Chapter I

INTRODUCTION:
A SURVEY OF UNITED STATES' CARIBBEAN POLICY
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On 28 April 1966, US President Lyndon B. Johnson made a dramatic announcement from the White House ordering a contingent of 400 US marines to land at once in the capital city of Dominican Republic, Santo Domingo. While this announcement of the US President puzzled the world, his subsequent announcement in less than four days of marine landing in the order of 14,000 admittedly baffled both the US public and the world. In the context of the critical escalation of US war efforts in distant Indo-China, the massive military deployment in the Dominican Republic made observers all over the world look with considerable misgiving and suspicion of the United States global objectives and intentions.

After almost a century of frequent military intervention in the Western Hemisphere, including in the Caribbean, the United States during the years of the so-called "good neighbour" policy, articulated and initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had almost desisted from military interventions of the kind that the world saw in 1966. Observers of US policy began even to wonder

1 See for details Bryce Wood, The Making of Good Neighbour Policy (New York, 1961); Merlo J. Pusey, Charles Evans Hughes (New York, 1951); Samuel Flagg Bemis, Latin American Policy of the United States (New York, 1943); Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 4th ed.); J. Lloyd Mecham, A Survey of United States: Latin American Relations (New York, 1965); Donald H. Dozer, Are We Good Neighbours? (Gainsville, 1959); Edward O. Guerrett, Roosevelt's Good Neighbour Policy (Alburquerque, 1950); For a survey of the US policy towards Caribbean, see German Arciniegas, Caribbean: Sea of the New World, Harriet de Onis trans. (New York, 1946);

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whether President Johnson by committing US marines in Santo Domingo had thereby formulated a new corollary if not, provided military teeth to the more than century-old Monroe Doctrine, and legitimized its military intervention in the Western Hemisphere. Ever since the Second World War and especially after the establishment of the Organization of American States (OAS) during President Harry S. Truman's Administration, the United States had formalized the proscription against unilateral direct military intervention.

United States action in Guatemala in the mid-fifties and in Cuba in early sixties though were instances of US intervention were nevertheless clandestine, para-military and certainly not...
of the kind that was witnessed in the Dominican Republic. What is even more baffling was the political stance the US government adopted in justifying, if not, explaining its intervention in the Dominican Republic. Whatever may be its intentions, the fact that it committed its marines without specific and prior consultation in the regional security organization such as OAS or in the world body vis-a-vis the United Nations and much less with its allies either in Western Europe or in South America clearly suggested something beyond mere duplicity in terms of US actions.

The single most important question is why a nation as large and powerful as the United States resorted to direct

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4 See for details Jerome Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy* (Columbus, Ohio, 1967), pp. 107-74.

5 While outlining the objectives of US intervention in the Dominican Republic, President Lyndon B. Johnson, stated that the simple goal of the US in landing its marines in the Dominican Republic was "to save the lives of all citizens"; "to save lives of all people" and "to help prevent another communist state in the hemisphere". President Johnson further was quoted as saying that "we don't propose to sit here in our rocking chair with our hands folded and let the Communists get up any government in the Western Hemisphere". Further US policy-makers in Washington were much worried about the domestic criticism which was mounting high against US policy in Vietnam. "What can we do in Vietnam if we can't clean up the Dominican Republic?" Johnson was quoted as saying. Apart from these stated objectives, US economic interests in Dominican Republic seem to have played a vital role in the process of decision-making. According to Fred Goff and Michal Locker, "the forces determining US priorities and objectives in the Dominican Republic were rooted in powerful American economic interests and domestic political considerations" and the authors provide further evidences to substantiate their arguments. The familiar reason that is given by authors like Abraham F. Loventhal, Tad Szulc, Theodore Draper, Philip Goyolin and others is that the United States was caught up unawares by the civil strife of April 1965. Moreover, the unilateral military intervention committed by the US aroused indignation among many

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military intervention in a country as small and weak as the Dominican Republic. Related are questions such as: Why with its overwhelming economic, political and military power, the United States opted for military intervention? Was US intervention at all justified? Was the United States able to achieve its stated or unstated objectives by committing its troops in the Dominican Republic? These and other related questions are relevant in any attempt to understand not only the US global objectives but its limited objectives as far as the Western Hemisphere is concerned.

With a view to consider these issues, an attempt is made in the preliminary chapter to focus attention on providing a brief background to the "Dominican crisis" by sketching US postures and policies in the Caribbean and particularly in the Dominican Republic and finally, surveying chronologically the events leading to the landing of US marines in Dominican Republic.

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A Review of US Policy Towards
Dominican Republic

The Caribbean area has always been regarded by the United
States as a region that required a distinct set of policies. The
strategic location of the islands of the Caribbean such as Cuba, and
Hispaniola and the geographical proximity of the region to the
continental United States have long commanded the special attention
of the United States. As a result, even though the economic re-
sources of the region were of little significance to the United
States, the strategic location of the Caribbean islands, gave the
region an importance in US foreign policy vastly disproportionate
to its resources. To some extent, the economic underdevelopment
and the prevalent political turmoil in the region, offered ample
opportunities for the United States to take advantage of the
region for its own strategic and political objectives. The three
important island republics of the Caribbean -- Cuba, Dominican
Republic and Haiti -- had therefore special relations with the
United States over since the 19th century. Attempts were made in
the course of the 19th century by the United States even to annex
at least two of these republics viz. Cuba and Dominican Republic.
While such efforts failed in the case of Dominican Republic,
United States retained a protectorate hold over Cuba following
the Spanish-American War and through the Platt Amendment of 1901.
Interests in the other Caribbean islands began to develop after

6 Kocham, n. 1, p. 235.
7 See for details, ibid., pp. 280-302.
the Spanish-American War and the subsequent acquisition of canal rights in Panama, precisely because of the strategic importance of the region. The major objective of the United States in the Caribbean being its strategic location, the perpetuation of political instability offered therefore a handle for the United States to prevent foreign influence and control and forge closer links with the region.

One of the earliest instances of US efforts to intervene in the Dominican Republic dates back to 1854. In that year the United States initiated negotiations for a treaty that would give San Juan Bay in the north-east of Santo Domingo, as a naval base for the United States. Subsequently there have been efforts during the administrations of President Andrew Johnson and President Ulysses S. Grant to negotiate for the annexation of the Dominican Republic as part of the territory of the United States. While such efforts failed to give the United States a foothold over the island, US intervention continued unabated, however, at other levels.

During the Administration of Theodore J. Roosevelt an agreement was signed in 1905 to create receivership with the Dominican Republic on the pretext of internal disorder and financial chaos. The receivership agreement continued for two years under an executive agreement. The agreement was replaced in

10 Kocham, n. 1, p. 282.
1907 by a treaty which incorporated essentially the same financial arrangement and prohibited the Dominican government from incurring anymore financial obligations from Europe. The 1907 treaty gave the United States at once an opportunity to eliminate all foreign insurrections and establish its hegemonic control over the political process in that island.

With a view to further intensify its hold over the Dominican Republic in the subsequent Administration of President Woodrow Wilson, the US sought to increase its control over the Dominican finances by securing the appointment of an American financial comptroller with powers to control and budget the national expenditure. Those and other efforts climaxed ultimately in the military intervention and occupation of the Dominican Republic by the United States in the year 1916. Once under military occupation, the United States was in a position to organize an indigenous constabulary. The unpopularity throughout the hemisphere of US intervention and occupation along with the Dominican situation itself becoming one of the critical issues in the presidential elections of 1920, forced President Wilson as early as December 1920 to initiate procedures for the withdrawal of the US military from the Dominican Republic. The next four years saw intense US manoeuvres to bring about a constitutional government which at the same time allowed for the transition from US occupation to Dominican control. Following the national election, "a constitutional" government was set up on 12 July 1924, and in the next two months, US withdrew its military from the Dominican Republic. Whereas the military occupation came to an end, the
fiscal control of the US however, continued.

Efforts to organize the Dominican constabulary during the Wilson Administration paid rich dividends. For, in the year 1930, "the bastard son of the occupation forces" Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, who as the chief of the national guard staged a coup from within and took over the constitutional government.

US policy towards Dominican Republic ever since Trujillo came to power, in the words of Jerome Slater "reflected in microcosm its [US] general Latin American policy. Throughout the twentieth century, the crucial objective of U.S. policy in the hemisphere had been to prevent coming to power of any Latin American government or political movement that could threaten the security of the United States or its predominant position in the hemisphere".

The relationship of the US with Trujillo typifying the "marriage of convenience" with the military dictator was devoid of any serious problems as far as the United States was concerned. The political and economic "stability" which Trujillo maintained in his country as well as his uncompromising stand against fascism and communism during and after the Second World War admittedly met with US interests in the Caribbean region. Both during the war and after, Trujillo's policy of co-operation

11 Martin, n. 5, pp. 28-32; Also see Keacham, n. 1, pp. 286-7; C.L. Jones, The Caribbean since 1900 (New York, 1936), pp. 121-5.

12 Howard J. Wiarda, The Dominican Republic (New York, 1939), p. 31, quoting a Dominican historian.


14 Fred Goff and Michel Locker, n. 5, pp. 252-61.
in support of the United States despite his reprisals and dictatorial tendencies made Franklin D. Roosevelt endearingly describe him as "our S.O.B."

Because of his tenacity and harsh effectiveness, the Dominican dictator became the chief target of attack especially since the post-Second World War years. The successful culmination of the Cuban revolution under the leadership of Fidel Castro accelerated a process of political destabilisation of the dictatorships both in the Caribbean and Central America. With the fall of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, the situation became somewhat ominous for Trujillo. An invasion launched from Cuba by the Dominican elites though unsuccessful shook Trujillo's regime to its roots. With the domestic support including that of the Roman Catholic church diminishing, Trujillo in a fit of desperation launched an assassination attempt on Venezuelan social democrat president, Romulo Betancourt. The assassination bid and his complicity in it, tolled the death-knell to Trujillo. The OAS called into session to discuss Trujillo's hand in the Betancourt assassination, denounced Trujillo and imposed economic sanctions on his country. The OAS condemnation to which US was also a party, and the economic sanctions imposed on the Dominican Republic -- all demonstrated the increasing erosion of US support to Trujillo. The pressures exerted by the United States and the inter-American community prepared the way for the final act of Trujillo's deposition which

came with his assassination on 30 May 1961.

Us Policies Towards Dominican Republic Since Trujillo

The year of 1960 with the advent of Fidel Castro in Cuba is in many respects a very important landmark in US policy towards its southern neighbours. Admittedly, the establishment of a regime basically opposed to US interests in an island so proximate to the United States and that too, in a manner somewhat unexpected, forced the US policy-makers to reconsider their postures essentially not to let the situation go unmanageable. Events immediately following the fall of Batista portended that the revolutionary zeal of the Fidelistas may soon have its reverberations in the other islands of the Caribbean as well as in the traditionally unstable Central America -- a trend which in the long run if not, in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban revolution may result in the emergence of a political process detrimental to the United States.

With a view to stem such deleterious processes US policy-makers under President John F. Kennedy evolved a two pronged response to the emerging situation in Latin America. One of those


17 A serious concern had developed by then in the Eisenhower Administration over the fact that the sudden removal of Trujillo from power would create a political vacuum and economic instability. "Batista is to Castro as Trujillo is..." the Washington wanted to insure that it could help fill in the blank. See for details Slater, n. 13, p. 7.
was increasing counter-insurgency programmes with a view to
suppressing rebel movements hostile to the US and the second
was the Alliance for Progress programme to engineer fundamental
socio-economic reforms.

In the general context of the Caribbean situation and on
the basis of the evolving changes in US policy alternatives, the
US developed its perspectives and relations *via-a-via* Dominican
Republic following Trujillo's assassination. The US policy-
makers, in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution and in the wake
of radicalism spreading in the Caribbean apparently opted for the
second strategy in the case of Dominican Republic. They desired
that they should turn the Dominican Republic the show-window of
the Alliance for Progress, by seeking to promote social reforms
and establish a democratic regime there. The objective was not
only to prove the ability of the Alliance to meet its expressed
goals but also to put an end to a Trujillo style of political
regime. They also desired to establish their credentials as one
who would have nothing more to do with such reactionary
regimes as that of Trujillo. In other words, it was an effort
at image building in the eyes of other Western Hemispheric coun-
tries which at the same time would assure the United States of a
Cuba not being re-enacted. Progress towards these goals they

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18 For details, see Larman C. Wilson, "United States Military
Assistance to the Dominican Republic 1916-1937", Paper
prepared for delivery before the Seminar on the Dominican
Republic, Centro for International Affairs, Harvard
University (Harvard, 20 April 1937), pp. 71-75.

19 In fact the US policy makers at Washington gave a clear
indication of their new policy. The Under Secretary of
State C. Douglas Dillon, referred to Trujillo as "a tyrant,
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thought, would be in dramatic contrast to US policies towards the defunct Trujillo regime. To some extent, such a trend was already witnessed in the preceding Eisenhower Administration when US played an important role in Trujillo's political demise by supporting economic and military sanctions against the dictator.

The earliest evidence of the change in the Kennedy Administration came with his ordering of US naval fleet to the shores of Santo Domingo as a demonstration of support for local efforts to rid the republic of Trujillo's heirs. No doubt his actions tilted the balance. Subsequently, the Kennedy Administration threatened military and economic sanctions and provided economic assistance in 1962 to ensure free elections in the politically unstable Dominican Republic. A liberal and progressive political leader of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), Juan Bosch was elected and assumed presidency in February 1963.

The election of Juan Bosch and the subsequent political events posed certain difficulties in respect of US-Dominican relations. Tension between the two governments began to develop.

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See Grassweller, n. 15, p. 421, and also see US Congress, House Committee on Agriculture, 

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Schlesinger, n. 19, p. 662. Also see Fred Goff and Michel Locker, n. 5, p. 262.
Though they had many political views in common, US Ambassador John Bartlow Martin, a liberal democrat and Juan Bosch President of the Dominican Republic, did not have the best of relations. Proud as he was, Bosch was very sensitive regarding Dominican weaknesses and dependence on the United States. Ambassador Martin who had very personal and friendly regards for Bosch was annoyed that Bosch had not consulted him on many occasions. One of the instances of serious difference between the two surfaced when Martin refused to support Bosch in his desire to remove military officers hostile to him controlling the armed forces. Certain economic policies which Bosch initiated irritated the US Ambassador. Bosch trip to Europe and securing a Swiss line of credit, his abrogation of a contract with ESSO for building an oil refinery, his ideas on agrarian reforms, his refusal to the fulfilment of sugar sales contract because of his view that the terms were unfair, and his inability to cope with the communists were matters on which Martin disagreed. Washington also viewed Bosch’s performance on the basis of Ambassador Martin’s assessment and recommendations, and made only minor commitments of economic assistance to Bosch’s government in contrast to much larger loan given to its predecessor. All or almost all AID loans and grants for fiscal year 1963 were committed before Bosch became President of which $3.5 million loan was made for housing under social progress fund signed in February 1963, and

21 In a note written by Ambassador Martin on Saturday, 23 February 1963 -- four days before the inauguration of Bosch’s presidency -- he described Bosch as “dividend, a splitter, a schemer and a destroyer”. See for further details Martin, n. 5, pp. 322-30 and 354.
nearly $4.8 million loan under Food-For-Peace Agreement.

Bosch's basic political problem on the other hand, was mobilising mass support and evolving institutions to counter the Dominican armed forces. Agrarian reform which he considered as one of the means by which he could mobilise the peasantry to support him was from the beginning opposed by Ambassador Martin and by the US official agencies. Uniting the labour organizations was the other means which Bosch encouraged. In view of many of the labour leaders and organizations generously funded by official US sources, they were therefore opposed to politicising and unifying Dominican labour. The Dominican armed forces having been very much under the influence of US military officers assigned to their country were critical of Bosch whom they often described as indecisive and unrelaible. In the process, Bosch was overtaken by events. For, when in September 1933 the military deposed Bosch, the United States refused to bring its fleet


23 Fred Goff and Michel Locker, no. 5, pp. 265-67.


unless its embassy certified that a communist takeover might occur.

In many respects, US influence in the Dominican Republic both in scope and intensity during the short-lived presidency of Bosch was truly remarkable. The US was deeply involved in the military, constabulary, labour, governmental and business institutions of the Republic. It is true that Martin and the US government desired to seek a victory for Dominican democracy under Juan Bosch. Yet they failed in their objective of maintaining a popularly elected Bosch in office because of their baseless fears that Bosch may radicalise the Dominican political process. Bosch, on the other hand, in seeking to promote genuine democratisation and economic development was unwilling to acquiesce to Dominican military and vested economic interests. The clash of interests therefore became inevitable and in the confrontation that ensued between Bosch and the armed forces, the US officials were undoubtedly reluctant to back Bosch firmly against the military. Had the United States provided Bosch with effective economic assistance when he needed most, Bosch would have been able to bolster his regime and possibly have offered a stable government for the Dominicans. Where the United States failed, in Bosch's Dominican Republic was, in its short-sighted appraisals of his genuine commitment to constitutionalism and progressive economic reforms. The United States policy-makers

26 Fred Goff and Michel Locker, n. 5, p. 271. Also see Slater, n. 13, p. 15.

27 See for more details, Juan Bosch, Unfinished Experiment (New York, 1965).
by viewing his commitments to constitutionalism and progressive reforms with suspicion and apprehensions led themselves to believe that over a period of time US private and public interests might be seriously jeopardized. Concern for US limited economic interests began to assume disproportionate importance which finally impelled the US to take actions impeding Bosch's strategy for building broad-based popular support through social and economic reforms. In rationalising its attitude the United States re-vendor looked at Bosch and his reformist government as implicit threats of communism. John Foster Dulles and his blinded perception of Latin American nationalism began to afflict once again the policy-makers of Washington.

After Bosch was overthrown in late September 1953, the military chiefs set up a three-man civilian junta and turned the clock back to the time of Trujillo. As expected the junta renounced relations with the United States. It sought US economic and military assistance and at the same time broadened its conservative and political base. The United States which had severed its diplomatic relations withholding recognition, terminating all assistance and recalling almost all its diplomatic personnel, under the new Administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, recognised the junta in December 1953. In the following year with the appointment of William T. Bennett Jr. as US Ambassador, economic and military assistance was once again resumed. Donald Reid Cabral, one of the three junta leaders who emerged as a strong figure and assumed office as the president of the republic had many friends in the US diplomatic circles. His austerity programme, ability to maintain law and order and
institute reforms in the armed forces were welcomed by the United States. Evidence of its willingness to work with Reid's government were seen in the United States interest in resuming its military assistance agreement with the Dominican Republic in June 1954. The civic action programme which had been formerly initiated and later discontinued by the US was once again resumed in October 1954. Seeing Reid's increasing stress on training in anti-guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency army units, the United States under the Mobile Training Teams (M7T) offered training and guidance to the Dominican armed forces.

The military reforms initiated by Reid in turn, caused considerable and widespread dissonance within the military itself. The old guard senior officers who were the worst of the victims of Reid's reformist policies favoured his ouster and the recall from exile Joaquin Balaguer who in the aftermath of Trujillo's assassination held briefly the reins of power. Another faction of young and reform-minded officers critical of Reid also favoured his ouster and the return of Juan Bosch. It is believed that many of these officers were loyal to Bosch and shared his party ideology. With such lines drawn within and dividing the Dominican army and the civilian population by now sufficiently exasperated over the happenings in the Dominican Republic, a

28 Lorman C. Wilson, "United States Military Assistance to the Dominican Republic 1916-1957", n. 18, p. 75.

29 See for details about the constitutionalists movement Lowenthal, The Dominican Intervention, n. 5; Tod Scuile, The Dominican Diary, n. 5; Dan Kurzman, n. 5; Theodore Draper, n. 5, pp. 38-68. Also see Carlos Maria Gutierrez, The Dominican Republic: Rebellion and Repression (New York, 1972).
coup against the Reid's government became almost inevitable. When several pro-Bosch officers refusing to surrender their commissions with other military units defecting and Reid himself having been removed from office, the resultant situation provoked the civil-war. The faction staging the coup labelled as "constitutionalists" favouring Bosch's return was first headed by Jose Rafael Molina Urena of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and was replaced a few days later by Col. Francisco Caamaño Deno. Although, the constitutionalists were opposed by all the military services, it had the support of some professional labour units with few army battalions as well as of thousands of civilians of Santo Domingo. The other faction which was mainly a military one with a support of the constabulary labelled as the "loyalists" was initially led by Gen. Elias Wessin Y Wessin and later by Gen. Antonio Inbert Berrera.

The "Civil Strife" and the Landing of US Marines

The major differences that riddled the two factions of the armed forces coupled with the prevailing chaotic economic situation led to a civil uprising in the capital city of Santo Domingo on 24 April 1966. The Constitution of 1953 with its emphasis on socio-economic reforms earlier promulgated by former president Bosch was however, repealed later that year and instead the Constitution of 1952 with its conservative provisions were reinstated by the military junta headed by Donald Reid Cabral. In an atmosphere of growing economic inflation and disintegrating political and social conditions, it is but natural that a conservative regime headed by a person like Reid Cabral became a
target of attack both from political and social organizations. In fact, in the US too not many were in favour of Reid's regime. Senator William J. Fulbright while addressing the Senate on the US policy towards Dominican Republic on 5 September 1965, emphatically said: "Men like Donald Reid ... may have their merits, but they are not the force of the future in Latin America".

Many scholars view that the civil uprising that broke out in April 1965 initially was nothing but an effort to oust General Reid. Jerome Slator: "The revolution of April 1965 began not so much as a revolution in the true sense of the word, but as a military coup designed to topple the Reid government". While another writer, Abraham F. Loventhal who was in Santo Domingo during the civil war argues that "the immediate causes of the 1965 Dominican political crisis may be traced directly to the events of 1963, particularly to the overthrow of President Juan Bosch on 25 September of that year". The opposition to the Reid Cabral regime came from various political factions. Some of them like PRD members wanted the return of Juan Bosch while other members of the Revolutionary Social Christian Party (PRSC) aspired for more political participation. The revolutionary students organization viz 14th June Movement wanted to get back the legal guarantees granted earlier to them by the


31 Slator, n. 12, p. 19.

32 Loventhal, *The Dominican Intervention*, n. 5, p. 35.
1963 Constitution. The pro-Balaguer faction which had the support of the PRSC took active interest in the upheaval not because they favoured the Constitution of 1963 but because they wanted a fresh election to take place. If such elections were to be held they believed that their candidate former president Joaquin Balaguer would have a good chance of winning. He was not only acceptable to the US government but was also considered a "moderate" in the Dominican politics.

The reports of the Informe del Banco Central de la Republica Dominicana published on 12 November 1965 showed that the sugar price in the world market had fallen to less than 2.5 cents per lb by early 1965. Prices for the Dominican cocoa also had declined from 19.61 cents in January 1965 to 12.22 cents on 22 April. Similarly the prices of other principle export commodities registered an overall decline all of which resulted in setting up a wave of economic depression contributing to the sudden political outburst. Further, it is said that the "austerity programme" supported by International Monetary Fund to tighten credit in order to limit imports and restore the country's payments position came under fire from every quarter. The unemployment rate also increased to 31.05 per cent of the work force particularly in the urban sector. The initial sign

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33 For further details, see Informe del Banco Central de la Republica Dominicana, 12 November 1965 (Santo Domingo, 1965), pp. 11-13.
34 Lowenthal, no. 5, p. 39.
35 Listin Diario (Santo Domingo), 9 January 1935.
of the impending civil strife was however indicated by the constant unrest among the labourers of US-owned La Romana Sugar complex and other industrialised sectors. It is said that the three-man military junta headed by Roid sent troops and even flew squadrons of P-51 air force to quell the disturbance that broke in March 1935. Another important factor which contributed to the uprising was the expulsion of some members of coalition cabinet and the personal control exerted by Roid. Moreover, when he discovered that pro-Dalaguer and pro-Bosch movements were directed against his regime, he took immediate steps to deport certain military personalities who were supposed to have had sympathetic leanings towards those movements. It was said that he was able to accomplish all these because he enjoyed the support of the Dominican Air Force General Hossin Y. Hossin.

Why in spite of the strong support given by a powerful section of the Dominican armed forces under Hossin Y. Hossin should Roid fail to contain the situation? The answer is not far to seek. The exasperated Dominicans having gone through the tyrannical rule of Trujillo as well as the liberal government of Juan Bosch feared the return of a dictatorial regime in Roid and so urged for the return of Bosch's constitutional government.

36 Louenthal, n. 5, p. 40.
37 Jose Moreno, "What made the Rebel Different" in Political Powers in Latin America (Stanford, 1970), pp. 245-51.
38 Louenthal, n. 5, pp. 68-61.
39 It is also said that when the crisis came in April 1935 not many in the Dominican military establishment including Gen. Hossin Y. Hossin were willing to defend Reid Cabral's regime. See for details Martin C. Noedler, The United States and the Latin American Revolution (Boston, 1972), p. 86.
Although there were rumblings in the air, nobody including Reid expected that the coup would materialize as early as April 1985. In its routine weekly report of 20 April, even the US Embassy had mentioned of rumours of continued pro-Bosch plotting within the military but had explicitly discounted their significance. It was widely believed that the Reid regime had an effective control over the defections in the armed forces. Even though one of the radio stations at Santo Domingo announced on the evening of 24 April 1985 that the "young and honest" officers dedicated to "constitutionalism" had overthrown Reid, the messages sent from US embassy in Santo Domingo to Washington informing about the rumours of the coup and the subsequent takeover of the Radio Santo Domingo reported that the Reid government might be in serious difficulty but that there was no solid evidence to the fact that it had actually been overthrown. The national constabulary, it reported, had controlled the situation immediately and by dusk imposed an effective curfew. The subsequent reports from US embassy stated that robot officers while holding control of the army headquarters reported that the uprising seemed to be confined to junior and non-commissioned officers of the army.

Though Washington was informed that the coup was well under control, actually the situation began to deteriorate by late that day in the capital. Two-thirds of the Dominican army units were in revolt and in order to keep the people from getting

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40 Lowenthal, n. 5, p. 65.
panicked, earlier that night Reid announced through radio and television channels that the attempted coup has been put down.

The involvement of the US embassy in the raging civil disturbance is somewhat unclear. The embassy authorities initially felt confident that the "loyalist" forces would control the situation and as such there was no need for direct US action. However, by Tuesday night of 27 April, when the US embassy was informed that the situation had deteriorated in favour of pro-Bosch group the command of which had now been taken over by Col. Caamano, the US officials and the policy-makers in Washington began evincing some concern. Their fear was that the pro-Bosch forces were gaining strength and certain communist elements had infiltrated into pro-Bosch group. The CIA reports received on the eve of the civil strife by the embassy also indicated the presence of communist elements in the constitutionalists group. The US Ambassador, Bennett who was away in his home town of Georgia, returned by now and tried to establish contacts with the two warring factions.

Very soon however, the US emissary realised that the situation had reached a critical point where no more negotiation is likely to produce any concrete results. The junta fighting a

41 The number of Communists identified in the Dominican Republic during the revolution by the CIA were rather equivocal. The lists contained many duplications of names and names of persons who were no more. The number varied from fifty-three to seventy-seven throughout the period from late April to mid-June. It is rather doubtful whether handful of these "known Communists" could have in anyway influenced the course of the revolution. For details see Larman C. Wilson, "United States' Dominican Intervention 1965: Illicit or Licit Exercise of Power?", Paper prepared for the Institute of World Polity, Georgetown University (Washington, D.C., 1966), p. 21. Also Tad Szulc, n. 5, p. 71.
losing battle, also to some extent, exacerbated his pessimism regarding the outcome of the interminable Dominican conflict. At the same time leaving the crisis to its logical consequences would mean decidedly a triumph to pro-Bosch forces, an outcome that Bennett felt was admittedly detrimental to US interests. In his view what was imperative at this juncture was a resolution of the crisis which while aiming to localize the conflict also at the same time offered the United States a clear edge in establishing eventually a regime favourably disposed to it. Bennett believed that in salvaging a crisis under these circumstances would therefore, demand the restoring to power the military elements especially under the leadership of José María Bosch.

Given the military junta's somewhat precarious predicament any effort to salvage it and thereby bring Bosch's faction back to power clearly, in Bennett's judgement asked for US intervention. Diplomatic feelers of both sides to this effect failing and the crisis itself having become a conflict of pitched street battles between the two contending forces, any US intervention necessarily has to be only military.

While these being the US emissary's assessment and options, the officials of the Department of State and President Johnson himself have independently been thinking along the lines of a prompt and decisive military solution to the impending Dominican crisis. In their view, earlier efforts to contain what they described as the "insurgency" forces in the Dominican Republic through civic action programmes obviously having failed and the fear of "another Cuba" looming large once again in loss
than five years in an island proximate to the mainland of the United States, necessarily called for a set of drastic policy measures. Sensitive to public criticism and still a potential contender for re-election in 1939 Johnson was apprehensive of the political penalties implicit "in another Cuba". So sensitive to these pressures were he and his advisors that they opted for a quick remedy which they felt under the circumstances was only by military intervention. Notwithstanding public postures, the Johnson Administration considered the Dominican situation as grave and decided as early as 24 April that he will have to commit US marines should the constitutionalists gain an upperhand.

According to some accounts it appears that Ambassador Bennett on his own had alerted the US marines to land in Santo Domingo and informed Washington about his action. In his

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42 It is not clear as to who took actually the decision and when exactly such a decision was made regarding the landing of US marines in Santo Domingo. Different accounts are given by writers on this episode. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on intervention were never made public. Max Frankel's story in the New York Times lacked some of the highlights of the hearings suggesting that the administration had decided in favour of US landing of its marines as early as 24 April. For details, see New York Times, 14 November 1936; Ted Saul, Dominican Diary (New York, 1936). Ambassador Bennett during his visit to meet his ailing mother in Georgia appears to have discussed with the State Department officials on the prevailing political situation in the Dominican Republic and had alerted the officials on the need for US military intervention should the situation turn violent. To this effect the writer was informed in an exclusive interview he had with Yard P. Allen, Deputy Representative of the US in the OAS in Summer 1975 who corroborated the above stated events.

43 Loventhal, n. 5, p. 103. Also see for details, James A. Baro, "Dominican Diary", US Naval Institute Proceedings (New York), December 1935.
message to Washington, the Ambassador seemed to have justified his action on ground that the Dominican "authorities" have failed to offer any assurance or guarantees to protect the lives and properties of US citizens, located in the capital.

In less than twenty-four hours on the evening of 28 April at a press conference in the lawns of the White House, President Johnson declared: "I have ordered ... necessary American troops ashore ... in the Dominican Republic". Elaborating his reasons for this unprecedented action, he said that situation in the Dominican Republic has become "serious" and he "considers [The landing of US marines] necessary in order to protect American lives". He also stated that he has ordered the landing of marines because "authorities in the Dominican Republic are no longer able to guarantee" the safety of Americans as well as the nationals of other countries, "some of whom have already asked for our help". His decision, the President added had the "support" of "the leaders of the Congress".

"Persuant to my instructions" President Johnson claimed that following the landing of 400 US marines in Santo Domingo "there have been no incidents". However, he continued, perhaps unsure of his own claim: "We have appealed ... for a cease-fire between the contending forces ... [and] I repeat this urgent appeal again". Concluding his remarks, he said: "The Council of the OAS had been advised of the situation by the Dominican Ambassador [Jose Antonio Bonilla Atiles], and the Council will

44 For the details regarding US Ambassadors' activities during the crucial days of 27 and 28 April 1965, see Lowenthal, n. 5, chapter 3 and Tad Szulc, n. 5, pp. 31-55.
be kept fully informed”.

The 28 April statement of President Johnson justifying the landing of the marines was somewhat misleading. Evidently his statement was based on Bonnot’s own assessment and cables from embassy officials both of which exaggerated the constitutionalists threat to the lives of American and other third country nationals. Dispatches from the US embassy often described firing squads holding terrorized Americans at gun point in the Ambassador Hotel. Moreover, heads of assassinated victims were supposedly paraded through the streets of downtown Santo Domingo. In reality however, ever since the outbreak of the rebellion, not one American civilian was killed either by accident or on purpose by the constitutionalists.

Be that as it may, the US stance on its marine landing underwent considerable change in less than two days. No more the landing was explained for reasons of "protecting" lives of "American and other nationals". A State Department communiqué of 30 April claimed that the US marines in Santo Domingo “are completing the establishment of the international neutral area


46 Documented atrocities of murder of civilian prisoners showed that all such activities were committed within the territory occupied by the military junta. A report submitted to the OAS by a team of criminologists, show that most brutalities were committed in the area under the control of military junta and most of them took place between 22 May and 5 June. For details, see Pan American Union Technical Assistance Committee Composed of Criminologists, OAS Official Records, OEA/3ER.E/11.10 (Eng.) Doc. 231 (Washington, D.C., 1935).
of refuge covering a limited area in the western section of the city. The international neutral zone, the communique explained "was established in response to a resolution passed by the Council of the OAS." It is, however, curious to note that although the Council had passed a resolution to this effect -- "the immediate establishment of an international neutral zone of refuge" -- the resolution nowhere had mentioned that it had charged the US marines of any such responsibility. Further, the thrust of the communique ran somewhat contrary to the statement which the President made on the evening of the same day. By and large, reiterating his earlier stand that the marine landing was necessary because of the "police and military officials in the Dominican Republic ... no longer in a position to guarantee the safety of American and foreign nationals," he added, "We took this step [also] to preserve law and order in the Dominican Republic". In other words, what exactly was the prime objective of the US decision in landing its marines had become unclear by now. Was it to protect American lives as the President said on 28 April or to establish an international neutral zone as the State Department in its communique mentioned, or was it "to preserve law and order" in the Dominican Republic as reflected in Johnson's 30 April statement? Again, whereas his 28th evening statement reported of "no incident" following the landing of the first contingent of 400 US marines, why then his statement on 30 April noted that after the landing now of

47 Department of State Bulletin, n. 46, p. 742.
48 Ibid., p. 741.
"over 2400" US marines "violence and disorder" have increased? Quickly however, he turned on to explain perhaps to redeem himself of the seeming self-contradiction of his Administration's stance. He attributed the increasing "violence and disorder" to the presence of "people trained outside the Dominican Republic seeking to gain control". Admittedly it was an implicit reference to the alleged Castroite elements infiltrating into the constitutionalists camp. Judging by the events, ironically enough, Johnson's reference to "people trained outside the Dominican Republic ... seeking to gain control" befitted the intervention by the US marines and described aptly the sinister motives of the United States "to gain control". After a lengthy statement the President concluded by highlighting the critical importance of the inter-American regional organization in the Dominican crisis. Said Johnson: "The eyes of the hemisphere are now on the OAS.... The wisdom, the statesmanship, and the ability to act decisively of the OAS are critical to the hopes of peoples ... of this continent".

Preparatory to the massive landing of over 14,000 marines by 2 May President Johnson's view of the Dominican crisis began to undergo metamorphic change. He said on 1 May that the "forces [US marines] in this area are thinly spread and subject to attack and sniper fire.... Under current circumstances, their capability is not adequate to this mission". While stressing


50 Ibid., p. 54.
on the inadequacy of the US marines to accomplish its stated objective viz "to preserve law and order" and thereby prepared the way for further landing of US marines the President however, reiterated relentlessly the role of the OAS. He said that the events in the Dominican Republic posed:

a threat to the principles of inter-American system and the peace of the hemisphere.... For our part, the United States is ready to support -- with every resource at its command -- the inter-American system ... it is in moments of crisis such as this, we truly test the vitality of our association.... Our goal in the Dominican Republic is the goal ... of the inter-American system. (51)

Then came the first Sabbath day of May. Contrary to the biblical dispensations, the protestant President worked all that day conferring with his aides to finalise his most unchristian decision of committing a massive contingent totaling now upto 14,000 US marines in Santo Domingo, a decision that startled the whole world. Evidently it was a hard job for Johnson. Before the press and news media, he lamented:

I want you to know that is not a light or an easy matter to send our American boys to another country, but I do not think that the American people expect their President to hesitate or to vacillate in the face of danger, just because the decision is hard when life is in peril.

Continuing his long-winding statement to justify his action, he said:

How sad it is tonight that a people so long oppressed should once again be the targets of the forces of tyranny. Their long misery must weigh heavily on the heart of every citizen of this hemisphere. So I think it is

51 Ibid., p. 55.
our mutual responsibility to help the people of Dominican Republic toward the day when they can freely choose the path of liberty and justice and progress. This is required of us by the agreements that we are party to and that we have signed. This is required of us by the values which bind us together. (52)

Although President Johnson's statement was replete with anguish and emotions -- genuine or simulated -- the decision to land the marines was admittedly regrettable to say the least.

The policy-makers in Washington very soon found themselves in an irredeemable quandary. For one thing the immediate objective of salvaging and bolstering the junta forces could not be met. For another, containing the civil disturbance to the capital city of Santo Domingo was no more possible. To resort to the OAS and attempt thereby to de-internationalise the Dominican crisis was fraught with many impediments. However much, the United States attempted to localise the crisis by resorting to unilateral military intervention, the Dominican situation assumed regional as well as international dimensions. In fact, the United States placed itself at the same time exposed to the regional organization as well as to the United Nations by flouting all the basic principles enshrined in the Charter of the OAS as well as that of the UN. The dilemma the US policy-makers confronted at this juncture was to make every effort to keep the issue simmering only within the regional organization than that of the spilling into a world forum. The efforts, therefore, ever since the initial landing of US marines was one of containing and finding a possible way out within the regional organization.

52 Ibid., p. 60.
To what extent, the United States succeeded in its efforts without relenting in the least its basic objectives in the Dominican Republic and at the same time seek if not a permanent at least an immediate solution not detrimental to its interests are examined at length in the following chapters of the thesis, focussing especially attention on the role of the OAS, its mediatory missions and the part the US and the other major Latin American countries played in the regional organization.