director Allen Foster-Dulles, were United Fruit shareholders.

The operation to depose Árbenz followed a “manual for regime change,” which has been consistently deployed by the US against anti-imperialist governments in the Global South. Chronicled by historian Vijay Prashad, here are the manual’s 9 steps →

Step 1:

Construct the Narrative



Public relations expert Edward Bernays was hired by United Fruit to lobby US Congress.

United Fruit spent half a million dollars lobbying the US Congress about a “communist conspiracy” in Guatemala. They hired public relations experts to make the words “United Fruit” and “United States” interchangeable, so that an attack on the corporation appeared the same as an attack on the country.

Journalists from the Chicago Tribune, Newsweek, New York Times, and Time were dispatched to investigate the “red rule” in Guatemala. Their reporting closely mirrored United Fruit press releases.

Step 2:

Get a Man on the Ground

John Peurifoy was the US' man on the ground who **tried to bribe Árbenz, threaten him, and organise his cabinet against him.**



U.S. Ambassador Loy Henderson meets Iranian President Mohammad Mossadegh.

In the 1953 coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, **Loy Henderson** was the man who **forced Mossadegh's resignation.**

In the 1964 coup against Brazilian president João Goulart, **Lincoln Gordon** was the man who **facilitated a "clandestine delivery of arms" to Brazilian insurrectionists.**

Step 3:

Prepare the Generals



The US recruited Colonel **Carlos Castillo Armas** to lead the coup against Árbenz. **United Fruit paid Armas \$30,000 per month as a retainer.**



CIA asset **Henry Hecksher**, posing as a coffee buyer in Guatemala, bribed Colonel **Hernán Monzón** to join the **coup**. Hecksher would go on to have a star-studded career in the CIA, leading regime change efforts against Laos, Indonesia, Cuba, and Chile.

Step 4:

Make the Economy Scream



National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger.

In 1970, Salvador Allende formed a socialist government in Chile. In response, President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisory Henry Kissinger made Chile's "economy scream."

The US cut Chile off from international loans and trashed its credit rating.

Step 5:

Diplomatic Isolation



A 1964 OAS meeting in Washington D.C.

Any government that stands with its people against imperialism must be isolated. “No longer is the government a government, but a regime; no longer is it a democratic government, but an autocratic regime.”

In 1962, the US coerced members of the Organization of American States (OAS) to suspend the revolutionary government of Cuba. The US also weaponised the OAS to obstruct Allende’s Chile from accessing finance and technical assistance.

Step 6:

Organise Mass Protests

To justify foreign-backed coups, the US needed to create the **illusion of grassroots resistance by manufacturing popular unrest.**

Protests were “rented.” The CIA spent \$1 million on a staged protest against Mossadegh in Iran and \$8 million on protests against Allende in Chile.

Strikes were “subsidised.” The CIA conspired with the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), the main trade union body in the US, to create a range of front organisations (e.g. the Free Trade Union Institute). These fronts trained and funded foreign unions to take disruptive strike action against anti-imperialist governments, like that of Cheddi Jagan in Guyana.

Protestors demanding the resignation of Salvador Allende in on September 5th, 1973.



Step 7:

Give the Green Light



Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba is arrested by the military.

There is always a green light from on high.

"In high quarters here it is the clear-cut conclusion that if Lumumba continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will at least be chaos and at worst pave the way to communist takeover of the Congo. His removal must be an urgent and prime objective. It should be a high priority of our covert action."

– CIA Telegram, August 26th, 1960

Step 8:

Kill

In 1953, the CIA completed *A Study of Assassination*, which outlines, in great detail, its **approach to murdering political opponents**. The CIA has a long track record of facilitating mass murder:

- ↪ In 1965, the CIA helped the Indonesian army kill 1 million people as part of its anti-communist coup against Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia.
- ↪ The CIA's Phoenix Program (1967-1971) killed 11,066 Viet Cong cadres in South Vietnam. The aim was to kill all 82,000.
- ↪ Operation Condor (1975-1989) killed 100,000 people and imprisoned half a million people across South America on suspicion that they were communists. It was organised by the CIA and military juntas (e.g. Argentina and Paraguay).

Step 9:
Deny



President Ronald Reagan laughs at a private dinner in 1982.

People who accuse the US of foreign intervention in the present are discredited as “conspiracy theorists.” **Coups are only acknowledged many decades later** through the declassification of government documents.

Thomas Sankara taught us that “when the people stand up, imperialism trembles.”

The global ruling classes constrain, sabotage, and crush anti-imperialist movements with impunity. And while they may succeed in derailing the struggle, they will never quell the masses' drive for dignity.

The temporary defeats of yesterday are the seeds of certain victory tomorrow.