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Non-Governmental Organizations As Mechanisms for the
National Security Strategy of the United States: Participation of
NGOs in the Attempted Regime Change in Nicaragua

非政府組織作為美國國家安全戰略的機制：非政府組織參與尼加
拉瓜的未遂政權變革



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Abstract

In the sphere of international cooperation, non-governmental organizations have, over time, taken an increasingly important role. In the case of the United States, non-governmental organizations are tools to ensure national security. In the attempt to change the regime in Nicaragua in 2018, the activities carried out by the NGOs funded by the United States contributed towards the creation of a framework through which the involvement of the United States in the conflict would be justified. This study analyzes the evolution of International Aid approaches and the United States' strategies to ensure its national security plan in Latin America. The results show that international aid is a set of political guidelines aimed at maintaining a given status quo. In the specific case analyzed in the paper, the United States provided aid to groups aligning with American goals, while legitimizing the use of violence and coercive economic measures and authorizing to commit crimes against humanity when these were necessary to meet the goals set by the White House. By analyzing historical data in light of contemporary events, this paper will show the mechanisms and frameworks through which the destruction and violence of the 2018 protests in Nicaragua could be perceived as necessary and beneficial by the international community.

Keywords: NGOs, international aid, United States, Latin America, Nicaragua, Sandinismo.

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Introduction

International cooperation represents a key tool for triggering a number of relevant changes in the life of countries. To achieve this, a key tool of international cooperation is represented by framing its messages and actions to deliver the desired meanings, while allowing it to reach given results. In a broad perspective, aid and development operations undertaken by international cooperation agencies more often than not hide a generally hostile significance, directed to purposes set to protect the interest of industrialized countries. Furthermore, the representational frame, historically used by donor countries, allows the means of control through an internally logical system.

In the case of the United States, bilateral aid is defined as a tool to influence and exert national security strategy. This viewpoint utilizes the moral imperative, i.e. the sovereignty of the national interests, above all other principles that frame legitimate behaviors. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the American activities in Nicaragua used means of influence to maintain the hegemony of the United States over the country. Despite being framed as activities directed toward the development of the country, they often involved actions such as weapons supply, military intervention, coup support, covert operations, financing rebel groups, the use of distributed war manuals, or economic embargo, among others.

In relation to NGOs, arguments collected by social scientists regarding the role they can play and how they can be placed as tools of political and security strategies. In this case, it is identified that the NGOs, especially those of the United States, have been compromised in conflict zones that question their independence, neutrality and impartiality.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States developed a framework called “Dollar Diplomacy” (1904-1933). According to Washington, Dollar Diplomacy was aimed at ensuring the stability of Latin America through the modernization of the State. In fact, it

ensured that the state institutions were controlled by the United States. In order to achieve the purpose, American aid was directed toward the support of Latin American leaders that would grant the interest of the United States, and the eradication of those opposed to it. For example, Nicaraguan president Zelaya was forced to flee the country for challenging the construction of the Panama Canal, the United Fruit Company provided funds to support Zelaya's rival Estrada, marine corps and weapons were deployed on the Nicaraguan territory. A great share of the Nicaraguan state institutions was controlled by US corporations, and the United States was eventually granted exclusive rights in perpetuity to build a canal through Nicaragua. The Dollar Diplomacy in Nicaragua was framed as an economic tool aimed at modernizing the country for its own benefit and growth enhancement. However, the real purpose of this initiative turned out to be mainly geopolitical, aimed at preventing oppositional interests to the United States to build the interoceanic canal in Nicaragua.

The international pressure over the direct and indirect interventions of the US in Latin America, the economic depression and other factors contributed to the formulation of the "Good Neighbor" policy. Under this framework, the United States promised not to engage directly in the internal affairs of any of the Latin American countries. While the Good Neighbor framework was described following a mainly economic interpretation, its practical application was directed towards defending the United States economic, political and military interests. In order to implement this strategy, and comply with the non-intervention policy, the United States financed, guided and armed several military dictators in a number of Latin American countries. In Nicaragua (1936), the United States supported the Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard - body trained and armed by the United States - Anastasio Somoza in a military coup, which would give birth to a 43-year long autocratic family dictatorship (1936-1979) supported and backed by the American government. The Somozas dictatorship received cooperation from the United States on economic and military issues,

and committed a large variety of crimes such as genocide, kidnapping, and murders, at the service of the interests of the Somoza family. Despite the blood and violence, the Somoza leadership granted the front-line alliance of Nicaragua with the interests of the United States, and faithful association during the Cold War years. However, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN), a revolutionary movement, came to light in the early 1960s in Nicaragua, inspired by the Cuban revolution, starting a conflict which by the end of the 70's decade turned into a civil war.

Following media pressure, the United State interfered in a democratization process, which was however refused by president Somoza. In July 1979, the “Sandinistas” overthrew the dictator through a popular insurrection. The rise of the Sandinista revolution was considered a threat to American national security. In an attempt to take action against it, the new government of Ronald Reagan was determined to definitely “destroy the Sandinistas”, and authorized the C.I.A. to train, arm and finance a counter-revolutionary army, i.e. the “Contra”, to achieve the purpose. With the sole scope of fighting the Sandinistas, this armed corp participated in acts such as murdering, torturing, raping, and many others. As these methods were coming to light, Ronald Reagan paid 300,000\$ to a public relations firm to frame the Contras in a positive light: the “Freedom Fighters”, as the American president himself addressed them. Besides spending an estimated \$50 million to support the Contras, the CIA also leveraged other methods aimed at creating chaos, together with a directed effort to manipulate the general public opinion. Among these, an air dropped manual intended to cause civil disobedience, and another one explained how to effectively sabotage the economy.

In 1990, the Nicaraguan presidential candidate Violeta Chamorro from the National Opposition Unit (UNO), with the support of the United States, won the elections against the Sandinistas. This event marked the beginning of the “neoliberal” era in Nicaragua, stretching

from 1991 to 2006 and within which the relationship with the United States was friendly and peaceful. The beginning of the 21st century brought adjustments to the national security strategies of The United States and Latin America. Among the most important: 1) an update to the American national security strategies, following which external cooperation agencies should pursue the maximum objective of guaranteeing internal security; 2) the birth of The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), an economic, ideological - and later political - integration project among countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was soon labeled “axis of evil” by President Bush administration; 3) the victory of Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinistas, in the Nicaraguan presidential elections of 2006, following which event Nicaragua became a member of the ALBA bloc.

This research aims at providing a deeper overview on the role of international cooperation as a national security tool of the United States. According to the American framework, in order to achieve national security for the United States, countries should be aligned with the American philosophy. In this scenario, a number of development agencies belonging to the United States enacted programs in the targeted countries, such as civic participation in political affairs and democracy promotion. Peer-reviewed academic articles such as “Chaves vs los Medios” by Gerson Lopez (2010) have proven the participation of NGOs financed by United States international development agencies in the Venezuelan coup d'état attempt of 2002. Similarly, Ecuador and Bolivia expelled in 2013 those American development agencies operating on their territories which were found to pursue political purposes. The three mentioned countries were all members of the ALBA bloc and political allies of the Sandinista president Ortega.

The bankruptcy of the Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security in 2018 led the government to negotiate a package of reforms, which triggered a massive wave of protests.

President Ortega quickly revoked the reforms, however the turmoil did not end and instead took the direction of openly demanding the resignation of president Ortega.

This paper aims at investigating the methods historically implemented by the United States in Latin America to identify a framework of self-serving interventions that might be present in the specific interventions in Nicaragua. In order to guide the framing approach in this investigation, the theories developed by anthropologists Gregory Bateson, in his essay “A Theory of Play and Fantasy”, and Erving Goffman, in his book “Frame Analysis”, are intertwined with international aid and the activities of the United States. Following Bateson’s theories, the entwined outcome proposes that the message of aid and development sent by international cooperation agencies, in effect, hides a generally self-serving interest from industrialized countries towards lesser developed countries. In a different way, Goffman’s ideas let us discuss the way that framework set by donor countries toward the receivers allows the donors to set the framework and interpretations. Furthermore, the actions of the C.I.A during the Sandinista revolution and the NGOs in 2018 take the approach to a new level where Foucault’s theory is intertwined with the intentions were located in the access to the daily life of the receiving communities, carrying out practices with the intentions of configuring, normalizing, guiding and instrumentalizing actions and thoughts to achieve the stated objectives.

More in detail, the analysis carried out in this paper focuses on how practices such as the Dollar Diplomacy, the Good Neighbor Policy and the CIA Covert Operations during the Cold War contributed to the construction of a framework which the United States used as a tool to defend its economic interests under the guise of international aid and US national security. As such, it can be evidenced that in the attempted regime change in 2018, the United States supported the opposition in overthrowing President Ortega. This attack was carried out using similar strategies and methods as during previous similar events aimed at (re-)aligning

countries with the American philosophy and, as in all other cases, the United States obfuscates its intentions to project a message geared towards protection and benefit for Nicaragua.

Analyzing the history of the US involvement in Nicaragua in light of the most recent events, this paper draws out important parallels surrounding the Nicaraguan attempted regime change in 2018. This investigation aims at bringing to light the methods implemented by the United States international development agencies in order to align countries with the “American philosophy” and achieve the goal of granting “internal security”. Evidence from the crisis in Nicaragua in 2018 suggests that the United States financed NGOs to: 1) recruit student leaders, grant their education in courses related to leadership and defense of democracy in which they would be methods to influence the younger population; 2) fund the opposition media to carry out a campaigns fueling the sense of chaos and ungovernability; 3) finance Human Rights institutions whose actions misrepresented data, which allowed for the United States to justify its participation in the conflict before the international community.

The evidence supporting the validity of the stated hypothesis will be divided in three parts throughout the course of this investigation: 1) international aid evolutions of approaches, United States definition of aid and the US foreign policy towards Latin America together with the execution in Nicaragua; 2) The new objective of national security of United States foreign cooperation agencies in the 21st century as tool to ensure internal security, the creation of the ALBA Bloc as a counterpart to the United States hegemony and the electoral win of Sandinista president Ortega; 3) an outlook of the Nicaraguan crisis in April 2018 and the activities performed by NGO.

Research Questions

This paper analyses the following research questions:

From a global and theoretical approach, what is the purpose of international cooperation for donor countries?

What have been the mechanisms of interaction of the bilateral cooperation of the United States to implement its national security strategies?

How have the US- financed NGOs in Nicaragua been instruments of the United States' security strategy?





Construction of International Aid Approaches

Global Evolution of International Aid Approaches

During the 18th and 19th centuries, many European colonizing countries underwent an industrialization phase and a large number of inventions came to change their societies. Meanwhile, post colonized Latin America's countries were dealing with ethnic rivalry, unequal distribution of resources, disallowed democratic governments, prohibiting a great part of the population in a governmental decision, unjust actions against minority populations and further consequences of post-colonization.

World War II brought numerous changes in the world order, and one of the new “discoveries” that took place on the agenda was mass poverty. Arturo Escobar noted in *Invention of Development* that rich countries were believed to have the “financial and technological capacity to secure progress the world over” (1999). On January 20, 1949, United States President Harry S. Truman announced The Point Four Program, a technical assistance program for “developing countries”. President Truman recognized that the United States, with its industrial and scientific techniques, could “afford to use [its techniques and material resources] for assistance of other peoples” with limited resources. It was the only plan of action that could foster economic development and opportunities for capital investment. President Truman’s speech started a new era in American foreign policy leveraging on American scientific and industrial advances, or, as Truman put it, means of improvement and growth of lesser developed areas (Haddad, 2017).

Truman’s statement is characterized by its particular way of framing the relationship between industrialized countries, i.e. former colonizers, and the rest of the world, i.e. former colonies. The concept of framing was first introduced by anthropologist Gregory Bateson in his article *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1955), through which he demonstrated that all forms of communication cannot be understood without a frame of reference. Bateson’s theory

explains that only with the reference of an inner message that could be inferred from a message the receiver could understand the self-serving intentions of another without the intention of aggression. He argues that a message and its framework must instruct, or assist the observer in the attempt to understand the message included in the framework (1954).

The message sent by President Truman, for example, creates a non-hostile framework whereby American aid would be directed to the help and development of lesser developed areas. Because of the framework created, the actual intention of self-serving interest is hidden. Using the words of Turner, author of *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, the superstructure of the “Modern World” is the confluence of the three great world systems—imperialism, capitalism, and the enlightenment. Modernity is fundamentally about conquest, “the imperial regulation of land, the discipline of the soul, and the creation of truth” (Turner, 1990). The World System theory holds that Latin American economies are already a part of the capitalist world system. They are not at an earlier stage of a transition to industrialization, instead are undeveloped because they are peripheral, raw-material producing areas, at the margins of, and exploited by the industrialized world. This postulates that as a result of the specific histories of Latin American countries, they are relegated to the edges of the world system (Ashcroft, 1998).

In his book *Frame Analysis* (1974), Erving Goffman links to Bateson's frame concept by stating that, in order to interact and communicate in a particular situation, individuals might choose specific frameworks for their messages in order to endow them with a particular meaning, and allow the receiver to comprehensively and consistently understand the situation. In other words, once the framework is used, the interpretation of the action is determined by its creator and the frame is used for the receiver to interpret the message. This evaluation brings conceptual tools to analyze various layers that represent the empirical

material to which the analysis of the frames is applied, despite the fact that frameworks impose control and restrictions in the process. This can be evidenced in the Marshall Plan.

In 1948, the Marshall Plan came as an initiative in economic assistance to help rebuild Western European economies. The framework provided was successful, however, unlike the decolonized countries, Western European countries were already industrialized countries. The level of their own technology and skilled workforce aligned in fact with the results expected by the Marshall Plan. The Alliance for Progress (ALPRO), created and led by John Kennedy, directly led to the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 1959. This funding program was seen as a Marshall Plan for Latin America, although there were differences in regards to the allocated resources, unevenly distributed across the region (Pastor, 1989).

In the 1950's, economic growth was one of the basic tenets of development theories and gave birth to concepts such as big push and take off into self-sustained growth. Gross National Product (GNP) growth was considered to be the objective and measure of progress and development. Industrialization was deemed a key instrument of growth which would create employment opportunities, increased demand for raw materials, thus providing an impetus from other industries to enhance their production and supply manufactured goods to agriculture (Thorbecke, 2006). In practice, however, latin American countries saw increases under employment, poverty, and excessive extraction of raw materials.

One type of transformation of the relevant framework on which this investigation is focused relates to the concept of fabrications (Goffman, 1974). The “keys”, as Goffman names them, are a transformation that is not hidden. For Goffman, the keys reveal the actions of the individuals destined to manipulate the activity with the aim of falsifying the events, for example, creating a deceptive narrative to serve one's self interest.

Using the above theories, it helps to discuss how donor countries approach development as a whole object and strategy, without taking into consideration many important aspects. Development treats people and culture as abstract concepts, conceived without nuance, where a standardized system of technical interventions are intended to deliver a badly needed good (Escobar, 1999). International aid overall does not embrace the understanding of national development, it instead functions without a concept as a theoretical definition of development (Pye, 1969). Pye suggests here that the international aid was only working from assumptions and within their own framework.

By the 1970's it became clear that, in order to achieve social development, it was not enough to focus solely on economic reforms (Escobar, 1999). The issue brought about a new model under the "basic needs approach". As one of the major approaches to measure absolute poverty in developing countries, this method attempts to define the absolute minimum resources necessary for long-term physical well-being, usually in terms of consumption goods. Under this framework, any development proposal that did not take poverty, inequality and unemployment into account would not be able to ensure development. These basic services entailed adequate food, shelter, clothing, safe drinking water, sanitation, health and educational services. This is a development strategy directed to social services more than economic growth.

The external debt of the Latin American countries in the 1980s caused by lending and investments to raise their Gross Domestic Product was important in the development debate. It called for the adoption of an economic model of neoliberal inspiration known as the Washington Consensus, based on economic liberation, the predominance of market forces, external openness and the supremacy of the export sector, with which to seek a new modality of insertion in the world economy (Pastor, 1989). In this context, framing may be defined as the permanent activity in which subjects "actively project their frames of reference on the

immediate world around them, (...) [and] do so only because events normally confirm these projections, leading the assumptions to disappear in the smooth flow of activity” (Goffman, 1974, p. 39). According to Goffman, “false frames” can be generated with honor, and used falsely. Framing imposes limitations, with control and power strategies as catalysts in this process. Both modulations and fabrications not only determine the interpretation of the world, but also guide the actions of the actors in the situation. At the same time, they however display a reality prone to the mutations, misrepresentations and interests of social subjects. This dynamic within the primary frameworks and in what happens within them requires the permanently attentive activity of the subject in order to distinguish with some precision “the edges” of the frame used to interpret reality, for example, the situation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Recipient countries were subject to the implementation and fulfillment of certain conditions, which is why the era is dubbed as the era of conditionality. Structural adjustment was the process according to which the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) gave loans to underdeveloped countries under specific conditions which were to be implemented in their economies (Harrigan, Mosley and Toye, 1995). These conditions were planned and devised by the above-mentioned institutions and were implemented under their auspices. These programs usually contained measures including privatisation of state-owned enterprises, liberalisation of trade and economy, improvement of the price system by removing distortions/subsidies, enhancement of the efficiency and profitability of public enterprises, devaluation of the domestic currency, reductions in government expenditures and increases in taxes (Doroodian, 1993).

The above resulted in a sharp decrease in public spending and the dismantling of the State, with the consequent impact on the ability of the domestic state to influence the development processes. These conditions show that the aid brings mechanisms for the

expansion of the values, institutions and standards that make up a certain world order (O'Neil, 2019). In “status quo” maintenance strategies, aid is largely preventative: aid is designed to avoid systemic shocks and maintain a regional or international status quo acceptable to a donor government (Markovits, Strange and Tingley, 2019).

In the nineties, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the ideological clash was a factor of great importance, especially in relation to the reorganization of the spheres of dominance. The neoliberal policies received great acceptance, the market was seen as the only alternative for the organization of economic life, and the Soviet model was instead viewed as an obstacle to development (Fukuyama, 1992).

Roger Riddle in his book “*Does foreign aid really work*” pointed out that the problem was not technical; the focus should instead be on understanding the inefficiency of the Official Development assistance through a political analysis (2008). It was an important yet slightly discouraging decade for the international aid industry. In most cases, donors pursued their own political-strategic and commercial interests while allocating aid, while ignoring issues such as human rights, transparency, accountability, good governance and democracy for recipient countries (Dijkstra, 2002).

At the Rio de Janeiro Conference of 1992, the World Conference on Environment and Development outlined an international development strategy that came to overlap with the previous ones of the United Nations. This strategy was characterized by a) placing its center of interest to the developing and underdeveloped countries; b) promoting evolution towards modes of production and sustainable consumption; c) the eradication of poverty; d) international cooperation to accelerate the sustainable development of the underdeveloped countries (Abellán, 1997).

The 2005 Paris Declaration attempted to correct the above strategies (2005). The Paris Declaration is a practical, action-oriented roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. It provides a list of specific implementation measures and establishes a monitoring system to assess progress and ensure that donors and recipients hold each other accountable for their commitments. The Paris Declaration outlines the following five fundamental principles for making aid more effective:

- *Ownership*: Developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption;
- *Alignment*: Donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems;
- *Harmonisation*: Donor countries coordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication;
- *Results*: Developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured;
- *Mutual accountability*: Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

The international cooperation framework is not natural. Instead, it implies human intentions and incorporates the will, effort and control of an agency that guides and directs such intentions. It is a correspondence between the perception and the organization and structuring of the perceived. The social frameworks of international cooperation constitute a central strategy of their practices. Social frameworks are cognitive frameworks that allow us to interpret events in which human beings are responsible. They outline a world of meanings and endow people with codes to interpret and communicate the meanings of the reality they experience.

Overall, international aid strategies are created by donor countries as frameworks which are successively imposed on the receiving countries. Such frameworks are set by the

donors on the basis of their own experiences, without considering the specific interests and situations of the receiving countries. Permanent activity on these allows donor countries to set the edges of the frameworks and therefore protect the donors' interest. This not only imposes limitations on the receiving countries, but it implies a hidden framework of self-serving interest within the framework created for international aid strategies.

United States Bilateral Aid

American foreign aid strategy begins during the presidency of Harry S. Truman, who proposed the concept of International Development Assistance with two main purposes: first, to rebuild those European countries devastated by World War II and ensuring allies; second, to stop the advancement of communism, a situation that took hold in the Presidency of John F. Kennedy, who turned International Aid into a tactic to attract and maintain allies during the Cold War.

In political terms, US foreign assistance is defined as a fundamental tool of the national security strategy. Development is as essential to national security as diplomacy and defense are (WH, 2002). Özlem Savas (2008) defines the culture of national security as a set of characteristics, values and priorities shaping the nation-wide security thinking and policies through the legacies of the past and inherent within the state structures and the minds of people. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has similar definitions:

“Just as the tools, ideas, and resources for progress can quickly move from industrial to developing countries, many forms of risk and instability can travel in the opposite direction.” (USAID, p1, 2002). *We need to recognize that U.S. assistance matters a great deal. All aid is political, particularly in countries at high risk for conflict* (USAID, p23, 2002).

The aid administered by USAID is channeled through a complex network of international institutions (companies, religious and secular organizations), US state agencies and local institutions of the recipient country, together with national and transnational NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Many of these organizations, in turn, finance local contractors in complex tender and service outsourcing networks with strategic linkage and complementation with European government cooperation agencies, multilateral credit agencies (World Bank, IDB, among others) and other US-based state agencies (Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy, among others).

Through a network of assistance programs, this blending of institutional and extra-institutional allows access to the daily life of the receiving communities, building senses, values and promoting practices. In theoretical terms, external assistance could be thought of as part of a set of government technologies, that is, of “practical and concrete mechanisms, local and everyday practices, through which the various authorities intend to shape, normalize, guide and instrumentalize actions, yearnings and thoughts of others, in order to achieve the objectives considered desirable” (Foucault, DE4, Cited by Castro; 2004).

These government technologies build a set of procedures that shape the practical exercise of power. These technologies are supported and built on the same political rationalities that configure discourses and practices from which problems and solutions for government are built (Rose, 1996); in other words, the discursive formulation of the problems and the practices promoted to intervene into them. These historically changing joints are assembled and disassociated, and interact in permanent struggle.

The Cold War context meant a change in US foreign policy with respect to Latin America: The Western Hemisphere should be defended from the “communist threat”. In this context, the communist advance in the region justified, from the American perspective, the

need for a doctrine of internal security, that is, the elimination of the “internal” enemy to each territory. This is how the US military and political intervention intensified in the countries of the region. Even in the cases when it was presented as development assistance, it was the political and military objectives that prevailed (Romano, 2011). In this framework, new forms of territorial intervention are proposed, whereby the maintenance of preeminence does not only presuppose the potential invasion or direct military intervention or the presence of military bases in the territory, but also occurs in other forms and shapes built in a long-winded scheme of which development assistance and humanitarian aid are a fundamental part (Kennedy and Lucas, 2005).

Having the external assistance work platform and its supporting structure, the argument for the need for security is transformed into a field of verification, of legitimacy construction, in two plans. First, as an internal political strategy, whereby foreign aid may be justified as a means to prevent risks from outside the borders. Second, as an international strategy, whereby external assistance is invoked from the discourse of human rights, of humanitarian protection, of moral duty toward foreign countries. “There is a moral imperative for the United States: to take a position whenever unimaginable human atrocities happen, no matter where” (USAID, p.26, 2002). A line of continuity is thus established with arguments linked to the moral duty of the intervention.

From this political fact (internal and external) around the urgency of security and “moral duty”, assistance can no longer be directed solely towards “development”. “USAID programs aimed at strengthening effective and legitimate governance are recognized as key instruments to deal with counterinsurgency” (Baltazar, 2007). It can be said that the leitmotif of these foreign policy doctrines is represented by the sovereignty of the national interests of the United States is above all other principles that frame legitimate behaviors (Samir, 2004), ignoring the supranational law that regulates the rest of the countries.

United States external assistance may be most accurately defined as a set of postulates bringing about the delimitation of territories and plausible populations to be assisted and to which a series of practices may be suggested. An analysis of the American modes of exercise of power reveals that these are only slightly connected with external assistance; they guide, reproduce, sustain, prescribe, induce, and impose within the dynamic framework the involved actors.

A historical journey of the United States foreign policy towards Latin America in the specifics of economic, military and cultural activities of the United States in Nicaragua explains the means used to maintain US hegemony over the country. From this investigation a series of programs, doctrines, documents and supporting speeches will be identified, in order to identify the mechanisms of interaction of the bilateral cooperation of the United States to implement its national security strategies.

Critical Social Science Perspective on Ngos Aid and Security

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have taken an increasingly indispensable role in the field of national and transnational humanitarian aid. NGOs have been involved in world-class projects that have been recognized by political actors, therefore their influence in the global sphere of international relations and politics is significant (Ryfman, 2007). However, scholars have highlighted “challenges which are crowding in on the humanitarian world” (Chandler, 2001, p700).

NGOs can be placed in a space where they represent private citizens, which leads them to have an influence in the humanitarian political field at local, national and global levels. However, weaknesses have been exposed in elements such as transparency, responsibility and neutrality

(Lawrence & Nezhad, 2009, p76-83). The following table shows the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs:

Strength and weaknesses associated with the NGO sector (Shastri 2008):

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong link with grassroots	Lack of Experienced Manpower
Empirical expertise	Limited financial assistance
Innovative ability	Focus on short range objective
Democratic work culture	Political Influence
Cost effectiveness	Legal Obligations
Long term Commitment	High rate of growth in number of NGOs
	High Corruption rate

Many NGOs are linked to government funding. A Study by Aldashev and Verdier (2010, p49) discovers a relationship between fundraising competition and the negative effect on the decrease of the welfare of the beneficiaries. Even so, undoubtedly whether or not they receive funds from governments, it is necessary to take into account that many NGOs can easily be placed as part of a political agenda (Gjorv, 2016).

Since the late 21st century, Western governments (especially the United States) have labeled cooperation as "humanitarian," yet it has increasingly been used for security agendas that have led to it being sometimes controversial. It is argued that governments use humanitarian action as a tool for objectives within their foreign policy (Curtis, 2001, p4). Many NGOs that carry

this humanitarian label have been and continue to be "tarred with the same brush", which makes it difficult to distinguish who is fraternized with the political objectives of governments and who is not (Schofield, 2019, p5). However, NGOs are often considered more trustworthy and credible than governments or private companies (Todaro and Smith, 2006).

In conflict zones, NGO humanitarian personnel generally live and / or work in military complexes (Crane et al, 2009). NGOs can still set valid targets because locals assume that those of a "western nation" have established relationships with government and political offices (Gaist, 2010, p122). According to Torrente (2004), the United States has promoted an integrated approach among various actors in order to ensure that its interventions and humanitarian aid are directed towards the common goal of building peace. Although, when the United States Army has publicly said that it can "use" humanitarian actors as "extenders of force" (Smith, 2010, p267), this agenda takes on new meaning for US governments. Imposed upon societies destroyed by conflict, the use of humanitarian NGOs as tools to influence not only the conduct of the war, but also its course (Richmond, 2011).

In Afghanistan, the United States during the intervention of "hearts and minds" directed its approach to generate cooperative and supportive behavior on the part of local actors towards their military intervention, in order to carry out its measures more efficiently (Schofield, 2019). However, these maneuvers were carried out by civilian agents that included NGOs (Abiew, 2012). The United States government openly described NGOs as drivers and executors of this assistance initiative. These events affected the credibility of humanitarian NGOs in the eyes of the beneficiaries (Abiew, 2012). "First there was Communism, then there was Talibanism, and now there is NGOism" (Murdie, 2014, p1).

In general, the information collected in this section suggests that whether NGOs are or are not financed by the States, in one way or another they may be part of a political and / or military agenda. This group of social scientists point out that the principle of NGO neutrality, especially in the United States, has been seriously compromised. NGOs, especially Western ones, have become an extension of military and political agendas. This situation has impacted the independence, neutrality and impartiality of their NGOs.

The United States Army has already announced partnerships with NGOs as part of its geopolitical strategies through its assistance initiatives. These facts have made the resistance programs of these NGOs be perceived as a related hostile act in the same military conflict.

United States Foreign Policy in Nicaragua in the Beginning of 20th Century

The activities of the United States in Latin America began in the 19th century. Except for Puerto Rico, the United States did not formally colonize the nations of the region; instead, it made them protectorates, allowing them to remain nominally independent while the United States exercised extensive control over its internal and external affairs. The United States' interest in Nicaragua was dominated by a particular geographic factor — the existence of a large volcanic lake that covers approximately a quarter of the country's total area — and which made Nicaragua the most logical site for the construction of a canal through the Central American isthmus.

The US corporations and the government maintained an aggressive stance towards Nicaragua, and continued to use strategies to coerce Nicaragua to maintain its interests during the first two decades of the 21st century. These activities goals evolved from more open military political advocacy forms into more subtle tactics, based on media, liberal

democracies and political legitimacy to discredit threats and to support allied groups in Nicaragua, in order to establish a docile neoliberal regime.

Since its birth as a republic in 1838, Nicaragua has been the stage of a dispute between the Liberals and Conservatives. These parties shaped Nicaraguan history even before the United States became a factor in national politics. The post-colonial oligarchy and the Catholic Church were part of the Conservative Party in the city of Granada. The Liberal Party, instead, was formed by a commercial and professional urban class in the city of Leon. In their constant struggle for power, the liberals bought the services of the American filibuster William Walker, which marked the first United States regime-change operation in Nicaragua. William Walker took advantage of the situation and usurped power in Nicaragua declaring himself president in 1856 to 1857 when he was defeated by a coalition of Central American armies (McPherson, 1988)¹.

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Theodore Roosevelt exercised the command of the United States of America guided by the “Big Stick” ideology, theory that he soon complemented by what he called “The Dollar Diplomacy”. The following chapters of this paper detail how the United States interacted and communicated with Latin America throughout the 20th century. Foreign policy will be treated as a focal point to evaluate the methods the United States implemented to endow messages with specific frameworks to ensure a given particular interpretation. This investigation further narrows its focus on the political struggle in Nicaragua, marked with continuous regime changes through which the US has actively projected its self-serving interests.

¹ Walker returned in an attempt to reestablish his control of the region and was captured and executed by the government of Honduras in 1860.

The Dollar Diplomacy

Central America is the only region in the world with an intercontinental and interoceanic position. In essence, its importance is not given by its productive resources, but by its isthmicity and its geographical location. The interest of the United States in the region was determined by how vital it was for the internal and external circulation of its merchandise, and for its proximity to its territory (Granados, 1985). However, the most geographically widespread US form of intervention was financial. The “Dollar Diplomacy” was the term coined in response to the 1912 statement by US President William Howard Taft that the United States was seeking to expand towards Latin America by "substituting dollars for bullets” (Munro, 1964).

The influence of the Dollar Diplomacy in Nicaragua is mainly associated with control of the National Bank, the rail system, and Wall Street's customs reception. However, it was especially through the Mixed Commission that American diplomats sought to “modernize” the Nicaraguan state² (Golbat, 2009). Although the Dollar Diplomacy projected a message of modernization, in practice it “involve[d] the conversion of the state department and the army and navy into collection and insurance agencies for Wall Street interests, concession seekers, munition makers, and those who would exploit weaker peoples under the philanthropic assurance of promoting their development” (Howe, 1916, p. 312). In order to assure these activities, the United States government, the marines and the American corporation United Fruit Company -which became a determining political and economic force- managed to achieve regime changes, which served to suppress the threats to their interests.

² In the case of Nicaragua, dollar diplomacy was made up of the two US members of the Mixed Commission; the administrators of the Nicaraguan National Bank in Managua and its branches in Granada, León, and Bluefields; and the administrator of the Pacific Railroad.

Political Struggle During the Dollar Diplomacy

In 1907, the president of Nicaragua Zelaya intervened in Honduras and El Salvador to create a Central American federation dominated by liberal parties (Esgueva, 2005). In that same context, Zelaya negotiated with the Germans and Japanese about the construction of an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua. In result, the United States dramatically changed behavior towards Zelaya, starting to consider him a threat to the region and challenging the monopoly of the Panama Canal, which was already under construction.

After receiving covert support from the United States, politician Juan José Estrada proclaimed himself interim president of Nicaragua on October 10, 1909. Although Estrada represented one of several factions of liberals dissatisfied with Zelaya, he was employed by the United States to maneuver and reimpose the unpopular Conservative Party. Within a few months, the forces on Estrada's side consisted mainly of conservative generals, such as Emiliano Chamorro, who used contracted troops and weapons supplied by US companies through intermediaries such as Adolfo Díaz (Kerevel, 2006).

When one of Zelaya's counter offensives led to the arrest and execution of two US citizens, soldiers of fortune hired by the Estrada insurgency. The Secretary of State of the United States, Philander Knox, wrote the notorious "Knox's Note" to a Nicaraguan diplomat in Washington on December 1, 1909, cutting diplomatic relations with the Zelaya government. At the end of December, Zelaya resigned and left for Mexico by boat from the northwestern port of Corinth, surrounded by American warships (Kerevel, 2006).

Zelaya's successor was Jose Madriz, who tried to negotiate peace with Estrada's rebellion to restore relations with the United States. As Knox refused to recognize his government, the US Marines were deployed on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua and the aforementioned United Fruit Company lent money to Estrada to acquire weapons and

soldiers. The US Navy handed the conservative general arms and blocked the arrival of weapons purchased by the Madriz government. On August 19, 1910 Estrada took office. However, Juan José Estrada, was overthrown by the Constitutional Assembly dominated by conservatives in 1911 in favor of Adolfo Díaz (Gould, 1996).

In 1912, President Diaz transferred control of the National Bank of Nicaragua to the Brown Brothers Commercial Bank of the United States. The National Assembly, led by Minister of War Luis Mena, approved a resolution censoring Diaz. Diaz dismissed General Mena and received the support of the United States, which also asked for American intervention. General Mena, together with General Benjamin Zeledon, rebelled against Diaz. In the city of Granada, Mena was defeated with his troops under the combined attack of US marines and conservative government troops. He was captured and exiled. General Benjamin confronted the Marine troops and died in battle in the city of Masaya.

The conservative government signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty in Washington in 1914. the Secretary of State of the United States and the Nicaraguan general Emiliano Chamorro granted the United States exclusive rights to build a canal in Nicaragua in perpetuity, as well as a 99-year renewable option to create a naval base in the Gulf of Fonseca and a 99-year renewable lease on the islands from Big and Little Corn Island in the Caribbean, in exchange for \$3 million to be used by Nicaragua to pay debts to US creditors.

US Military Occupation of Nicaragua (1912-1926)

In 1912, the US Marines in Nicaragua occupied the capital, Managua, and the cities of Granada and León. During the so-called “Banana Wars”, the United States Army intervened in several countries of Latin America between 1898 and 1934. In the “Banana Republics”, United Fruit Company controlled the ports, managed the postal service, and created the first network of radio stations in Central America creating a media monopoly. With equal force it

suppressed all the initiatives of the organization of unions. United Fruit gave governments money and weapons to suppress the numerous rebellions that were happening among the hundreds of thousands of highly exploited banana workers in the region, which led, for example, to the “Banana Massacre”, during which several hundred striking workers died in Colombia in 1928 (Langley and Schoonover, 1995).

The United Fruit Company monopoly was protected by the US Marines, placed in Central America and the Caribbean. The “Banana Wars” became a good exercise for the US toward the maintenance of the protection of the capitalist economy. As a consequence, to this event, the Marine Corps started analyzing the strategies and tactics for conducting this type of short war operations. The results of this effort were encapsulated in 1935 in a war tactics manual going under the name of “*Small Wars Operations*”, later renamed “*The Small Wars Manual*” in the revision from 1940.

In 1926, once again, a confrontation arose between the liberals and the conservative government. The liberals had popular support, which forced the United States to intervene, obliging the Nicaraguan government to implement measures which would favor the American counterpart. The Liberal General Augusto César Sandino rejected the terms of the US plan and, with only 29 men, embarked on a guerrilla war against the US occupation of Nicaragua.

Sandino, A Symbol of Resistance

Sandino's first victory came at the San Andres mine in Nueva Segovia, where he expelled the American managers and handed the plant over to the workers. Consequently, the United States openly began depicting Sandino as a bandit and an outlaw (Campbell-Jeffrey and Sjoberg, p7, 2005). After the defeat, the Marines initiated a counterinsurgency campaign,

while Sandino had already become internationally a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance (Kaufman, 2019).

The first use of airplane attacks in the Americas occurred in Nicaragua, when the US Marines bombed the mountainous region in the north of the country, where it was believed Sandino was hidden (Macaulay, 1998). The fact that American airplanes were more damaging to the civilian population than Sandino, could not fail to have a great impact against the foreign policy of the United States. Thus, Selser reports that the newspaper "The Nation" of New York, 1927, affirmed that the US troops without any legal justification assassinated Nicaraguans. "El Tiempo" of Colombia, pointed out that the president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, characterized the Sandino patriots as bandits to hide from the American people that US marines were violating the rights of the people in Nicaragua, as they had previously done in Haiti, committing homicides that went unpunished (Selser, 1986).

The United States encountered great struggle defeating Sandino, and the Great Depression forced the withdrawal of U.S troops. Despite this, the American interests established an armed forces corp, the Nicaraguan National Guard. The U.S. hoped to accomplish three objectives in establishing the National Guard: to replace Nicaragua's old army and police with a central, well-trained and well-equipped military force; to establish internal order; and to obscure the task of preserving a constitutional government and free elections with a military and seemingly non-political force (Millett, 1977).

Sandino met with president Sacasa in Managua in February 1934, during which he pledged his loyalty to the President and agreed to order his forces to surrender their weapons within three months. In exchange, Sacasa agreed to give the soldiers who surrendered arms squatters rights on land in the Coco River Valley, together with the requirement that the area

be guarded by 100 Sandinista fighters under the government's orders, and giving preference in employment to Sandinistas on public works in northern Nicaragua (Neugebauer, 1988). On February 21, 1934, Sandino attended a new round of talks with Sacasa. Opposed to it, the leader of Nicaragua's recently formed National Guard, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, gave the order to assassinate them. The six men were stopped in their car at the main gate by local National Guardsmen and ordered to leave their car. Sandino was taken and executed (Neugebauer, 1988). That same night, the National Guard massacred the nearly 300 unarmed Sandino allies who were in Wiwili, including men, women and children (Tunnermann, 1979).

“It was Anastasio Somoza Garcia who planned the murder of Sandino. Somoza himself told National Guard officers that Sandino's removal had the blessing of the American Minister, Arthur Bliss Lane, with whom Somoza met three times on the day of the crime. Somoza assured that Washington supported and recommended the elimination of Sandino because he was a threat to the peace and tranquility of the country” (Tunnermann, 1979, p 10). Two years later, General Somoza García proclaimed himself the autocrat of Nicaragua through a coup d'etat organized with the support of the United States to overthrow Sacasa. US president Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to Somoza as follows: “He is a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch” (Black, 1988).

While the Dollar Diplomacy was brought about as a means to assist and modernize underdeveloped regions such as Latin America, the real intentions were more self-interested. The United States of America leveraged Dollar Diplomacy to justify forceful and military intervention in these countries to serve American interests. Needless to say, this involved making sure that the reins of the country were handed over to governors politically allied with the United States, and suppressing political adversaries.

However often successful, the impossibility of defeating Sandino, the international pressure of peoples and governments against intervention in Nicaragua, the approaching of another world war that forced the United States to secure the American continent for themselves against German and Japanese expansionism, the existence of the National Guard as a substitute instrument for the Marines (Barahona, 1989: 49) and the serious economic crisis that shook the entire capitalist world were among the political and social factors that forced the United States of America to rethink their strategy. The United States gave birth to a way to approach Latin America, starting a path which would lead to the “Good Neighbor Policy”.

Good Neighbor Policy

The “Good Neighbor”, adopted by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, was the new American foreign policy directed towards Latin America. It was framed as a formula tending not to directly engage the United States in the internal affairs of Latin American countries. For this reason, the principle of non-intervention was postulated, by which it was meant that, in the future, the United States would not make any decision concerning the Latin American nations, without first “consulting” their governors (Moncada,1990). Roosevelt expressed his point of view on the policy in the following words: “The most important item in our country’s foreign policy is the economic exchange of merchandise”. For his part, the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, emphasized the elimination of military power policy and proposed thawing trade and investment channels (Dick,1975).

The policy was centered on one simple pillar: all direct military interventions would fade in the background. In order to achieve its purpose of granting its own economic, political and military interests, the US was therefore forced to find its ways around the problem. The effort concluded that, if the United States could no longer be *physically* present on the foreign

soil without breaking the policy terms, they could nevertheless be virtually present. As a result, a number of US-financed, -guided and -armed military dictatorships sprang (or better, was imposed) in Latin America. To mention some, in Guatemala, Jorge Ubico (1931-1944); in El Salvador, Maximiliano (1935-1944); in Honduras, Tiburcio Carías (1935-1949); in the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leónidas (1930-1938-1952); in Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza García and his heirs (1934-1979).

Supported by the United States, the Somoza family led Nicaragua from 1936 to 1979. “Somoza Garcia skillfully used his strategic position to gain special military, economic, and political concessions from the U. S. government, and carefully maintained close personal relationships with key members of the State Department until his assassination in 1956” (Zaremba, 1992, p. 4).

Luis Somoza,³ his firstborn child, was the President of the Nicaraguan Congress. He assumed the presidency upon his father's murdered and appointed his younger brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle commander of the National Guard and the Air Force. Luis Somoza had a heart attack and died in 1967. Shortly before the death of his brother, Anastasio Somoza was sworn into office following his election on 5 February.

In 1974, Somoza declared a state of siege when a guerrilla movement called Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front, introduced more fully below) seized government hostages. The fact humiliated the government and the National Guard. The crackdown included complete press censorship and the unleashing of the Guard on the Nicaraguan population (Walker, 1985).

³ At the age of 14, he and his younger brother Anastasio attended Saint Leo College Prep near Tampa, before transferring to La Salle Military Academy on Long Island. Luis was then educated at Louisiana State University.

After the 1974 hostage incident, opposition to the dictatorship grew steadily, initiating a brutal cycle of opposition and repression. The most serious events occurred between 1978 and 1979. By June 1979, Somoza was actively engaged in violent tactics in the war against the Sandinistas, including bombing residential neighborhoods (Chomsky, 1992). Among the aforementioned, the testimonies clearly highlighted some facts. In some cases, the National Guard searched for kids between 14 and 20 years of age, and then executed them for the slightest suspicion of being members of the FSLN. In other circumstances, hundreds of farmers “disappeared” in rural areas, usually after being arrested by the National Guard. Finally, torture and ill-treatment were reported to be common methods to interrogate political detainees.

These included blows, hanging by the wrists, electric shocks, immersion of the head in water, hooded or blindfolds, gymnastics exercises until exhaustion, keeping detainees naked in air-conditioned rooms at very low temperatures, deprivation of food and drinks, etc. In many cases, death was following the torture treatments. Some victims even endured punishments such as having their eyes torn off, or their tongues were cut (Fragoso and Artucio 1980, p.24)

When his rule was challenged, by the Sandinistas in the late 1970s, the US first tried to institute what was called "Somocismo [Somoza-ism] without Somoza"-that is, the whole corrupt system intact, but with somebody else at the top. That didn't work, so President Carter tried to maintain Somoza's National Guard as a base for US power (Chomsky, 1992). Currently, United States media were aware of the crimes committed by Somoza, as the daily student newspaper of Harvard University quoted “as the troops of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza Debayle attempt to pound the widespread popular opposition to his rule into submission, the time has come for the United States government to re-examine its relations with the Somoza regime” (“Carter Must End Aid To Somoza”, 1978).

In some cases, international media seemed to be putting pressure on the United States to quickly clear the situation: “The United States, having helped keep the Somoza family in power in Nicaragua for four decades, is now deeply involved in trying to force President Anastasio Somoza Debayle to resign and replace him with a stable democratic government” (Riding, 1978). On the other hand, the US ambassador sent a cable to the White House saying it would be "ill advised" to tell the Guard to call off the bombing, because that might interfere with the policy of keeping them in power and the Sandinistas out (Chomsky,1992).

However, at the end of 1978, State Department officials said the United States was withholding all military aid to Nicaragua, including credits previously authorized. They said \$6 million in economic aid had been approved for Nicaragua for the 1979 fiscal year, but that it will not be “disbursed” until the Nicaraguan Government would assure Washington the money would be used to “promote the process of democratization in Nicaragua” (Riding, 1978).

An Organization of the American States mediating team, including special U.S. ambassador William G. Bowdler, sought to resolve the crisis by winning agreement to a plan that would have included free elections and the eventual withdrawal of Somoza from the presidency. Somoza refused the mediation. The United States, retaliating against President Anastasio Somoza's refusal, cancelled two development loans totaling \$10.5 million and approximately \$800,000, respectively, in military equipment that had been in the pipeline to Nicaragua (Goshko, 1979).

On June 21, 1979, ABC American television correspondent Bill Stewart was shot and killed while attempting to film war destruction in a neighborhood of Managua. The Nicaraguan government radio said Stewart's death was a result of sniper shots by Sandinista rebel guerrillas (Deyoung, 1979). However, according to ABC sound technician Jim Cefalo, the incident began when the ABC team, traveling in a marked press van, approached a

National Guard patrol. Stewart and his interpreter, Juan Espinosa, got out of the van and walked toward a soldier with their hands raised, carrying a white flag and government-issued press credentials. As the soldier approached them, his rifle raised, Stewart went down on his knees with his hands up. Cefalo told reporters “He stepped back and motioned... It looked like he told [Stewart] to put his hands behind his back. Bill started to comply, and the guard stepped back, put the rifle to [Stewart's] head and shot once”. [Dramatic films of the shooting, made by survivors among the ABC crew were shown on U.S. television evening news programs] (Deyoung, 1979). John Bargeron, a U.S. vice consul in Nicaragua charged with facilitating shipment of Stewart's body to the United States, was heard telling the ABC crew that “this is a war of murder. Nicaraguans are killed like that everyday”. (Deyoung, 1979).

Events culminated in July, 1979 with the Sandinista victory in a situation which had become, by that time, a full-blown civil-war (Zaremba, 1992). Somoza fled the country and the United States managed to fly Guard commanders out of the country in planes with Red Cross markings (a war crime), and began to reconstitute the Guard on Nicaragua's borders (Chomsky, 1992). This reconstitution of the Guard will later become a covert war by the C.I.A.

Like others, made-in-the-USA products, both the Dollar Diplomacy and the Good Neighbor Policy are characterized by having been actively projected as beneficial policies in their own frames of reference. Despite the sugar coating, in both cases the pill was a bitter one to swallow, as the United States was directly involved in triggering political unrest and throwing water on the fire. Although the good neighbor policy did not allow direct intervention, the military, political and economic support to Somoza guaranteed the protection of the interests of the United States in Nicaragua. The means to achieve this goal went often as far as instrumentalizing proper crimes against humanity.

The Sandinista Popular Revolution

In the early 1960s, inspired by the success of the Cuban revolution, radical Nicaraguans led by student activist Carlos Fonseca created the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The communist guerrilla group engaged in military actions and propaganda in order to overthrow Somoza. In June 1979, the guerrilla moved all its combatants in order to gather in the capital, Managua. At the same time, a popular insurrection was being organized with the participation of workers, businessmen, and students in several departments and cities. The FSLN managed to lead a massive popular insurrection that overthrew Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the second son of Somoza García, on July 19, 1979.

Between March and August 1980, the national literacy crusade was organized. Tens of thousands of urban youth members attended as volunteer brigades, organized in fronts, brigades, and squads. They worked to impart basic literacy to half a million of their rural compatriots. The new government proudly announced that within a few months the national illiteracy rate had been reduced from 50.35% to 12.36% (McFadden and Warner, 1983).

Dirk Kruijt states in *Guerrillas: War and Peace in Central America* that “from the beginning, the FSLN sought to “integrate the masses” in the revolutionary process by creating urban and rural organizations of middle-class workers and middle-class landowners and small owners of the Pacific coast (2011). The government also unionized other key sectors of the labor force. According to the registers of the Ministry of Labor, in 1979 there were 133 unions, with a total of 27,000 members. By 1982, the number of unionized workers had reached 150,000 (Núñez, 1998, p. 238).

Ideologues of the FSLN concluded that “democracy came to have in Nicaragua the natural surname of participatory” (Núñez 1987, p. 238). But it must be borne in mind that the relationship between the Sandinista party and its unionized organizations was not a

relationship at par: in fact, the party did not grant organizational autonomy. On the contrary, Commander Tomas Borge, Minister of Interior during that decade, in an interview on February 24, 2006 affirms that in those days the popular organizations were “very subordinate, with very little initiative, subordinated to the Party” (Kruijt, 2011) .

One of the main and most highlighted Sandinista actions was the expropriation of the property of Somoza and its closest collaborators, which accounted for around 25% of GDP at the end of the 1970s (Dijkstra, 2002, p. 296). The houses and expropriated land were handed over to those who had distinguished themselves in combat. A large majority of goods and companies were transferred to the newly constituted ranks of the “mixed economy” (Xabier, 1987).

Nicaragua was leading the way as an example to neighboring countries, as its government was recognized by international organizations such as Oxfam and the World Bank as shown great commitment from part of the government toward increasing the condition of its peoples and fostering development through the implementation of extremely successful projects in highly specific sectors. In the words of José Figueres, Nicaragua was truly caring about its people (Chomsky, 1992).

The positive feedback coming from the greatest share of the international community did not modify the image that the United States held of the “Nicaraguan communists”. The Sandinistas were still a threat to the interests of the United States and for this reason represented an enemy. Later on, the United States developed a new foreign policy aimed at directly attacking the Sandinistas - and therefore Nicaragua - through CIA operations.

CIA Secret War in Nicaragua

The Cold War was a “battle for hearts and minds”, and it brought together a vast arsenal of cultural weapons such as magazines, books, events, seminars, exhibitions, concerts, and awards, as well as financial and military support for anti-communist forces. The Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) of the United States had the objective to prevent the world from contagion from communism, and to favor the interests of the foreign policy of the United States. Stemming from the need of preventing exposure, all American covert operations were carried out by the CIA, a body fully separated from the military corp (Gibbs, 1995).

The National Security Council defined covert operations as follow:

Propaganda, political action; economic warfare; escape and evasion and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile state or groups including assistance to underground movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups; support of indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world; deception plans and operations; and all activities compatible with this directive necessary to accomplish the foregoing (Dullen, et al. 2007, p.24).

As the United States pointed its finger against the Sandinista revolution, the United States Congress quickly froze aids toward Nicaragua. In order to approach this “threat”, President Jimmy Carter authorized the undercover support of the CIA for the press in Nicaragua and labor unions (Woodward, 2005). The president further approved a million dollars for the CIA to support the work of anti-sandinista groups. The Sandinistas were portrayed as a totalitarian communist group seeking to establish a new Russia in Central America, “imposing rigid military rule and ousting the leaders of the other factions that had fought with them in the revolution” (Reagan, 1990).

Despite the rhetoric, Nicaragua was not the totalitarian communist nation that Reagan imagined. The Sandinistas did consolidate power in the ruling of the “Junta of National Reconstruction⁴” after the revolution, but they were well supported by the population in general. Though an election was not held until 1984 which was won by Sandinista candidate Daniel Ortega, most observers agree that the Sandinista party would win any election held (McConnell 1996)

Reagan made clear the United States limited foreign policy goals:

Let us be clear as to the American attitude toward the government of Nicaragua. We do not seek its overthrow. Our interest is to ensure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence. Our purpose, in conformity with American and international law, is to prevent the flow of arms to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. We have attempted to have a dialogue with the government of Nicaragua but it persists in its efforts to spread violence.

However, it was difficult to prove that a large-scale arms shipment program was underway. The other countries where Nicaragua was supposed to be sending arms were relatively unimportant and mainly added for effect or in order to bolster the notion that Nicaragua was supporting a widespread communist revolution in Central America (Gibbs, 1995). Ex CIA agent David C. MacMichael in an interview with The New York Times said that “the whole picture that the Administration has presented of Salvadoran insurgent operations being planned, directed and supplied from Nicaragua is simply not true [...] there has not been a successful interdiction, or a verified report, of arms moving from Nicaragua to El Salvador since April 1981” (Taubman, 1984)

⁴ Composed of five members: a member of the FSLN directorate, Daniel Ortega, two left-wing activists, Sergio Ramírez and Moisés Hassan Morales, and two right-wing representatives, Alfonso Robelo and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro.

In March 1981, during just his second month as president, Ronald Reagan authorized the CIA to undertake undercover activities in Nicaragua. An initial budget of 19 million dollars was assigned with the purpose of “destroying the Sandinistas”, the action team started with 500 people destined to participate in paramilitary and political operations (Inouye and Hamilton, 1987).

By mid-1981, Reagan’s State Department advisor Robert McFarland had prepared a report entitled “Bringing war to Nicaragua” (Marshall, Scott and Hunter 1987). By December 1981, Nicaraguan groups in exile, the “Contras”, began training in combat at a location west of Miami, and later at training camps in California, New Jersey, and in the northwestern part of Florida. In December 1981, CIA Operation “Red Christmas” took place in the Miskito territory of northeastern Nicaragua along the border with Honduras, where indigenous communities were forcibly relocated to create a beachhead within Nicaraguan territory, before Sandinista government forces could establish control of the area. The purpose of this action was the hope to create a separatist state that could ask for US military support (Guzman, 2018).

According to a secret report from the Defense Intelligence Agency of the United States, in 1982, in a period of 100 days, the Contra groups participated in 106 attacks that included assassinations of high Sandinista officials, sabotage of bridges and roads, sniper attacks on military patrols, fire to a customs warehouse and to multiple food crops. In February 1983, as a countermeasure to the criminal acts executed by the Contras that included burning, kidnapping, raping, killing civilians, beheading, dismembering, sabotaging the economy (Walker, 1987). The sabotage operations of the Contras, even early on, pointed to a policy of destabilizing the Nicaraguan state, not merely preventing the shipping of arms (Gibbs, 1995).

The United States didn't hide its support to the Contras. When the actions of the Contras were coming to light, Ronald Reagan paid \$300,000 to the public relations firm Woody Kepner Associates to elaborate positive images of the Contras. Reagan himself publicly began calling the Contras "freedom fighters" and accused the Sandinistas of "spreading cancer" (Parry, 1999). In a speech to the annual conference of the Conservative Political Action Conference here, Ronald Reagan renewed his call for Congressional approval of \$14 million in aid for the Contras. Reagan called the Contras "our brothers" and "freedom fighters". Reagan added:

"we owe them our help [...] you know the truth about them, you know who they're fighting and why. They are the moral equal of our Founding Fathers and the brave men and women of the French Resistance [...] given a chance and the resources, the people of the area can fight their own fight" [...] they have the men and women, they are capable of doing it, they have the people of their country behind them. All they need is our support [...] they need to know that the U.S. supports them with more than just pretty words and good wishes [...] perhaps the greatest triumph of modern conservatism has been to stop allowing the left to put the average American on the moral defensive." (Boyd, 1985)

However, the main goal of the CIA was not to mold the Contras into an effective guerrilla force, the CIA operation was an attempt to overthrow the government of Nicaragua by destabilizing the government (Gibbs, 1995). William Casey, head of the Reagan CIA, said: "What else can we do with the economy so that those bastards sweat?", emphasizing, "I want something to hurt them" (Woodward, 2005). In October 1983, the CIA produced 2,000 copies of a 90-page manual to guide Contra activities against the Sandinistas, entitled "*Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare*". This manual contained a section labelled "Selective Use of Violence", which included:

- Hire professional criminals, or thugs, for selective jobs, including sabotage and murder;
- Neutralization of key officials, including judges, local Sandinista leaders, police and state security officials;
- Creation of martyrs for the Contras by staging violence at demonstrations, causing the deaths of their own supporters with strategically located cameramen to assure images to enhance public relations;
- Coercing locals to carry out disruptive assignments.

The same year the CIA created a comic magazine with images, “*Freedom Fighter’s Manual*” which was airdropped in northern Nicaragua. The manual was intended as a guide for the common citizen to free Nicaragua from “oppression and misery”, by means of causing “civil disorder” and sabotaging the economy. This guide gave strategies to hurt government operations in the following ways:

- Hiding or destroying important tools;
- Calling in sick for work;
- Leaving lights and faucets on;
- Breaking light bulbs and windows;
- Stealing food from government supplies;
- Releasing or stealing livestock from farming coops;
- Spreading rumors;
- Making false reports of fires and crimes;
- Cutting telephone cables, severing telephone and electric lines;
- Clogging toilets;
- Disabling government vehicles;
- Putting dirt and water in government gasoline tanks and carburetors;

- Cutting down trees, blocking highways;
- Placing nails on roads and highways;
- Instructions on making Molotov cocktails to firebomb police stations.

That same year, the CIA created an intelligence network in Central America with a budget of 50 million dollars. This had the mission of infiltrating American agents and piloting low-altitude spy planes. Moreover, the congress approved 24 million dollars to aid The Contras. The Contras sabotaged the national airport, an oil pipeline in Puerto Sandino and the most important sea port, Corinto. Nevertheless, CIA agents in February 1984 mined Nicaragua's harbors in flagrant violation of all international laws, with the sole purpose of preventing Nicaragua from receiving foreign aid (Blum, 2004).

In addition, the non-profit foundation "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED) was established in 1983 by the United States congress. The purpose of this was to feed the non-military activities of the opposition, including the manipulation of public opinion, by controlling the news daily (Blum, 2004). The objective was to distort the facts and intelligence to put the Contras under positive light and especially to convince the Congress and the American people of the nobility of the Contras and the repression of the Sandinista Marxist tyranny. These efforts continued until the 1990 elections.

An economic embargo was applied in May 1985 because the policies and actions of the Government of Nicaragua continue to represent an unusual and extraordinary threat to national security and foreign policy of the United States (Kornbluh, 1987). In 1986, the *Nicaragua vs. United States* was a case brought before the International Court of Justice by the Nicaraguan Government, which accused the United States of violating international law by supporting the Contra and by undermining the country's ports. The full name of the case was *Military and paramilitary activities against the Government of Nicaragua*. The Court

ruled in favor of Nicaragua, but the United States refused to respect the Court's decision, arguing that it did not have jurisdiction over the case. Following the Court's decision, the United States Government withdrew its declaration that it would accept the jurisdiction of the Court.

The International Court of Justice ordered the United States to “cease immediately and refrain from training, arming, equipping, financing and supplying the forces of the Contra or otherwise to encourage, support and assist military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua”. The Court also ordered the United States to provide reparations to Nicaragua, which were later determined to be more than \$17 million. Beside not respecting the Court decision, two days earlier, the House of Representatives of the United States voted in favor of Reagan's new request of \$100 million aid for the Contras.

In October 1986, two teenagers from the Sandinista popular army with a surface-to-air missile (SAM) shot down a cargo plane from the ground carrying 13,000 pounds of military supplies, including 60 AK-47 rifles, 50,000 cartridges of munitions, grenades and grenade launchers, jungle boots and packages of water from Brooklyn, New York (“Hasenfus: Nothing But the Facts,” 1986). This event would successively reveal the Iran-Contra Affair. The only survivor to the attack was the former marine Eugene Hasenfus; the pilot and copilot, who had served with Hasenfus in secret CIA air drop operations in Laos in the 1960s and 1970s, didn’t survive the crash and the fourth member was a Nicaraguan. By October 1986 there were already 500 successful drops of secret supplies (Kinzer, 1991).

The CIA and Reagan administration denied they had connections with Hasenfus. Nonetheless, Hasenfus revealed that the United States traded arms with Iran in exchange for US hostages and the money earned were to provide weapons to the Contras in Nicaragua. The US Congress underwent many trial sessions when Iran-Contra was made public after the

testimony of Hasenfus, however no one was punished. In 1988, Colonel Oliver North was indicted for conspiracy to defraud the government and resigned from the Marine Corps. He was found guilty of obstructing the U.S. Congress, destroying documents, and accepting an illegal gratuity and was sentenced to two years' probation. In 1991, after a prosecution witness claimed that his testimony had been tainted, all charges against North were dropped. He was not punished and three years later ran for US Senator for the State of Virginia.

In 1996, investigative journalist Gary Webb revealed a sordid history of cocaine smuggling by the Nicaraguan Contras in a series of articles published in the San José Mercury News, later to be told in his exhaustive report, *Dark Alliance*. For more than a decade a San Francisco Bay Area drug ring sold tons of crack cocaine to Los Angeles street gangs which funneled millions in drug profits to the CIA-backed Nicaraguan Contra terrorists. US officials were aware of this network and did little or nothing to stop it, and Reagan's National Security Council headed by Oliver North took extraordinary steps to protect the drug trafficking from public exposure. Webb examined thousands of pages of once secret documents of the CIA, FBI, DEA, and Los Angeles police Department, and from the Iran-Contra investigation. On December 10, 2004, Webb died from two gunshots to the head, which fact was officially published as a suicide (Bratich, 2004).

During the years of the CIA's operation until 1990, possibly a specific \$100 million was spent in internal opposition to the Sandinistas. These opposition groups include political opponents, religious leaders, and even *La Prensa*, Nicaragua's most successful newspaper received disguised funds not only from the Central Intelligence Agency, but also from the red secret coordinated by Lt. Col. Oliver North, the former National Security Council official and central figure in the Iran-Contra scandal (Gibbs, 1995). Indeed, the CIA helped set up the civilian cover for the Contras at times even enticing former Sandinista supporters to serve on the Contra's political directorate (Gibbs, 1995).

Noam Chomsky, the American philosopher and the so-called “father of modern linguistics” made the following statement in his book *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*: “the attack against Nicaragua was justified by the claim that if the US don’t stop “them” there, they’ll be pouring across the border at Harlingen, Texas-just two days’ drive away. As far as American business is concerned, Nicaragua could disappear and nobody would notice. However, it has been subjected to murderous assaults by the US, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of lives and many billions of dollars” (1992).

The United States interests in Nicaragua were established by general elections in 1990. “If the Sandinistas were truly as evil as they were portrayed they would never have won the 1984 election, which was considered basically free and fair by the international community, and they never would have peacefully stepped aside as they did upon losing the 1990 elections” (Gibbs, p75, 1995). Indeed, most of the money for candidates came from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), as an open source. The NED provided about \$12.5 million to the opposition directly, or about \$8 a voter, more than twice what George Bush spent per voter to get elected in 1988 (Gibbs,1995).

However, former CIA agent David MacMichael (1990) said that the Sandinistas were by no means defeated as a political force. Within the Chamorro government they still wield much power and have a strong base in the military. They also maintain widespread political support. Some have argued that Nicaraguans were convinced to vote for the Chamorro government because it was the only way to convince the U.S. to leave Nicaragua alone. Essentially, the Contras, with U.S. approval and at U.S. direction, became an active part of the US-organized anti-Sandinista political campaign.

U.S. foreign policy typically suffers from an emphasis on promoting “democracy”. The mission in Nicaragua never met democratic standards. Chomsky claimed that if you want

a global system that's subordinated to the needs of US investors, you can't let pieces of it wander off. It's striking how clearly this is stated in the documentary record-even in the public record at times take Chile under (Salvador) Allende. Chile is a fairly big place, with a lot of natural resources, but again, the United States wasn't going to collapse if Chile became independent. According to Kissinger (1992), Chile was a "virus" that would "infect" the region with "effects all the way to Italy".



Participation of the United States in the coup d'état to Salvador Allende

In the framework of the Cold War, Chile became the object of singular attention for US foreign policy. The significant presence of leftist forces identified with a Marxist revolutionary project made Chile a scenario of great symbolic value in the context of the United States activities in the affairs of Latin American countries. As Bryan Loveman said: American control of Chile's principal economic resources accompanied intensified involvement in Chilean politics. Cold War intrigue made post--World War II Chilean politics a confrontation zone for "Communism" and the "Free World". American political heads considered the presence of Communist ministers in the González Videla government to be dangerous, and therefore allied with the Chilean Right in an active campaign to weaken, then destroy, Marxist political parties and the labor movement. The United States gave greatly needed financial assistance to the Chilean government on the condition that the Communist menace be eliminated (Loveman, 1979).

In 1970, socialist candidate Salvador Allende ran for president for his third time and finally won by 1%. The CIA started a propaganda campaign against Allende, using radio and news media attempting to link Allende with crimes and repression associated with communism (CIA, 2000). Allende won the runoff resoundingly, which prompted Nixon to express his anger over CIA's failure, and CIA director Richard Helms to complain he was ordered to "beat somebody with nothing" (Mitrokhin and Andrew, 2006).

Allende, democratically elected President of Chile, had an open friendship with the Soviet Union, declared support to Fidel Castro and condemned the U.S invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba: "Fearing another Cuba, where Fidel Castro expropriated over \$1 billion in American investments, Nixon began to impose massive sanctions against Allende to supplement the covert activity designed to weaken the socialist regime" (Mitchell, 2012, p. 41).

On September 29, 1971, Allende nationalized all American copper holdings in Chile with no compensation due to “excess profits” earned in the past (Petras and Morley, 1975). In 1972, the CIA was implementing economic covert actions. One of the most relevant was the 45-day strike of Chilean truckers’ union, which years later would be revealed was funded by the CIA using laundered money (Haslam, 2005). The Nixon administration used a variety of tactics to garner the support of the American business community in rallying against Allende, and, by 1973, U.S. private sector involvement in the crusade against Allende had become a major force (Esty, 2013, p. 32).

The CIA concluded that “the only viable solution for blocking Allende” was a military coup covertly organised by US agents operating in the region, or Chilean proxies implementing CIA-backed actions (United States, 1975) The commander-in-chief of the Chilean army at the time, René Schneider, had expressed opposition to the staging of a coup. However, this did not get in the way: a group of insurgents led by General Viaux and financed by the CIA shot and killed Schneider during a failed kidnapping attempt (Kornbluh, 2004, p. 21).

On September 11, 1973, air force planes bombarded the presidential palace during the first day of the coup. According to the reports of the Organization of American States, 1,500 people died, president Allende killed himself rather than surrender and later members of his presidential guard were killed (Ortiz de Zarate, 2005). The Chilean military conducted the government at the hands of a military “junta”, which within a matter of months, would dissolve into an authoritarian government under the control of Augusto Pinochet (Esty, 2013, p. 33).

Two months after the violent coup, Nixon administration provided the military aid requested by the junta: “one thousand flares and one thousand steel helmets” to the Chilean

army were delivered so that the junta could quell any resistance to the coup and \$48 millions in commodity credits (Stephen, 2012). The US eventually acknowledged that Pinochet was creating detention camps for political prisoners, which American funds indirectly supported by providing materials such as tents and blankets, which “need not be publicly... earmarked for prisoners” (Kornbluh, 2004, p. 211). The International Commission of Jurists stated in a report that: “Pinochet was a dictator who would stop at nothing to consolidate his power. His regime eliminated thousands of opponents. During the dictatorship, arbitrary executions, arrests, assassinations, torture and disappearances were common practice. Tens of thousands of Chileans met their fate at the hands of Pinochet's ruthless regime” (International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), 1999, p.7).

Between 1970 and 1973, the Allende government received \$19.8 million in assistance, compared to \$186 million provided to Pinochet between 1974 and 1976 (Livingstone, 2018). Former president Carter failed to improve the situation of human rights in Chile. In American foreign policy discourse, economic freedom equals social freedom, and to dispute this notion was seen as damaging to global order in the bipolar world of the Cold War. Therefore, to condemn Pinochet's human rights record would also mean condemning his economic policy, as the two were inextricably linked (Creffield, 2019).

C.I.A.'s Covert War Scope

The purpose of the CIA operations was not exclusively that of providing intelligence to military groups; the intelligence agency was also tasked with gaining access to the daily life of the receiving communities, building senses, values and promoting practices. The overarching objective was set to extinguish the interest towards communism and strengthen instead the image of the United States as a guardian of freedom. To achieve this, the CIA used the following methods, as defined by the National Security Council: 1) Financing,

advising and arming military powers such as the Contras and Pinochet; 2) Manipulation of public opinion through animated magazines on how to cause civil disobedience and create chaos, and radio stations, and; 3) Economic warfare.

In spite of the tremendous amount invested, the Contras failed to overthrow the Sandinista government by military means. Nevertheless, the combination of the economic embargo, the bombardment of the principal sea port, and the economic sabotage, in general succeed in devastating the economy. But manipulation of the public opinion is a primary means to completely eradicate a threat. In fact, the Sandinistas had the greater popular support, and the coalition of opposition parties leveraged on the economic sabotage to frame them as “evil” before the international community and win the elections in 1990.

Despite the fact that the Sandinistas won elections by popular vote by democratic elections and also Salvador Allende was democratically elected, the United States pointed an accusatory finger toward both and undermined their reputation internationally. In both the Nicaraguan and the Chilean cases, the United States through the CIA financed and assisted military powers to fight and win a coup war. Furthermore, a common thread followed by the United States to align the countries with their interests seemed to entail efforts made with the purpose of naturally stirring the population toward a given direction, without openly imposing it.

To eliminate the Sandinista threat, the United States availed themselves of the following strategies:

- Creating chaos: despite the fact that the Contras did not succeed in defeating the Sandinista military, they brought war to several places on the Nicaraguan territory. Their acts of violence and crime against humanity, harassment, the acts of terror, created an environment of chaos, instability and insecurity;

- The sabotage of the economy: the economic embargo, the mining of seaports, the sabotage of oil pipelines and airports, the burning of crops, the destruction of bridges, among others, were the selected means of pressure. Quoting the director of the CIA, “what else can we do with the economy so that those bastards sweat?”;
- Manipulation of public opinion: paying public relations firms, giving speeches on the defense of democracy, financing of the opposition media, creating of civil disorder manuals were some of the means leveraged to frame Contra's criminal actions as heroic for the democracy. On the flip side of the coin, the complete concealment of acts of aggression and the violation of human rights and international law in Nicaragua acted as cards to point to the Sandinistas as evil.

This investigation centers on how these actions that violated human rights and international law were hidden, and how the United States prized its actors as patriot heroes instead of condemning them, as Goffman frame theories argue that false frames can be created by impostors and scammers. Although the new government started with peace campaigns and an end to the war, in essence, it was a conflict instigated by the United States, and it was the United States itself that financed the electoral campaign in conjunction with the threat that, if people didn't vote for the opposition, the war and the economic blockade would continue. The chaos, the economic sabotage, and the manipulation of public opinion were all born from the common root of United States external cooperation funds, framed under the interpretation that these were necessary means to grant national security, additionally illegal means were also used by the U.S authorities in order to keep the Contras undefeated.

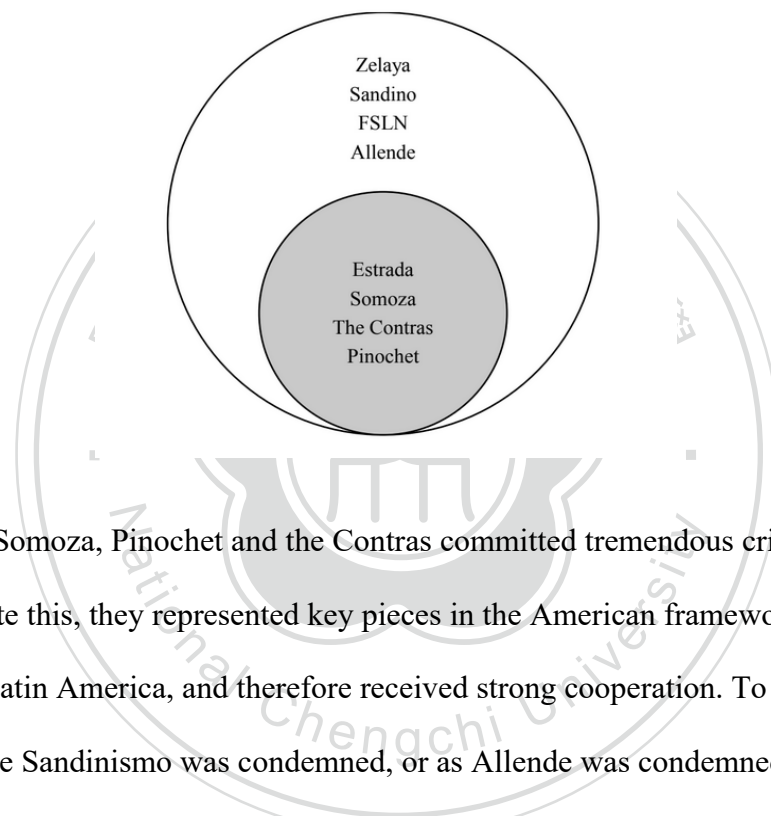
Analysis Chapter I

The international community created their unique framework to define the direction of their cooperation. As mentioned in the previous sections, in international aid strategies, it is normally the donor countries that set the framework of operation for the international aid strategy, and they subsequently impose it on the receiving countries without taking into consideration the needs, situations and experiences of these latter players. Throughout this permanent activity, donor countries set, in the words of Goffman, the edges of such frameworks in a way that their own interest is protected within the international arena. Disguised as international aid programs, as Bateson's theory explains, this aggressive attack is masked by an apparently positive purpose aimed at humanitarian, social and economic development of the lesser developed countries.

In the case of bilateral aid from the United States, the method of interaction was tailored as a scaffolding structure not built on issues such as modernization, development, the fight against poverty or inequality, instead centered on the political sphere and national security, and in particular on the matter of the protection of American objectives and interests. To score this goal, the United States took the approach of continuously framing its foreign policy towards the Latin American countries as beneficial for these latter, while the center of interest was dramatically biased toward doing good for the United States of America, independently of what it would take, up to instigating political conflicts in the targeted countries and directing cooperation toward those groups that would look after the American interests.

Framing is an internally logical system, consisting in the intentions about what individuals think of the world and themselves. This definition of the situation places within the "edges" its own interpretation of what is national security, and its lasting efforts to defend it has brought to light the extension of the means used.

The United States Agency for International Development defined its external assistance as particularly political and as a fundamental tool for its “National Security Strategy”. The meaning of this statement is well depicted in the below graph, placing in the smaller circle the actors who have received cooperation from the United States and outside the actors that according to the evidence have been considered a threat to the national security of the United States.



Estrada, Somoza, Pinochet and the Contras committed tremendous crimes against humanity. Despite this, they represented key pieces in the American framework for achieving US interests in Latin America, and therefore received strong cooperation. To have them condemned as the Sandinismo was condemned, or as Allende was condemned, would have been (under their own interpretations) detrimental to the American national security, as they were contributing to protect the framework set by the United States aimed at the imposition and maintenance of the American hegemony.

Evidence shows that part of the line of conduct to ensure the defense of “national security” included activities such as media manipulation and provision of weapons and resources to those groups aligning with the scopes and interests of the United States, and often legitimizing the latter to commit crimes against humanity if they were necessary means

to achieve the purpose. Continuously nurturing and developing these activities was fundamental to define a framework that would allow the United States to preserve its interests in the region.

The roadmap for action in the United States is established through the country's own interest, its own interpretative frameworks that justify its actions. The essential core characteristics which serve to this investigation is the fact that the United States has permanently exported the frameworks and its interpretations as mechanisms used to foster development of the receiving countries and, in the case of the Contras, the defense of democracy. However, these foreign policies have placed the interest of the US above human rights, international law and moral legitimate behaviours.

The Sandinista revolution represented an extraordinary event in the context of the Cold War which was a battle for hearts and minds. By taking into account the theory of Michel Foucault previously presented, the external assistance could be thought of as part of a set of government technologies, that is, of "practical and concrete mechanisms, local and everyday practices, through which the various authorities intend to shape, normalize, guide and instrumentalize actions, yearnings and thoughts of others, in order to achieve the objectives considered desirable. Using this theory can reflect with the methods of the CIA by manipulating the public opinion framing the Sandinistas as evil and the Contras as heroes, same way the distribution of manuals which frame civil disobedience as a heroic act.

Covert operations, ousting democratically elected governments, inciting revolts and supporting transnational companies were the run of the mill actions. Nonetheless, the CIA has been the protagonist of many academic books and news and the target of many journalists who have revealed the criminal actions of their covert operations, furthermore, the controversy faced before the US congress, the media, and the public opinion is well

documented. However, a very important aspect that cannot go unnoticed was the successful use of the Non-profit Organization National Endowment for Democracy (NED). NED also managed to finance communications media that framed the Contra as a heroic and an effective electoral campaign, without the need for cover operations, rather openly and consequently without controversy, which were indispensable elements in restoring Nicaragua's alignment to the philosophy of the United States.

The following part of the paper explores the update of United States national security strategies, and especially on how non-profit organizations take a critical role in the implementation of national security strategy, by first and foremost locating the aid with the purpose of aligning countries to the “American philosophy”. For example, Allen Weinstein, cofounder of NED, said in 1991 that “a lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA”. Furthermore, this paper details some of the inside operational strategies within which the International Development Agency of the United States funds national NGOs that contribute in the creation of a framework where the political struggle, chaos and violence are meant to overthrow in 2018 the Sandinista president Ortega. As such, these violent means and the involvement of the United States’ support are once again framed either as beneficial or obfuscated.

Chapter II



The Neoliberal Era 1990-2006

The international system in the 1990s was essentially marked by the end of the Cold War, the consummation of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the collapse of the USSR (1991), as well as the formation of new economic blocks. In Nicaragua in 1990, the presidential candidate Violeta Chamorro of the National Opposition Unit (UNO), supported by the United States, won the election against the FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega. Noam Chomsky commented that the Nicaraguan people were voting “with a gun to their heads”, as the UNO promised to end the war if it won the elections. President Bush informed the Nicaraguan people that, if they chose not to vote for Violeta Chamorro as their president, the war and economic embargo would continue. The US spent nearly \$50 million tailoring the UNO Party specifically for the election and as an alternative to the FSLN (Wilson, 2013).

The government of Chamorro and the Sandinismo tried to establish an economic plan after the elections. However, this unprecedented form of social pact was increasingly less acceptable to the United States government. To ensure the disbursement of the Economic Support Funds for 1990-1991, approved by Congress, the Nicaraguan government was forced to implement economic reforms, especially regarding privatization (Aravena, 2000). In the 1990s, privatization and structural adjustment policies weakened and fragmented Nicaraguan civil society, while business actors enhanced their power (Carrion, 2020). Nevertheless, there was also a restoration of relations and alignment with the US and the lifting of the economic embargo, which was imposed by the Reagan administration in 1985 and continued by George Bush (1989-1993).

This transition meant what the Central American sociologist Torres-Rivas (2008, p. 173) called “the authoritarian transition” in the sense of the oligarchic domination that

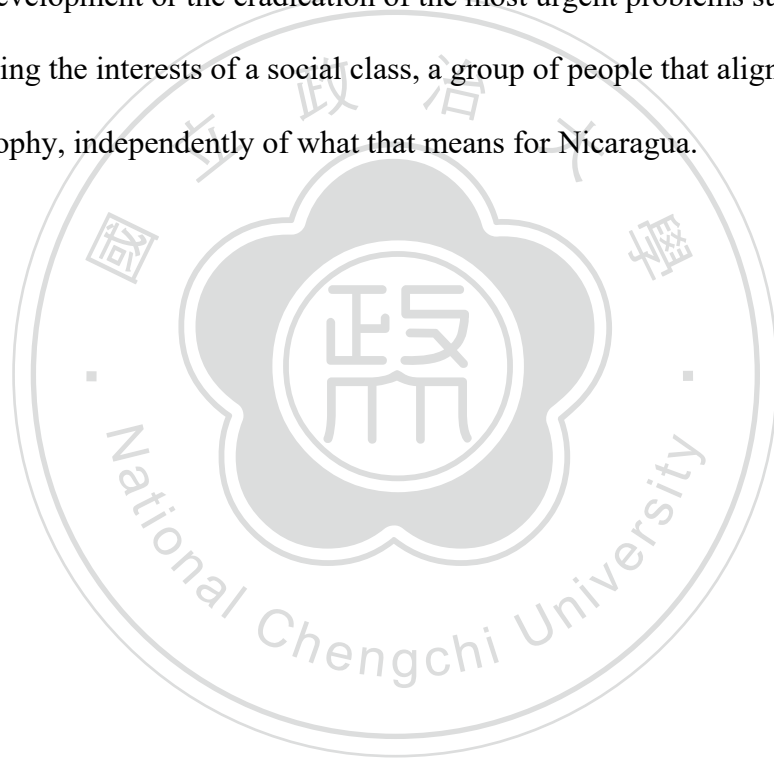
underlie it. This imposition of bourgeois democracy was aimed at avoiding another experience such as the popular revolution in Nicaragua. It was carried out on the basis of exclusion, political and military control, of misery, of the advance of dependence, the conditionality of Financial Organizations International and internal authoritarianism of the dominant sectors, and under the external threat of the US invasion. This allowed the return of US interests and interventionism in Nicaragua which, in part, was carried out through one of the American agencies, i.e. the International Development Agency (IDA). For this reason, the IDA program transcended the strictly economic framework and extended to the political field, causing large-scale social changes.

The neoliberal era came with sixteen years of economic policies based on faith in the privatization of state resources, reduction of public spending and deregulation in general, around the poorest communities. Oscar-Rene Vargas, a Nicaraguan economist, argues that this era was characterized by “the preeminence of the media as modulators of social conscience, the concentration of power in an elite divorced from citizenship, the cult in the market and the fear of poverty, respect for macroeconomic equilibrium, the absence of any equivalent of a Cultural project, the assumption of democracy with lowercase; in short, the lack of a vision of the future” (Vargas, 2005).

During this neoliberal era in Nicaragua, the governments in power carried out the neoliberal and privatization policies designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which seriously affected social programs. For example, in the 2001-2005 period, no progress was made in reducing poverty, on the contrary, its behavior has been slightly upward. Proof of this is that in 2001, according to the consumption method, the Central American Council of Human Rights published that 45.8% of the population was poor and in 2005 it increased to 48.3%. In relation to extreme poverty, for 2001 the percentage

was 15.1%, while for 2005 the trend increased to 17.2%. (“Políticas públicas regionales”, 2008).

The neoliberal era in Nicaragua was characterized by a general growth in the economy, which however came at the expense of the abandonment of such social issues as poverty reduction. This upward trend in the GDP path made the neoliberal a pillar of the American philosophy, and was able to allow the maintenance of a stable relationship between the two countries. This fact suggests that the priorities of the United States do not center on spurring social development or the eradication of the most urgent problems such as poverty, rather on cultivating the interests of a social class, a group of people that aligns with the American philosophy, independently of what that means for Nicaragua.



United States Foreign Aid Strategies in the 21st century

It is from this event that the International Agency Development of the United States became agencies present in the most economically needy countries or those with weakened governments, playing an essential role in fueling the of the United States philosophy worldwide. After the attacks of September 11 by Al Qaeda, foreign policies, especially in relation to security, changed globally: part of the restructuring included greater emphasis on politically weakened governments with programs of civic participation and promotion of democracy by US government agencies (Coma, 2002).

Among the diplomatic strategies used in international relations described by -co-founder of International Relations neoliberalism and actual member of the Defense Policy Board⁵- Joseph Nye (1990) is soft power. *Soft power is a term that describes the ability of a political actor to influence the actions of other actors using cultural and ideological means.* The exercise of international cooperation from the United States perspective can be seen as a generator of soft power, aimed at the fulfillment of three geopolitical projects, namely: “international development; globalization; imperialism” (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2006: 276 - 277). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an executor of such projects worldwide exploiting international aid to achieve its three objectives: the pursuit of development through Official development assistance (ODA); globalization through the export of language; the transplantation of American organizational culture, products and supplies such as modified seeds, processed foods and technology (Hayter, 1971).

In Latin America, USAID management always maintained the parameters of cooperation from the donor-recipient dynamic. An example of its activity in Latin America is

⁵ Federal advisory committee to the United States Department of Defense.

the Venezuelan case, within which country, in 2002, the USAID created the Office of Initiatives towards a Transition (OTI) that aimed to improve democracy in the country.

During the 2002 political crisis in Venezuela, the American government attempted to overthrow the government of Hugo Chavez by appointing Pedro Carmona as president, which fact resulted in a violent clash between oppositions. Peaceful resolution was achieved by the unarmed retake of Miraflores, reappointing Chavez at the presidency. Objectives such as the aforementioned, the improvement of democratic institutions and the promotion of citizen participation through democratic leadership courses are cited within the official descriptions of these programs. These projects were executed mainly by local NGOs that received American goods and services (“A Review of U.S. Policy Toward Venezuela November”, 2002)

In summary, the external cooperation strategies implemented by the United States in the 21st century mostly center on programs enacted through American Agencies for International Development. These organs were tasked with fueling the United States philosophy worldwide. In general, external cooperation is a type of soft power which comes as an essential strategy to exert hard power. Despite the fact the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness explicitly states that donor countries must align behind the strategies set by developing countries, the United States instead located the aid in promoting its philosophy through programs such as civic participation and promotion of democracy.

The Venezuelan attempted coup against the self-proclaimed enemy of the United States president Hugo Chavez was mostly guided (and executed) by local NGOs funded by the international development agents of the United States. These local NGOs were also in charge of providing courses in matters such as leadership and civic participation, which highly contributed to the American strategy of framing such aid strategies as baseline

beneficial for the receiving countries. Despite the sweet sugar coating, the United States prioritized their own interests before anything else, including any morally legitimate behaviors.

The next part of this paper takes a deeper dive into the topic of national security strategies of the United States in the 21st century, zooming its focus particularly on the role of International Cooperation Agencies and local NGOs as a national security tool.



The Return of the Sandinistas

The Bush administration in the United States entered Nicaraguan political fray, warning that if Nicaraguans backed Ortega's return to power, the country would cut off aid funding. Ortega's opponents exploited this threat from the United States, promising dire days ahead in case he would prevail at the polls (Country watch, 2016, p. 20). However, during the general election of 2006, a divide within the neoliberal party let the Sandinistas win the race with only 37.99% of the votes.

Before moving forward with the topic, it is necessary to elaborate further on the description of character Daniel Ortega. Ortega played a crucial role uniting the FSLN and sparked the massive uprising of 1978-1979. He had in the past already led the Sandinista, first as Coordinator of the Junta of National Reconstruction (1979-1985) and then as President (1985-1990). Moreover, besides losing the candidature in 1990, he was the only Sandinista presidential candidate during neoliberals' government, losing the race in October 1996 and November 2001, to finally gain victory after the division of the neoliberalist political party.

The Sandinistas' comeback with president Ortega came at a time when several countries in Latin American with left or center-left governments were abandoning the path defined by the Washington Consensus to and design and apply alternative regional development strategies. A number of events followed to threaten the hegemony of the United States in the Latin American region: the creation of the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA); the energy integration plans in South America promoted by Venezuela; the creation of the Bank of the South, which came to settle several debts toward the IMF and therefore contributed to increasing independence toward this institution. This investigation will especially narrow its focus on the role of ALBA, an institution that became an antagonistic political block to question and challenge the United States capitalist philosophy

and its way of intervening in the Latin American region, and of which Nicaragua became a member of soon after Sandinista president Ortega won the elections.



The ALBA Bloc

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) was born in 2004 as a regional integration project linked to the emergence of progressive governments identified with social ideological currents. These coincided with the Venezuelan model of the 21st Century Socialism concept developed by Heinz Dieterich and based on the just distribution of wealth through dynamics promoting the prevalence of the human being over capital, by building a society in which democratic, participatory, socialist values are identified, and without social classes. Although Dieterich does not define a way to reach this socialism, he mentions ideological links with a type of self-managed development based on the achievement of creative and sustainable societies (Dieterich, 2003).

ALBA was constituted as a political organization with a transversal impulse to elect the State in the regularization of the economy for social purposes, without neglecting the productivity, industry and social development in use of the “solidarity” international aid. This was a characteristic that qualified Cooperation from another perspective and was one of the original signs that ALBA sought to project with the scope of an integration project. This also led to the construction of a theory of interaction between trade and competition without causing damage between countries (Santillano, 2016).

In this sense, ALBA is the result of a progressive process of postmodern currents that brings together environmental, feminist and neo-Marxist precepts. These precepts were imbued in the academy and in the political representatives whose management generated new development perspectives during the last two decades. Among these, Chávez (Venezuela), Morales (Bolivia), Correa (Ecuador), Ortega (Nicaragua), Zelaya (Honduras) (Sierra, 2011, pp. 1-2). Although ALBA was born under a manifesto that declares “independence, revolution and socialism”, the block responds to the integration of the needs of a heterogeneous continent, which is to build a unique identity, without following a single

ideology but instead based on the particularities of its members and the demands of the international system (Araya, 2010, p. 154).

ALBA countries were the object of profound criticism from nations that did not share their vision. On the other hand, they had the support of countries identifying with a reform of the global economic system.

Joint Implementation of Regional Policies

The ALBA bloc countries managed to form several axes for the construction of joint policies. Starting with the traditional economic unions, such as the Andean Community and Mercosur, another axis was political, with the appearance of regional conglomerates seeking a new ideology that identifies and differentiates them from other organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS). These organizations explicitly left out the capitalist vision by promoting instead a social ideology. Examples of them are: ALBA, CELAC and UNASUR (Ayerbe et al., 2011).

In relation to this situation, problems and vulnerabilities arising within traditional regional organizations such as the OAS can be analyzed. A specific example of this is the debate on the reform of the Inter-American Human Rights System (IACHR) -organ of the OAS to promote the observance and defense of human rights. The ideological conflict with IACHR began in 2012, with Venezuela's denunciation of the Convention of the American Convention on Human Rights, whereby, through a political discourse, it denounced an alleged interference of the United States in Latin America through the IACHR. (Rodríguez, Saldivia, and Chacín, 2013).

Subsequently, and reinforcing the political position that ALBA members cultivated regarding the management of international agencies, and in particular American agencies in Latin America, Ecuador revived the debate on the Inter-American Commission on Human

Rights (IACHR) with a proposal to reform the financing of the court of the mentioned organization. President Rafael Correa denounced in a public statement the IACHR was being used to interfere with Latin American governments through the financing of foreign NGOs. In addition, he proposed that only the countries part of the Pact of San Jose⁶-which the United States didn't ratify- should be responsible for financing the 15 million dollars needed for the functioning of IACHR (Falca, 2014). In this context, ALBA turned its policy in favor of the Ecuadorian situation, and, during a meeting of presidents, the IACHR report displayed firm disagreement on the situation of Human Rights in the country. In addition, and following the precept of interference by the Inter-American Human Rights System, the representatives announced the withdrawal of the Inter-American Defense Board. Subsequently, a new defense and security system tailored to ALBA's philosophy was proposed in order to tackle the situation in the region.

On June 21, 2012, in the City of Rio de Janeiro, ALBA Political Council decided on a joint strategy to counteract the interference of the United States in Latin American countries, this time focusing the strategy on the management of USAID. The first observation was made to reach the resolution: the interference in international policies through the planning and administration of economic and humanitarian assistance, which also involved the financing of non-governmental organizations, carried out projects that led to the destabilization of governments not aligned with Washington. A second argument was raised from declassified documents of the Department of State, within which donations were registered towards political parties and pressure groups opposed to acting governments. These actions went against the laws of Latin American countries, prohibiting the intervention of foreign capital in the internal politics of the nation (ALBA, 2012).

⁶ An international human rights instrument. It was adopted by many countries in the Western Hemisphere in San José, Costa Rica, on 22 November 1969

Within the preamble of the resolution taken by ALBA's governments it is described that USAID represents a facade to finance a network of organizations that identified themselves as NGOs. In certain circumstances the projects carried out by the NGOs - or USAID itself - were outside the institutional and judicial framework of the countries, far from the true needs of the recipient countries (Otis, 2014).

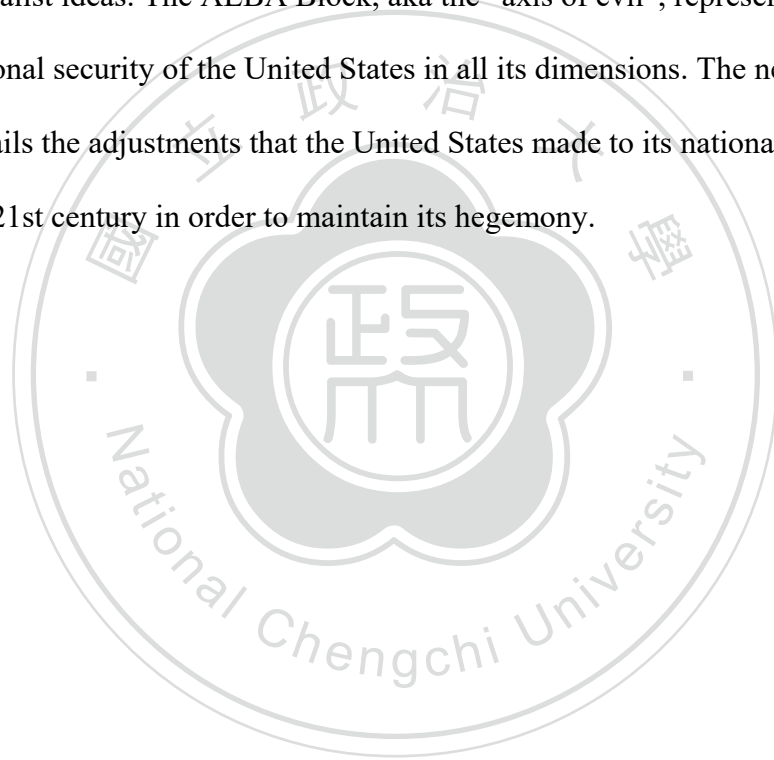
Another axis of the set of resolutions designed by ALBA was the protection of natural resources in a sovereign way: ALBA countries condemned in fact the actions of those NGOs that, funded by the USAID, limited the powers of the States on the use and conservation of their own environment. Finally, ALBA countries were deemed to be capable enough to carry out their democratic systems on their own. By the same token, it was affirmed that the financing to sustain democracy in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean provided by USAID or by National Endowment for Democracy (NED) resulted in direct interference with the functions of the State.

ALBA was considered the Latin American "axis of evil" by the administration of President George Bush. This statement provoked a trail of disagreements between the US government and the countries of the Bolivarian Alliance: if, on the one hand, the Alliance proposed independent management of North-South diplomacy and countries' autonomous action in the face of foreign pressures. This led ALBA countries to exercise political rather than economic diplomacy. The members of this organization sought recognition in a diplomatic sphere, showing their multiculturalism and authenticity, as opposed to traditional military or economic recognition (Ullán de la Rosa, 2012).

Traditionally, Latin America has been subject to hegemonic foreign policies from the United States. As detailed in the previous sections, such policies were disguised as aimed at the benefit and development of the receiving country, while uncovering way less altruistic

purposes. In fact, they practically consisted in instigating conflicts and directing aid to groups aligning with the American interests, disregarding crimes, sabotage and creation of chaos to achieve the set goals.

Driven mainly by Venezuela, the ALBA Block was led for the first time in history solely by leftist presidents. Through it, Latin America joined forces and stood as a block against the activities and methods of dominance of the United States. As pointed out in earlier sections of the paper, during the cold war, the main problem for the United States was the spreading of socialist ideas. The ALBA Block, aka the “axis of evil”, represented a huge threat to the national security of the United States in all its dimensions. The next section of this research details the adjustments that the United States made to its national security strategies in the 21st century in order to maintain its hegemony.



The New Panorama of United States Security

Among the programs managed by the US Department of State, there was a predisposition to treat international aid as a tool for strengthening democracy, improving the judicial system and transparency of public processes, by means of increasing the capacity of the State to provide services, reduce corruption rates and decrease gray economy. All the above activities were carried out to ensure international security, and therefore the internal security of the donor country (Foreign Assistance, 2015).

To describe the international context, the sociologist Waldmann (2003) proposed a categorization of the United States taking into account its internal political problems and the possible threat that they represent to the international community. The proposal portrays Latin American countries as villain states, i.e. countries reluctant to receive international aid. In this context, the United States considered Latin America the main threat to international security. Within the categories proposed by Waldmann, weak states are defined as countries that have a defined state structure, a quasi-established democracy and a rule of law instituted by the existence of a law, together with (theoretical) human and civil rights. These countries are weak as they lack the power to consolidate state sovereignty over the entire territorial area, aggravating the non-existent capacity to provide goods and services to citizens. State inefficiency in areas far from the center of power, such as border areas, eventually ends up creating a separation between the state and society. In relation to this gap, Waldmann (2003) proposes that this gives rise to a justification for intervention to solve the inefficiencies of such States.

In consideration of the threats posed by weak countries, the United States of America proposed a process of consolidation of the State. In fact, in the case they would fail completely, these countries would become villain States, which would give rise to a major

expense for the neutralization of the international threat posed by a State that does not share American ideals.

In this context, each agency of the US government pursued the maximum objective of guaranteeing internal security. In order to achieve it, it was necessary to ensure the alignment of countries to American philosophy (Coma, 2002). The activities performed by the American specialized agencies included: the generation of habits of cooperation, dialogues to reach agreements, analysis of international situations, approach of common strategies with the purpose of consolidating the country's hegemony in the long term and provision of development solutions to the less favored countries (Santillan, 2016).

The agenda that the United States developed with these countries was dynamic and built on multiple axes, as it pursued maintenance of productive activities that responded to the real-time needs of the government (Coma, 2002). American international policy defined democracy as the most important value of a country at the time of establishing international relations. In this context, the efforts made by government agencies to strengthen democracy in foreign countries are framed. Government agencies such as USAID carried out projects with the purpose of promoting democracy and the stability of countries, eventually aimed at creating allied countries that share the American philosophy, resulting overall in a Security Model International (Santillan 2016).

In December 2002, President George W. Bush presented his “National Security Strategy” to the United States Congress. An analysis of his speech allows us to appreciate a marked change in the priorities of international politics, in the words of the president:

Today, the United States has a position of unparalleled military power and great economic and political influence. By maintaining our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantages. Instead, we try to create a balance of power

that favors human freedom: conditions under which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic freedom. In a safe world, people can improve their own lives. We will defend peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve peace by creating good relations between the great powers. We will extend peace by promoting free and open societies in each continent (Lieber and Lieber, 2002).

The proposal for the use of military power and “soft power” stands out in what the Secretary of State during Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice defined as “Transformational Diplomacy”⁷ (Rice, 2006) . Through this new strategy, the United States proposed the use of international aid to ensure national security through the fight against terrorism. In this context, President Bush promulgated a turn to USAID in order to implement the "National Security Strategy", including international development as a priority in the political relations of the United States along with national defense and diplomacy (United States Department of State, 2002).

The adoption of international cooperation on various issues allowed the US system to continue exercising power even within left-wing governments, especially in the context of the management of national security, by directly influencing the military sphere through direct cooperation demands and projects with the armed forces. Here, the fight against drug trafficking allowed US cooperation to work on related issues such as within the social and economic spheres, while maintaining its influence. In this regard, the US government always asked for unconditional support in international forums in exchange for international projects,

⁷ Transformational Diplomacy, a term developed by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to describe the work that the United States does to establish democratic governments that respond to the needs of the people and have international responsibility for their actions.

including military support in cases of war. These antecedents created a contrast between economic and political ideology, a dilemma that is not new in the region (Parada, 2016).

Through its external agencies, the USA exercised a form of soft power based on the cooperation with ODA initiatives and an economic negotiation process for the development of trade (Santillan, 2016). USAID then played a leading role in the pursuit of American planning related to the defense of its geopolitical interests against regional initiatives that demonstrated a clear opposition to the maintenance of old power dynamics between the North and the South as is the case of ALBA.

NGOs Funded by USAID

Democracy can meet its representative objectives as long as there is an active participation of constituents. In a democratic system, there are various forms of control and guarantees of democracy in order to ensure the fulfillment of the rights of all, especially minorities. In this sense, NGOs take the post in raising awareness of the rights of representation, extending the purpose of their projects to ensure compliance with the human and political rights of citizens (Santillan, 2016). In their role of solving the deficiencies of the State, NGOs have worked in a diverse spectrum of activities with civil society, becoming pioneers in pointing out the criticalities that could cause the destabilization of a country and even a region.

It is important to recognize that NGOs do not seek to replace political parties in any country; rather, they use the government system in which they are embedded to mobilize the government team and, if necessary, work together to meet the needs of the population. Although these activities carried out by NGOs do not represent an immediate increase in the participation of the population in politics and the strengthening of democracy, it is the

generation of skills and interest in the population to actively participate in politics that generates Soft power for society and NGOs (Powell and Clemens, 1998).

It is striking that those countries within which NGOs are the most active present opposing positions in the way of relating to these organizations. For example, while in the Latin American case strict regulations are imposed on their actions, in the African case, countries became dependent on their services and projects. In both of the mentioned cases, NGO structures were altered, which caused a loss of their primary values, as they cannot be coupled with the new regulations of the countries (Cáceres, 2014).

In 2002, in Venezuela, a coup d'etat was led by right-wing parties trained by American NGOs (López, 2010, pp. 31-52). In the incident, President Hugo Chávez was overthrown for a few hours, during which Pedro Carmona took office as temporary president. The response of the governments of the European Community and Washington, gave signs of approval to the situation. American media also commented in favor of the groups that led to the incident (Vulliamy, 2002).

The coup d'etat ended in a failure, causing the death of numerous protests, and after only two days President Chavez was back in power. Despite this, that was not the last incident that occurred during the Chavez government: using tools learned in democracy training centers created with US funds, the opposition began a media campaign calling for a revocation of the mandate (López, 2010). Eventually, this episode ended with the re-election of Hugo Chávez (Carter, 2004).

The NGOs financed by the American international development agency hold as a main objective the alignment of the “weak countries” to the American philosophy. To succeed in this mission, these NGOs exercised a form of “soft power” through programs that encourage the population to participate in politics and strengthen democracy. Through this,

the ability of and interest in enacting policies aligned to the interests of the United States is generated in the population. In other words, the American strategy was aimed at creating a sense of independent thinking and decision making and freedom between the individuals, convinced of taking decisions of their own while instead were puppets of the United States.



Overview of the Sandinista Government

Since 2007, the governmental plan for development centered on the following aspects (International Monetary Fund, 2010):

- Free basic health care for all;
- Doubled government spending on education, together with policies focusing on ensuring that children complete primary education. This plan has included a free school meals programme in areas of poverty;
- Food security, with the Zero Hunger programme, which supported women by providing pregnant cows and sows, sheep, goats, and hens, as well as materials to house these animals, including the technical support and training to raise them. In addition, the “Healthy Backyard” program was launched, providing poor urban families to plant and related training with the scope of improving family income;
- Strengthened trade union rights. A tripartite agreement was accomplished involving the Government, the unions and the private sectors.

Nicaragua hit a record 5.1% growth during 2011. Successively, 4.7% and 4.5% were achieved during 2016 and 2017, respectively. This macroeconomic data placed Nicaragua in the third position among the highest economic growth countries in Latin America (World Bank, 2019).

Dataset Records registered by the National Institute for Development Information (Nicaragua) and published by the Global Health Data Exchange display a situation in which general poverty in Nicaragua dropped from 29.6% to 24.9% between 2014 and 2016, whereas extreme poverty fell from 8.3% to 6.9%. Because of the achieved results, Nicaraguan efforts for eradicating poverty were internationally well accepted.

In 2017, Nicaragua ranked second in growth among Central American countries, with favorable prospects for foreign direct investment and trade. Overall, macroeconomic performance in 2016 was robust. Real GDP grew by 4.7% in 2016, supported by strong domestic demand, while inflation remained subdued at 3.1% at year's end, mainly because of food prices (Country Watch, 2016, p. 102).

In January 2018, Fitch Ratings commented that the Nicaraguan banking system was displaying good performance despite lower growth, which resulted in a stable outlook for the industry (Country Watch, 2016). This positive macroeconomic outlook was partly a result of pro-business measures which led foreign investment to increase by a compound annual growth rate of 22% between 2005 and 2014 (Raderstorf, 2016).

In 2010, Mirte Roses, from Pan American Health Organisation, stated the following: "Nicaragua is one of the countries with the highest vaccination cover [...]. The level of social participation has been a fundamental factor because health workers collaborate very closely with community leaders and with society in organising health responses" ("Nicaragua and ALBA", 2015).

The Panamerican Health Organization recognized the Nicaraguan system of Casas Maternas, meant at assisting women in remote rural areas to give birth in an attended setting, as a key element in the country's successful effort to reduce maternal mortality. The network covered the entire country with around 150 Casas Maternas ("Nicaragua and ALBA", 2015).

Social and economic programs were taking effect, and subsequent improvements were achieved. However, in the political aspect, Ortega had effective control over more than the executive branch of government. Although the constitution of Nicaragua prohibited re-election, in 2010, the Constitutional Court ruled that President Daniel Ortega could, in fact, run for presidency again. During the election in 2012, Ortega won with 62.65% of the votes.

The candidate from the Independent Liberal Alliance (PLI), Fabio Gadea, placed second with 30.96% of the votes, followed by Liberal Constitutionalist Party candidate Arnoldo Aleman, who garnered 6.02%.

Therefore, the Sandinistas controlled the judiciary, the electoral commission and the national assembly, holding the majority of seats in the parliament in 2016. In a system with little or none checks and balances, given the domination of Ortega and the FSLN, the move to facilitate another term in office for Ortega meant a consolidation of power was in process (Country Watch, 2019, p. 29).

In November 2016, Ortega was re-elected for the third time consecutively with more than 72% of the votes, while the Sandinista party won the most seats in parliament, capturing more than 65% of the vote share there and 71 of the 92 seats at stake. The main opponent, i.e. the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, obtained only around 14% of the consensus and won 13 seats (Coleman, 2019). The loss was attributed to a profound divide within the opposition and its strategy mainly focused on pleading Ortega a threat to democracy instead of on concrete objectives like connecting with the poorest share of the population in Nicaragua (Raderstorf, 2016).

During the last election of 2016 the electoral authorities said that the participation was almost 66%, that is to say that abstention was only 34%. Opposition groups claimed abstention was instead 60% to 70%, probably (Lugo, 2016).

Differently from other cases, the Nicaraguan government avoided media conflicts with the United States government. Governments like the Venezuelan Hugo Chavez, the Ecuadorian Rafael Correa and the Bolivian Evo Morales had instead, as part of their foreign policy, pronouncements against imperialist activities of the United States. Moreover, sound policymaking helped the Ortega government to avoid much criticism. Ortega's willingness to

work within a market-based economic system had mollified concerns in the United States and elsewhere. As Pedro Reyes, the newly appointed president of the PLI, expressed, in Nicaragua “there is an authoritarian government, but not a dictator. We have freedom of the press, a business economy, and the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (Cosep) maintains very good relations with the government” (Raderstorf, 2016).

From this review, it seems there was great improvement around economic and social issues. However, evidence shows that no political group was able to effectively represent the ideology and interests of the share of the population opposed to the Sandinista government. However, president Sandinista Ortega is a traditional enemy of the United States and was on the front line aligned with the ALBA bloc. It did not seem to matter whether Nicaragua was going through a successful stage of social and economic development, politically it was not aligned to the American philosophy and was a member of the “axis of evil” that is challenging the United States interest in the region.

The Withdrawal of International Cooperation in Nicaragua (2010 - 2012)

During the years 2010 to 2012, several of the European countries which had been donors for two decades withdrew their flows of cooperation funds. One of them, part of the OECD, was Norway, which withdrew aid in 2010 after 23 years. A number of countries of the European Union, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Development Assistance Committees (DAC) underwent a switch of priorities. Some of them were: a) Holland, which, despite not being listed among the main donors of Nicaragua, always had granted constant participation; b) the United Kingdom, which closed its headquarters in Managua in 2009; c) Sweden, i.e. the European country which had most helped Nicaragua in the period 1990 - 2009 and which closed its embassy in 2010, after

ending a gradual withdrawal of cooperation announced in 2007. Other countries that joined the list were Denmark, Finland and Austria (Corrales and Dávila, 2014).

Despite this, this effective coordination framework changed radically in 2007 with the Sandinista government, an active member of the ALBA block. Nils-Sjard Schulz (2007), Associate researcher at FRIDE stated in a report that “the scenario for Nicaraguan ownership is thus no longer an aid architecture inspired by the commitments and principles of the effectiveness agenda, but is instead part of the post-DAC world, in which aid recipients aim to guarantee themselves enough independence to remodel the existing power structures of the aid system”. The following table shows the bilateral and multilateral cooperation received by Nicaragua between 2007 and 2013:

Country	2007					2013				
	PUBLIC SECTOR		PRIVATE SECTOR		Total	PUBLIC SECTOR		PRIVATE SECTOR		Total
	Donation	Loan	Donation	Loan		Donation	Loan	Donation	Loan	
Germany	18.3	7.7	0.4	19.1	45.5	12.5	0.0	1.3	3.9	17.7
Austria	3.7		6.0		9.7	0.0		0.0		0.0
Brazil				0.0	0.0				1.0	1.0
Canada	4.5		1.5	0.0	6.0	6.2		5.5	0.0	11.7
Taiwan (PDC)	17.7	1.6		0.0	19.3	9.2	0.0		0.2	9.4
South Korea	0.0	8.6			8.6	0.1	6.5			6.6
Denmark	33.3		0.0		33.3	0.0		0.0		0.0
Spain	9.8	20.6	16.1	0.0	46.5	3.6	1.7	5.9	0.0	11.2
United States	11.3		57.1	5.0	73.4	0.0		32.2	0.0	32.2
Finland	18.0		1.9	0.0	19.9	3.2		2.1	0.0	5.3
UK	3.7		1.2		4.9	0.0		0.0		0.0
Italy	4.1		1.8		5.9	0.0		0.0		0.0
Japan	20.7		0.0		20.7	18.7		0.0		18.7
Luxemburg	7.5		1.1	2.0	10.6	8.9		1.8	0.0	10.7
Norway	16.1		2.0	0.0	18.1	5.0		3.0	3.0	11.0
Netherlands	27.9		4.1	17.5	49.5	1.2		3.0	8.6	12.8
Russia	5.0				5.0	35.1				35.1
Sweden	30.2		15.9		46.1	0.0		0.0		0.0
Switzerland	15.0		0.0	0.0	15.0	14.8		5.7	0.0	20.5
Venezuela	19.3		39.9	80.0	139.2	0.0		0.0	559.1	559.1
Bilaterals	266.1	38.5	149.0	123.6	577.2	118.5	8.2	60.5	575.8	763.0
Multilaterals	133.5	215.1	19.8	123.4	491.8	99.6	279.4	18.4	135.5	532.9
TOTAL	399.6	253.6	168.8	247.0	1,069.0	218.1	287.6	78.9	711.3	1,295.9

Source: Inter-American Development Bank (2015)
Notes: USD millions

The table displays a decrease in the participation of some of the traditional donors in favor of the emergence of new donors such as Brazil, Russia, Venezuela and China. President Ortega stated that Europeans were like “flies that step on dirt”: “what they provide is not aid, but bread crumbs, small payments for the enormous unpayable debt they have with the people of the Americas” (Noticias24 cited by Carrion, 2020, p.319).

As defined earlier in the paper, international cooperation imports its own frameworks to define the direction of its cooperation. The Sandinista government drastically modified the structural adjustments that set the pillars of the work of neoliberal governments between 1990 and 2006. This new approach crossed the behavioral boundaries established by donor countries over decades of permanent activity. International cooperation does not operate in a vacuum of forces, instead it involves human intentions, the frameworks of which constitute a central element of their culture. The withdrawal of International Cooperation in Nicaragua during the Sandinista government represents a proof that countries establish ideal limits in their set frameworks to protect their interests and exercise a mechanism that imposes limitations and control over the recipients.

Analysis Chapter II

Imposing neoliberal adjustments comes as practice of the United States to export its philosophy. The Nicaraguan neoliberal era was characterized by the imposition of an oligarchy by some referred to as “bourgeois democracy”. Since the beginning of this period, the United States conditioned its development cooperation with Nicaragua in exchange for structural adjustments to the economy previously managed by the Sandinistas. These adjustments in general brought economic growth to Nicaragua. Despite the GDP growth, social projects and - in a specific way for the purpose of this research - poverty witnessed alarming increase rates.

Sandinista President Daniel Ortega won the elections in 2006. This governmental change in Nicaragua moved drastically shifted attention from the neoliberal policies to more pressing issues such as poverty reduction, access to education, health, security, and a number of other social projects. Additionally, to be internationally recognized for these social development achievements, a number of macroeconomic indices now also placed Nicaragua

on the list of the highest growth Latin American countries. The victory of Sandinista Ortega, a traditional enemy of the United States, led Nicaragua to join the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), resulting in a withdrawal of International Cooperation aids from the territory.

Promoted by Venezuelan Hugo Chavez, the ALBA bloc came to provide a multilateral balance to a geographic region traditionally known as “America's Backyard”. This new union of several Latin American countries was based on four main pillars: the prevalence of the human being over capital; the regularization of the economy for social purposes without neglecting productivity; industry and social development for international solidarity aid; the construction of an intertwined trading network between countries which does not neglect any of the participants. The ALBA bloc represented, for the first time in Latin American history, a union of countries antagonizing American philosophy, denouncing US interventions in Latin America and conducting political debates with a socialist vision. Because of the above, predictably, the bloc was soon referred by the US as the “axis of evil”.

Within the same context, the United States restructured its national security scheme around the core role of “Soft Power”. Once again, the goal was exporting a message of cooperation for peace and freedom, which practically stood for imposition of US ideals and objectives. This investigation centers its focus on the conduct of International Development Agencies in conjunction with national defense and diplomacy in a mission to align recipient countries with the “American Philosophy”.

What was previously done covertly through CIA operations, now could be openly carried out by NGOs. These organizations were aimed at educating the population on issues of democracy and civic participation, with the overarching objective to shape, guide and instrumentalize actions, desires and thoughts. Being the alignment of American philosophy

the main objective, it can be concluded that these programs are shaped to stir the individuals to act in a molded direction, for reasons they believe are their own. In other words, the NGOs would frame these individuals' goal, i.e. embracing the American philosophy, as beneficial for their own country and development, and let the community follow the lead of these pioneers naturally. As an example, it happened in Venezuela that people who were trained by NGOs financed by Development Agencies built the engine of the coup attempt against Hugo Chavez.

This chapter of the research leads to the following conclusions: 1) the objectives set by the United States international cooperation strategies prioritize the enactment of governments that maintain the structural adjustments and development models desired by the donors, even if these imply increased poverty for the receiving country; 2) the ALBA block is a giant threat to US hegemony in Latin America; 3) with a Sandinista government and as a member of ALBA, Nicaragua again represents a threat to national security; 4) International Development Agencies are an arm of the US national security strategy, and their mission is to align the receiving country's population with the American philosophy.

Previously in the paper, it has been described how the United States is willing to direct its bilateral cooperation to groups that defend its interests above any legitimate behavior, human right or international law. Similarly, it has been verified that this resulted in the United States often triggering cycles composed of political unrest and conflict, which were offered to the receiving countries as beneficial and altruistic. The next chapter will analyze in detail the attempted regime changes in Nicaragua. Once again, the United States was found supporting, protecting and guiding opposition groups that leveraged the creation of violence, chaos and economic sabotage to overthrow Sandinista President Ortega. This section will further detail on the role of local NGOs financed by International Development Agencies in the violent event, and how they joined forces to construct a framework within

which these violent actions were painted as necessary for the benefit of the country and / or hidden from the public eye.



Chapter III



Unexpected Uprising

Two years of steady political stability followed the 2016 election, until April 2018, when an unexpected uprising exploded. After negotiating with the Superior Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP), i.e. the leading business chamber in Nicaragua, the government published in April reforms to the Social Security Institute. These reforms triggered a violent response from the population that immediately turned into a violent clash between the opposition and the groups allied to the government. Although President Ortega revoked the reforms just a few days later, the protests went on to demand the resignation of President Ortega. Opposition media claimed a brutal government crackdown, while the government accused protesters of having caused violence and destruction in general. When fake news reporting three students being killed by the police started circulating virally on social networks, the protests unavoidably intensified. From that moment on, two sides of the story were describing the events in Nicaragua very differently.

The means to demand the resignation of the President of Ortega were based on violence, economic sabotage, chaos, manipulation of public opinion and international pressure promoted by the government of the United States. This investigation does not aim at verifying the veracity of the two versions; instead, it centers its focus on the role played by local NGOs funded by the International Cooperation Agencies created by the United States Congress, such as USAID and NED, and how they constituted the pillars for a framework in which the executors of violent actions, the creators of chaos and disorder, were framed as human rights defenders by US politicians and international media.

Reform of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute (INSS)

The Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security (INSS) was finding itself in a situation close to bankruptcy. Despite having significantly increased the number of taxpayers, the reality was that the INSS still had an annual deficit of around \$75 million. The government was in a process of dialogue with the business organization (COSEP) (Kaufman, 2019). COSEP wanted to reduce pension coverage and privatize services, while the government wanted to improve existing social security rights and ensure universal pension benefits. During the first week of April, the talks broke down (Lárcom, 2019). The private business sector proposed the following points:

- Raise the retirement age from 60 to 65 years old;
- Eliminate the reduced pension paid to retired people who were unable to complete the 750 weekly contributions required to receive a full pension;
- Eliminate the minimum pension that ensures no one has a pension lower than the minimum wage for industrial workers;
- Eliminate the annual Christmas bonus equivalent to one month's pension;
- No longer maintain the value of the pension against the national currency to compensate for the annual sliding devaluation of 5% applied by the Central Bank;
- Double the number of weekly contributions to qualify for a pension from 750 to 1500;
- Privatize the INSS medical clinics.

The Government instead proposed (Lárcom, 2019):

- Gradually increase employers' contribution by 3.25%;
- Increase employee's contribution by 0.75%;
- Increase the government's contribution for public sector workers by 1.25%;
- Remove the salary ceiling so that people earning high salaries pay social security contributions proportionate to their income;

- Deduct 5% from retired people' pensions so they receive the same health care benefits as active workers (which they currently do not);
- Keep the number of weekly contributions to qualify for a full pension at 750;
- Maintain the reduced pension, the minimum pension, and the Christmas bonus maintaining pensions' value against the annual 5% devaluation;
- Keep all INSS clinics in the public system.

La Prensa, one of the opposing newspapers to the government published on April 20, 2018, an article analyzing the crisis of the INSS. The following Graph, titled “Chart with the financial balance of the INSS of each year. With Daniel Ortega in power, the economic debacle began”, courtesy of La Prensa⁸.



INSS Superavit or Cash Deficit (In Millions of Cordobas⁹)

In 2006, former President Bolaños presented an actuarial analysis carried out by an inter-institutional technical commission to determine where the Institute was going and the measures that should be applied to keep the finances stable. The analysis concluded that

⁸ Retrieved from: <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2018/04/20/economia/2406620-por-que-el-inss-esta-en-crisis-y-su-situacion-es-peor-de-lo-que-parece>

⁹ Monetary unit of legal tender in Nicaragua

market structures and precarious wages were insufficient to cover the attention programs offered by the Institute (Alvarez, 2018).

According to Nicaraguan economist Adolfo Acevedo, the government responded to the first year of deficit in 2013 by investing in the real estate and infrastructure industry, which instead of generating profits resulted in a diminishment of the income from the investments. In addition, 2017 displayed an increase in administrative expenses from 6.6% in 2006 to 12.6%. The payroll raised from 1,543 to 4,060 from 2007 to 2017 (Interviewed by Alvarez, 2018).

On the other hand, “Telesur” a digital newspaper allied to the government published an article on the same day, April 20, 2018, stating that “Before the arrival of the Sandinista government of President Ortega, the INSS was used for acts of corruption by state officials to the detriment of the people” (“¿De qué trata la reforma al Seguro Social en Nicaragua?”, 2018). The same article outlined some alleged - and interesting- facts:

- *1993: President Violeta Chamorro (1990-1997) approved the acquisition of a Negotiable Investment Certificate (CENI) for nine million dollars in the name of the American mining company Rosario Mining, despite its face value being three million;*
- *1994: The INSS made a loan for 14 million dollars to Housing Bank to carry out constructions, but the money was never returned;*
- *2000-2003: The INSS assumed debts for about ten million dollars in an attempt to privatize retirement.*

Among the consequences of these efforts, fictitious clinics were created that received contributions without providing services. Furthermore, there was a freeze on minimum pensions as well as wages.

The pro-government digital newspaper RedVolucion.net published on March 12, 2019, an article titled “What did the newspapers say about INSS and Bolaños?” putting together the following compilation of how the issue of the INSS opposition media was addressed in the period of government of former President Enrique Bolaños (Rugama, 2019). (translation made by the author):

El Nuevo Diario:

- *The inevitable technical bankruptcy of the Nicaraguan Institute of Social Security (INSS) was something recently declared by the President of the institution, Edda Callejas (October 2002);*
- *The INSS is owed, as contributions for workers' social security, the amount of one thousand one hundred million córdobas (1,100,000,000) (October 2002);*
- *The culprits of the debt are the Government and the private company; the first owes 440 million cordobas and the second 660 million (October 2002).*

La Prensa:

- *“There is a sovereign irresponsibility on the part of the current Government of Nicaragua and the previous government, given that time they told us that there was a deficit of 34 billion córdobas” Comptroller of the Republic, Luis Ángel Montenegro said (2004);*
- *The comptroller also questioned international financial organizations such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which promoted the pension reform, and which recently claimed it as non-viable (July 21, 2004).*

Confidencial:

- *In addition to the undeniable energy crisis of every day, the new Ortega government will face in the short term another problem less visible but of equal magnitude for public finances: the social security crisis. Ortega must decide whether to pay the INSS the 6.034 million córdobas that this entity claims as its own (December, 2006).*

On Monday, April 16 2018, the INSS published reforms proposed by the government that would increase the contributions of employers by 3.25% and those of workers by 0.75%, with a 5% tax on pension benefits to improve pension benefits and health coverage of pensioners.

Evolution of Events

Students and retirees took to the streets to voice their rejection of an increase in the contributions for workers to the social security system. During the days 19, 20 and 21 of April, some groups of the political opposition mixed with students and other young people began intensifying the attacks, and soon violence arose. Infrastructure of all kinds were targeted with firearms, spell weapons and Molotov cocktails.

The police tried to restore order. An intense social media campaign was aimed at students from other cities. The campaign included a report on a student from the private Central American University (UCA) who was killed in the fights. In just three days, instead of discussing the changes in pension agreements, social networks were rapidly promoting the overthrow of the government (McCurdy and Sefton, 2019, p.79). The opposition demonstrations turned more violent with an increased participation. While the protestors denounced a brutal crackdown of law enforcement against them, government supporters complained about the vehicles burnt, or such things as looting and destruction of public buildings by vandals, with the scope of instilling fear in the country.

On April 22, President Ortega revoked the resolution of the INSS reform. On April 23, President Ortega announced the dialogue proposal and the Superior Council for Private Enterprise (COSEP) accepted it (McCurdy and Sefton, 2019). However, the violence did not end, and the peaceful demonstration quickly deteriorated into clashes between groups of protesters and groups of young people affiliated with the government, the most numerous one being the youth organization of the Sandinista “Juventud Sandinista”.

World wide a campaign was broadcasting the events taking place in Nicaragua. The New York Times published on April 26 an article describing that young men armed with cell phones and social media skills “were challenging the government after” dozens “of students had been killed” (Robles, April 2018). The COSEP urged private university students to go out to the streets to protest (McCurdy and Sefton, 2019, p.79). The immediate social media campaign described the government's social security reforms as cuts in benefits and increases in contributions, which caused more people to join the protests, with hashtags like #OccupyINSS (INSS is the Institute Nicaraguan Social Security), #SOSINSS, and #Nicaraguaspring.

On April 20, the attacks increased in almost all the main cities of the country. Violent opposition protesters with mortars and other weapons attacked the INSS buildings, municipal councils, Sandinista political offices, schools, private businesses, Sandinista residences and radio stations. The response included measures of censorship against the press, the blockade and attacks on the functioning of Internet media, in retaliation for their coverage of the protests. The transmissions broadcasted by Channel 12, News Channel of Nicaragua (CDNN23), Telenorte and Canal 51 were suspended. Channel 100% Noticias spent 6 days without transmission, which prevented it from broadcasting programs perceived as contrary to the interests of the government. On April 23, also the digital edition of the weekly Confidential suffered a blockade for seven hours.

Students, relatives, collaborators and journalists were allegedly assaulted, and took shelter inside the Cathedral. On the other hand, there is information that the same protesters made use of homemade mortars with gunpowder, stones and slings. The government affirms that vandalism and criminal groups operated within the framework of protests and university takeovers, and that they caused damage to public and private goods. In the city of Leon, the building hosting Radio Darío, which programs transmitted the protests, was completely burned down and two of the attackers lost their lives as some of the fuel carried out for the attack took fire. In the same city protesters also burned the University Center, where a person lost his life (Gonzales, 2018).

The coup attempt brought class divisions in Nicaragua to the public eye. Piero Coen, the richest man in Nicaragua, owner of all Western Union national operations and agrochemical company, personally arrived on the first day of protests at the Polytechnic University of Managua to encourage students to continue protesting, promising his support (“Dialogue in Nicaragua an Inauspicious Start”, 2018). On April 22, President Ortega asked the Catholic church to mediate in a dialogue. The violence did not stop, and theories arose around the protest representing a pretext for a coup d'etat. On April 22, opponents continued their propaganda, the public digital Confidential pre-newspaper released that 23 people had died in the protests and that number had increased to 40 (Cerde, 2018).

The Catholic Church, allied with the oligarchs for a long time, made every effort to create and sustain anti-government actions. Universities, high schools, churches, bank accounts, vehicles, tweets, and Sunday sermons were involved in unilateral effort. Pope Francis called for a peace dialogue and even called the Nicaraguan Cardinal Leonardo Brenes and Bishop Rolando Álvarez to a private meeting at the Vatican, triggering rumors that the Nicaraguan monseñores were being scolded for their obvious participation in the conflict. The church was a pillar that kept the coup alive (Ortega, 2018).

On May 3, United States Vice President Mike Pence called for repression of the protests in Nicaragua at the oath ceremony to the new United States ambassador to the OAS, Carlos Trujillo. In this same communication, the government of Donald Trump would stand firm against the prisoners of Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela to promote freedom in the hemisphere. Pence stated that the Nicaraguan government brutally repressed its own people for raising their voice in “peaceful protests” (“Vicepresidente de Estados Unidos denuncia al gobierno de Ortega, 2018”).

On May 4, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) published a report indicating that to date there were 45 dead and 400 injured.

On May 6, students who opposed the government formed a coalition. This coalition was born from a proposal of the Catholic Church, in order for the latter to have a representation in the national dialogue that would be moderated by the bishops (Lárcom, 2019).

On May 7, the National Assembly created a “Truth Commission” to investigate in detail the events that occurred in April. This commission was composed of five members: The Catholic priest Uriel Molina, the indigenous people activist Mirna Cunningham, Jaime Lopez, a former police officer and now vice-rector of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, Adolfo Ortel, former member of the Liberal party, and intellectual Cairo Amador.

On May 3, an opposition press media claimed that a Peasant Movement averse to the Government, called “The anti-canal peasants”, joined the action plan against the government (Lorio, 2018). Such action plans consisted of erecting roadblocks named “Tranques” in various parts of the country.

Eventually, on May 14, the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua announced that: “Having heard the clamors from the great majority of the society, and being aware of the seriousness of the situation in the country, despite the fact that the circumstances for a dialogue are not the best, we announce the beginning of the dialogue this Wednesday, May 16 at 10:00 am”. The Archbishop of Managua, Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, declared: “The Church will be a mediator and witness in this dialogue. We want to make it clear that the Church has no solutions for all the particular issues, but together with the different social forces, we will address those proposals that best respond to human dignity and the common good, so that they can be translated into public policies”, calling an end to the acts of violence (Made for Minds, May 2018).

On May 13, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua invited the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) with the purpose of “observing the situation of human rights in Nicaragua” and clarifying the facts related to human rights violations (“Concluye primer encuentro del Diálogo Nacional” 2018)

The National Dialogue

On May 11, the bishops presented a letter to President Daniel Ortega establishing four preconditions for the dialogue (Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, 2018):

- The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights should arrive to Nicaragua immediately to investigate and clarify the “deaths and disappearances” of people;
- Suppression of “paramilitary bodies” and “shock forces” that intimidate, coerce and attack ordinary citizens and limitations in the use of police for “any type of repression”;
- Immediately end all forms of repression against peaceful protests and guarantee the physical integrity of the people participating in the National Dialogue and all citizens;
- Give “credible signals” of willingness to negotiate for peace, respecting the human rights of all citizens and not forcing public employees to participate in political party demonstrations or “paralyze national transport” during those events.

During the same day, President Ortega replied with a letter stating that “We agree to work on each of the Points raised there, taking into account that in all of them your Goodwill is collected as Mediators and Witnesses”.

May 16 marked the first day of the National Dialogue. In his speech, the President of the Republic, together with the wife Rosario Murillo, thanked the Episcopal Conference for the effort put into establishing the dialogue. For her part, Rosario Murillo ratified the good faith and respect with which the Sandinista government had been attending this round table.

First National Dialogue

The National Dialogue shows the class interests in conflict. The Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy of the opposition was represented by a number of key figures, among which: José Adan Aguirre, leader of the private business lobby; Maria Nelly Rivas, director

of Cargill in Nicaragua and head of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States and Nicaragua; the private university students of April 19th Movement; Michael Healy, manager of a Colombian sugar corporation and head of the agribusiness lobby; Juan Sebastián Chamorro, an emblematic person of the oligarchy; Carlos Tünnermann, 85-year-old former Sandinista minister and former chancellor of the National University; Azalea Solís, director of a feminist organization funded by the US government; Medardo Mairena, a “peasant leader”, who lived in Costa Rica for 17 years before being deported in 2017 for human trafficking. Tünnermann, Solis and April 19th movement students were all associated with the Movement for the Renewal of Sandinism (MRS) (Zeese and McCune, 2019, p.119), which will be described in more detail in the next paragraph.

In the 1980s, many of the Sandinista Front's high-level leaders were, the sons and daughters of some of the famous oligarchic families, such as the Cardenal brothers and part of the Chamorro family, in charge of the Ministries of Culture and Government of the revolutionary government, respectively. After FSLN's electoral defeat in 1990, the aforementioned actors organized an exodus from the party. Along with them, some of the most notable intellectuals, military and intelligence leaders left and formed, over time, the MRS. The new party renounced socialism, blamed Daniel Ortega for all the errors of the Revolution, and, over time, took over the sphere of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nicaragua, including feminist, environmental, youth organizations, media and human rights. Since 2007, the MRS has become increasingly close to the extreme right of the Republican Party of the United States. Starting from the outbreak of violence in April, many, if not most of the sources cited by the Western media (including, disturbingly, Amy Goodman's Democracy Now), had come from this party, which has less than 2% support of the Nicaraguan electorate (Zeese and McCune, 2019, p.119)

The social and student movements represented the majority and marched and fought in the streets risking their lives in the barricades. They were represented by the April 19th University Movement, although in the following sections, this paper will show how the entrepreneurs of COSEP (Superior Council of Private Enterprise) and FUNIDES (Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development), a think tank founded by USAID, to be the real leaders of the negotiations.

According to an article by Luna: The first day of the negotiations was marked on May 16. President Ortega intervened saying: “should the National Police tolerate this type of actions? Should everyone apply the law the way that they prefer? They march here every day. Nevertheless, paramilitary gangs have occupied the Polytechnical University, and they will find an arsenal of weapons, and not only homemade ones [...]. Yesterday a group of boys, most of them drunk, assaulted a pickup truck belonging to the Ministry of Health. People want to be able to work peacefully. We have convincing evidence that the police were quartered and those that went out during the night are paramilitary gangs. [...] The police have received orders not to shoot and proof of this is the attack in Masaya, during which the police resisted for hours without shooting”. The dialogue did not reach consensus. The Civic Alliance demanded an advance of elections, to be run within 14 months, and, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs Denis Moncada, i.e. the politician with the highest rank in representation of the government, the government stated that “It is incongruous to talk about political reforms if we do not set out to guarantee the stability of the country” meaning that the Tranques issue should be dealt with first in order to move forward with the dialogue (Luna, 2018).

The National Assembly issued declaration 2-2018 in rejection of existing Tranques in different parts of the country. In the resolution, the Parliament affirmed that the Tranques affected the life and health of the people, as well as impeding free movement of people and

goods, and generating restlessness and anxiety among the Nicaraguan families (“Declaración Rechazo a los Tranques y a la Violencia”, 2018). In addition, these tranques hampered the development of trade and generated losses in economic activities and jobs, all points in clear violation of the Fundamental Rights protected in the Constitution, and, in particular, Article 31 on the right to free movement. The statement made by the Assembly was supported by 74 deputies.

Because of the tranques, at least 6,000 cargo trucks from the entire Central American region were trapped in Nicaragua for a week, according to the president of the Salvadoran Association of International Freight Carriers (ASTIC), Raúl Alfaro. Following the businessman, these trucks with merchandise could not be mobilized and, in just one week, the truckers had lost at least \$70 million. Michael Healy, president of the Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua (Upanic) and one of the representatives of the private sector in the dialogue, said that the “Tranques” also affect the producers, “but that is a cost that Nicaraguans are going to pay for that once and for all we do not have to be sitting in a dialogue looking for solutions to people who want to become dictators in this country” (“Monitoreo de Noticias Empresariales”, 2018). They maintained that these Tranques were the key to meeting their demands before the Government.

Medardo Mairena said in an interview that “the only way out” that has remained were “the streets” and that is why the tranques would remain “firm and in resistance [...] we have spoken with the leaders of the tranques and throughout the national territory and all say that the fight must continue because here the demand is that Daniel Ortega go out of power”. Mairena said there were around 156 active tranques, and those located in the northern part of the country would intensify the protest and completely prevent the circulation of vehicles (Luna and Olivares, 2018).

The Catholic church was also hardly criticized for giving support to Tranques. Monsignor Silvio José Báez, auxiliary bishop of Managua, on may 22, wrote on his Twitter account that the Tranques “are not a violent act but an expression of peaceful protest and protection”. Overall, the bishops were encouraging the popular manifestation (Baez, 2018).

The president of the Evangelical Church Clamor of God International, the Puerto Rican Jorge Raschke, criticized the work of the Catholic bishops and defended the continuity of President Ortega until the general elections of 2021. “I do not hear them calling for peace, I do not hear them asking their parishioners not to participate in any type of activity of this kind”, Raschke said at a press conference in Managua, where he advocated a “true dialogue”. “I would tell the bishops that, in order to have morals to lead a national dialogue, they should order all those priests, who I saw with white cassocks waving the population promoting the protests, to remove them”, he said (“Líder evangélico critica a obispos”,2018).

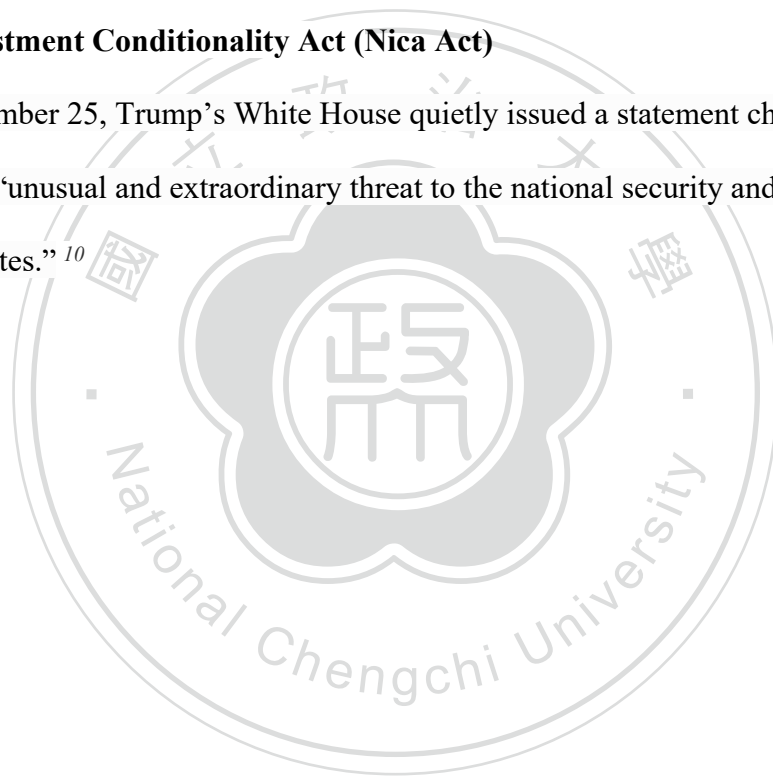
On May 21, the representatives of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Nicaragua released their preliminary report. There, they reported 76 deaths in the recent protests, 438 arrests by the authorities and three processes to jail. The dialogue reached the agreement of a commission responsible for monitoring the events and a second visit of the IACHR (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2018, p.17).

However, no agreement was reached on lifting the roadblocks. Opposition members continued to insist on the resignation of the entire government and the appointment of a transition board. The IACHR report which was rejected by the government as considered to be subjective and non-impartial. There, no criminal acts are mentioned to have been executed by the opposition. Furthermore, conclusions are based solely on testimonies from members of the opposition or extracted from media hostile to the Nicaraguan government (Chávez, 2018).

With an unsuccessful dialogue, the government implemented on July 10 the so-called “clean-up operation”, i.e. a plan to remove obstacles on streets and roads installed by the opponents. The plan consisted of an offensive executed by the “combined forces”, a group composed of police, riot police, and paramilitaries, together with state workers, with the scope of removing all the tranques in different areas of the country (“Nicaragua: Operación Limpieza, 2018). The clean-up operation was a victory of the government and removed all Tranques in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act (Nica Act)

On November 25, Trump’s White House quietly issued a statement characterizing Nicaragua as an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”¹⁰



¹⁰ *The White House. (2019, November 25). Text of a Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to the Situation in Nicaragua. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/text-notice-continuation-national-emergency-respect-situation-nicaragua/>.*



On November 27, 2018, by Executive Order 13851, I declared a national emergency pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701-1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the situation in Nicaragua.

The situation in Nicaragua, including the violent response by the Government of Nicaragua to the protests that began on April 18, 2018, and the Ortega regime's systematic dismantling and undermining of democratic institutions and the rule of law, its use of indiscriminate violence and repressive tactics against civilians, as well as its corruption leading to the destabilization of Nicaragua's economy, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, the national emergency declared on November 27, 2018, must continue in effect beyond November 27, 2019. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13851 with respect to the situation in Nicaragua.

This notice shall be published in the Federal Register and transmitted to the Congress.

DONALD J. TRUMP

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 25, 2019.

The Civic Alliance traveled to meet United States senators in order to issue sanctions against Nicaragua. On December 21, 2018, President Donald Trump signed a law conditioning US approval for the loans requested by the Government of Nicaragua in international financial institutions. This law is known as the "Nica Act" (NICA, 2018) and was previously approved by the US Congress. In a similar way, the US Congress had previously withheld aid to Latin American countries during the rule of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 and of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in the 1980s. The Nica Act also allowed for the application of sanctions against officials of the State of Nicaragua. It explicitly states that:

This bill directs the President to instruct the U.S. Executive Director at each international financial institution to use U.S. influence to oppose any loan for the government of Nicaragua's benefit, other than for basic human needs or to promote democracy, unless

the Department of State certifies that Nicaragua is taking effective steps to (United States Congress, 2018):

- *Hold free elections overseen by credible domestic and international electoral observers;*
- *Promote democracy and an independent judicial system and electoral council;*
- *Strengthen the rule of law;*
- *Respect the right to freedom of association and expression;*
- *Combat corruption, including investigating and prosecuting corrupt government officials; and*
- *Protect the rights of political opposition parties, journalists, trade unionists, human rights defenders, and other civil society activists to operate without interference.*

The Department of the Treasury shall submit to Congress a report assessing: (1) the effectiveness of the international financial institutions in enforcing applicable program safeguards in Nicaragua, and (2) the effects of specified constitutional and election concerns in Nicaragua on long-term prospects for positive development outcomes. The President may waive such requirements in the U.S. national interest.

Second National Dialogue

On February 17, 2019, a new dialogue began between some officially unidentified members of the government and private companies, with the exclusion of the Civic Alliance. Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and Apostolic Nuncio Stanislaw Waldemar Sommertag participated as witnesses to open a new route (Losaiga, February 2019).

Ortega confirmed that his government called on Saturday, February 16, to a meeting of the “big capital” businessmen, to talk about stability, security, peace and the economic crisis. He asked to be accompanied by Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and the apostolic nuncio, so

that “they would not go on to say out there that they had come to look for their militant card” (Losaiga, February 2019).

President Ortega recalled that Nicaraguan entrepreneurs had been working from 2008 until April 2018 without political or ideological conditioning. “It did not occur to us to tell them to become militants. In all the elections we had, they voted for their parties opposed to Sandinismo”, concluded President Daniel Ortega (“Discurso Íntegro de Daniel Ortega”, 2019). Ortega did not mention that the negotiating table would be held together with the Civic Alliance. He justified alleging that it would be the businessmen who should decide, because this is a principle in all negotiations.

The COSEP president, José Adán Aguerri preferred to give statements to journalists under his influence. Aguerri said the meeting is “an important effort to open a door that had been closed” (“Gobierno inicia diálogo con empresarios representativos”, 2019). The resumption of the national dialogue between the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (ACJD) and the government had its first session on February 27, behind closed doors. There would be no live broadcast, nor would there be a mass broadcast, and the media would not be present during the negotiation sessions.

“Our negotiating team is assuming the enormous and patriotic challenge that the circumstance demands and we reiterate that the commitment to political prisoners will be present at all times in this process. Freedom is a priority in negotiation”, said academic Carlos Tünnermann, delegate owner of the negotiating committee of the Civic Alliance. “Electoral reforms that guarantee fair, free and transparent elections. And justice, [...] We are confident that we are on the verge of starting an inclusive, serious, frank and informed negotiation. We appreciate the work of the Catholic Church and we are ready to start this new stage with them” (Espallargas, March 2019).

Excluding the release of political prisoners, the advancement of elections, the cessation of persecution, the return of international human rights organizations and justice for the victims of the massacre, for the Civic Alliance, the prerequisites coincided (Salazar, March 2019). On March 12 and 13, meetings were held at the Apostolic Nunciature with participation of the Government, the Civic Alliance, Nuncio S.E. Bishop Waldemar St. Sommertag, with the presence of the Special Envoy of the OAS General Secretary, Luis Angel Rosadilla (“Comunicado Conjunto sobre el reinicio”, 2019).

On March 29, the Nicaraguan government signed an agreement with the opposition Civic Alliance, ratifying its commitment to “definitively” release hundreds of people considered “political prisoners” and to annul their judicial processes. In the document, signed by all the parties and witnesses, stands the acceptance to the clause that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) facilitates the process and specifies that it will be the ICRC that will propose to the parties the “updated” list of prisoners to be released (Selser, 2019).

From the opposition, more than 640 people were imprisoned in the framework of the current crisis that began in April 2018. “The follow-up mechanism of the prisoner release process will begin by reconciling and updating the lists of the Government, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the (opposition) Civic Alliance”, the parties said in a joint statement. At a press conference, the chief negotiator of the Civic Alliance, Carlos Tünnermann, declared that the IACHR list registered 647 detainees identified as “political prisoners”, and a total of 809 since when the negotiation started, number that included 162 released on probation since February 27 (“Civic Alliance and Government to Reconcile, 2019”). The government's list is smaller. Ortega’s government recognized 340 inmates and called them “terrorists”, “coup” and “common criminals”

(“Nicaragua’s Business Leaders”, 2019). The authorities reiterated that the term of release of detainees was maintained within 90 days starting March 20.

The national dialogue did not meet the deadlines and was extended. The delegation of the Government of Nicaragua ratified the will for peace and resolution of conflicts. To date, 200 people detained for generating violence and destruction in the country were released. On April 5, 50 more people were returned to their families as part of the agreements signed with the opposition. On April 23, the Civic Alliance gave the apostolic nuncio and the representative of the OAS a letter stating that the implementation of the agreements should have begun several weeks beforehand, which lack of execution entailed a lack of will to hold a real negotiation.

“There has been no compliance with agreements for the release of prisoners and detainees, nor about agreements on guarantees and citizen rights. The Government had said that it was going to announce the way in which it plans to implement the agreements that we have already heard several times. We need proof that they are implementing the agreements” reiterated Tünnermann Bernheim.

On April 24, a press release from the delegation of the Government took place (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2019)¹¹

The GRUN (Government of Reconciliation and National Unity) Delegation informs our People and the International Community that the Information Exchange began this morning between the OAS (Organization of American States) International Expert, Mr. Cristóbal Fernández, the witnesses and companions and the negotiation table has been concluded. During this Information Exchange, the procedures established in the

¹¹ [https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinyMCE/source/2019/00-Abril/24ABR/NOTA%20DE%20PRENSA%20DE%20LA%20DELEGACION%20GRUN%20ANTE%20LA%20MESA%20DE%20NEGOCIACION%20\(ENG\)%20-%2024%20ABRIL%202019.pdf](https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinyMCE/source/2019/00-Abril/24ABR/NOTA%20DE%20PRENSA%20DE%20LA%20DELEGACION%20GRUN%20ANTE%20LA%20MESA%20DE%20NEGOCIACION%20(ENG)%20-%2024%20ABRIL%202019.pdf)

memorandum of understanding for the political-economical strengthening in Nicaragua emerged. The memorandum was undersigned by the State and the Government of Nicaragua and the OAS General Secretary on February 28, 2017. It is well-known that the Special Government Commission OAS Secretary General, created in order to accompany the efforts directed to the political-economical strengthening in Nicaragua, progressed until mid-2018, and today's Information Exchanged is part of the update to the work plans agreed upon within the context of the relationship between the country of Nicaragua and the OAS Secretary General. Mr. Cristóbal Fernández reported the objectives of the program directed to the strengthening of the electoral processes, which is developed around three main ideas:

- *Proposal for Electoral Reforms;*
- *Technical Support to the Supreme Electoral Council;*
- *Implementation of Technical Recommendations to the CSE.*

Managua, Wednesday, April 24, 2019. Delegation of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity before the Negotiation Table

United States Regime-Change Strategy

Raul Capote¹² a Cuban former CIA double agent gave an interview during which he described how the activities of United States NGOs sought regime change (Becker 2014)¹³. Capote claimed the CIA was attempting to create alternative groups to turn universities into reactionary factories. The purpose was to train them for when the “time is right”, to give birth to “the famous revolution of colours”¹⁴. For this purpose, one of the most important missions was for students to occupy leadership positions in their respective universities. The plan was to organize a popular uprising, to make these leaders look like revolutionaries wanting to make changes in the government. Capote claimed that the essence of the project did not go beyond the speech and the project was exactly the same as traditional right as the changes promoted were the changes that the right wing was promoting within the country; as well as being USAID the provider which channeled the money via NGOs.

In the specific case of Capote in Cuba, the plan was to bring someone to provoke Cuban security forces by making proclamations against the government and force them to act. When Capote mentioned the risk of death in the mission, the answer was “the best thing that could happen for us is if they kill that man, it would be perfect [...] all he had to do was provoke. They would go into the street, and there would be a clash there. If that happened, the press would do the rest, and they told me, we’re going to start a huge media campaign to demonstrate that there is chaos in Cuba, that Cuba is ungovernable”. Capote said that more

¹² In his youth he was recruited by the CIA but worked for Cuban national security. Since then, he served as a double agent (1994- 2014)

¹³ Whole interview available at:<http://sabinabecker.com/2014/03/ex-cia-agent-reveals-how-venezuelan-students-get-putschist-training.html>

¹⁴ Term used by worldwide media to describe various related movements that developed in several countries of the former Soviet Union, People's Republic of China and the Balkans during the early 2000s. The term has also been applied to a number of revolutions elsewhere, including in the Middle East.

than 80% of the information he witnessed was built or manufactured. The same was done in Syria and Ukraine.

US Regime-Change Strategies in Nicaragua

In 2007, the US redesigned its strategy given that Nicaraguan political parties aligned with its policy had lost much prestige, due to the highest levels of corruption, neoliberal policies and public contempt for class rulers to the reality of the popular classes. Therefore, it created more efficient mechanisms to finance and control organisms that gave an appearance of objectivity and that represented the social struggle, beyond politics, to give a perspective of an “independent” civil society with a human face and without links to any party (Blum, 2004).

The first success of the National Endowment for Democracy in Nicaragua was the creation of an anti-Sandinista media, which is the case of the newspaper La Prensa, covertly financed (Massing, 1987). When the Sandinistas lost the election in 1990, they were defeated by the candidate Violeta Chamorro, whose family owned the aforementioned newspaper¹⁵. During the 90's, evidence suggests that the NED had been involved with neoliberal candidates in Russia and Mongolia (Guillory, 2017). The Associate Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland University College Tom Ricker¹⁶ wrote that the US government no longer were going to finance opposition political parties in Nicaragua. Instead, they would finance the NGO civil society sector (Ricker, 2018). Even though these sources are not peer reviewed they are worth mentioning to proceed with the investigation of these NGOs.

¹⁵ The Chamorro family have been historical ally of the United States, which has allowed their members to assume the Presidency at various times

¹⁶ 20+ years' experience in nonprofit management and teaching. Special areas of focus in community development and human rights, international relations and foreign policy. International work experience in Haiti and Nicaragua.

The United States focused its strategy on international aid in Nicaragua primarily on the “promotion of democracy and human rights” for opponents of the Sandinista government. In 2017 alone, Nicaraguan civil society organizations and media companies received more than \$31 million from USAID, of which 14.5 million went to two spending categories: “Government and Civil Society” and “Conflict, Peace and Security” (USAID, 2017). USAID funded the NED and directly funded contractors such as the Washington-based Freedom House, or national media, youth, and women’s groups in targeted countries.

NED made grants with some of the money received and split the rest primarily between its four pillars: International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), American Center for International Labor Solidarity (aka Solidarity Center), and Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). The first two were controlled by the two major US political parties, the Solidarity Center was the AFL-CIO’s foreign policy arm, and CIPE was under the purview of the US Chamber of Commerce.

During the war against the Contra, the NED gave \$15.8 million to anti-Sandinista groups to frame the Sandinistas as evil and the Contras as heroes and to boost the presidential campaign of Chamorro. Between 2014 and 2018, the NED donated more than \$4 million to several civic organizations (Source: Compiled by author using data from www.ned.org).

Table 1 Total NED Funds Distributed to Nicaragua between 2014-2017

Project Focus	Number of Projects	Funding
Accountability and Governance	18	\$1,848,487
Human Rights	9	\$555,604
Freedom of Information	8	\$450,057
Democratic Ideas and Values	8	\$634,788
Rule of Law	5	\$327,843
Civic Education	6	\$311,000
Total	54	\$4,127,779

Chuck Kaufman, National Co-Coordinator, Alliance for Global Justice said that “In 2006, I led a pre-election delegation to Nicaragua and we met with the IRI. Their staff person

told us, ‘We created the Movement for Nicaragua [...] the Movement for Nicaragua presented itself as an independent civil society organization promoting democracy. It did not admit that it was created and funded by the United States government’” (Kaufman, 2019). The NED was characterized by retired U.S. Congressman, Ron Paul, as: “... an organization that uses US tax money to actually subvert democracy, by showering funding on favored political parties or movements overseas. It underwrites color-coded ‘people’s revolutions’ overseas that look more like pages out of Lenin’s writings on stealing power than genuine indigenous democratic movements” (Kanopiadmin, March 2014).

NGOs Financed by the United States and their Role in Conflict

In Nicaragua, some of the names of NED-funded organizations have been hidden. In 2017, for example, the NED provided to anonymous organization (NED, 2017):

- \$86,000 to foster “a new generation of democratic youth leaders.” According to the project description, the funds were intended, *“To promote democratic values and participation among youth in Nicaragua. Forums in schools and universities will educate students about democratic values and human rights. A network of youth leaders will foster a more active role of youth in defending democracy. Additionally, a magazine and social media will facilitate discussion on youth issues and democratic activism”*;
- \$100,000 to “Strengthening the Strategic Capacity of Civil Society to Defend Democracy”. The project description intended *“to strengthen the capacity of Nicaraguan pro-democracy activists to forge a common civil society strategy to defend democracy. Periodic publications will cover the state of democracy and the situation of human rights in Nicaragua. A group of civil society organizations and*

social movements will convene a series of forums to discuss their content and identify advocacy opportunities”;

- \$45,000 “Promoting Freedom of Expression in Nicaragua”. Project description states *“to strengthen independent media and citizen journalism in Nicaragua. A local media campaign will promote democratic values and support the networking activities and collaboration efforts of independent radio broadcasters”.*

The largest recipient of donations was Hagamos Democracia, (Let’s Do Democracy), which received more than \$525,000 since 2014. Hagamos Democracia programs were directed *“To promote citizen participation in local pro-democracy efforts in Nicaragua. The group will organize regional discussion forums to identify challenges to democracy and advocate for their solution by key decision makers. The grantee will organize a campaign to promote democratic reforms to the Electoral Law, and advocate for a more independent and democratic legislative body”* (“Advocating for a More Democratic National Assembly”, 2018). The president of this NGO, monitoring a network of journalists, is Luciano Garcia. He declared that Ortega had turned Nicaragua into a “failed state” and demanded his immediate resignation.

The Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (IEEPP), based in Managua, received at least \$162,968 from the NED between 2016 and 2018. The grants were intended to support the work of IEEPP in training activists to “encourage debate and generate information about security and violence” (NED, 2017). The president of the IEEP is Feliz Maradiaga, former World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, educated at Yale and Harvard. Maradiaga received a lot of attention from the newspaper La Prensa for having “sweated, bled and cried together with young students who have led the protests in Nicaragua that continued from April until the end of May”. In the same newspaper, he declared “I

cannot imagine a way out at this time that does not include a transition to democracy without Daniel Ortega” (Gonzalez, May 2018).

Transformational Youth Programs

Since April 18, in less than 72 hours more than 100 million anti-government messages were sent to social media users—in a country with a total population of only 6 million (Trucchi, 2018). A national and international media strategy was deployed around the events of April 19, 20, and 21, including the massive distribution of a certain version of those events, as well as their broader historical, social, and political context (Kaufman, 2019).

In 2018, the USAID budget for training civil society was \$5.2 million (Blumenthal and McCune, 2019). As Raul Capote mentioned in his interview in 2014, education was a means for the United States to model thoughts and actions of individuals to seek American interests via regime change. As a consequence, the money was used for the implementation of scholarships to learn English, , graduate studies, and courses with enticing names like “democratic values, social media activism, human rights and accountability” at exclusive private universities to attract and lure young people. The scholarships were publicized on social media, at public and private universities, and in youth base communities of the Catholic Church. Online application was available (Blumenthal, 2018).

Journalist Yorlis Gabriela Luna conducted some interviews in 2019 shedding light on the real truth unveiling the mentioned courses (2019):

I heard about it through the youth pastors at the Cathedral. All youth pastor leaders had to apply and they told me to apply on social media. They told us it was an open consortium in which IPADE, the embassy, USAID, IEEPP, the American University, (St) Thomas Moore University, and American College all participated. Once you were there, they told you about investment funds, international scholarships to the U.S., internships and

volunteer opportunities, and international travel. For them to finance you in big programs or entrepreneurship opportunities, you had to be part of the consortium. They would say it was apolitical and it was mostly aimed at development, but once you started a program, they would watch your actions closely (Interview of ALP, February 11, 2019).

It is estimated that between 2,000 and 5,000 young people were trained as democracy promoters, influencers, community journalists, and other titles (Blumenthal and McCune, 2019). The courses included project preparation, reporting, videography, photography, social media, website creation, and fundraising:

We participated in competitions and whoever had the best initiatives would get a financial reward. Given what I saw in April, among the most successful ideas on the networks during their programs, some of them involved painting poles. The idea was to paint them in blue and white. In April they also would put you in touch with sponsors outside the country to implement your own projects. Other times, they would draw you in with community projects from IPADE and other NGOs that would give you connections; in the churches they managed a lot of young people. These were the same ones who took charge in the church... the church would give you a recommendation, during the first interview to belong to the workshops you had to give references. When I applied, I gave several references from the church and another one who had participated. I realized that it was a competitive space to recruit young people. The kids who excelled were the ones who didn't appear to be politically interested. There were scouts, environmentalists, even kids from the Sandinista Youth. They would give you some assistance, travel allowance, meals at hotels, they covered transportation costs. They wouldn't pay you, but they covered your expenses and courses and gave an endorsement for you to look for work in those same NGOs. (Interview of DAR, March 7, 2019). Often these kids got to see places like Selva Negra in Matagalpa, the hotels in Bolonia in Managua, Hotel Hex in Estelí, Café Iguana in Juigalpa. Some kids were even taken out of

the country. (Interview of DAR, March 7, 2019). You wouldn't think it's for such evil purposes, but you would somehow feel deceived. It felt as if they were preparing an army for combat, and then you would see the kids who were in those courses, the leaders, and you would feel defrauded. (Interview of FML, February 6, 2019).

In her article, Luna affirmed that “this training process was the key component for spinning a web of young people with all the tools of communications and networking, trained and prepared to carry out actions in the streets that would have great symbolic impact [...]. This served to generate partial social consciousness [...]. The objective was to “de-ideologize” them and put their class consciousness to sleep, along with their sense of the historic moment; their subjectivity was colonized. It was reactionary training disguised as revolutionary training”.

Behind these leaders prepared by the United States, there was a network of more than 2,000 young people who received training with NED funds on issues including social media skills for the defense of democracy.

Directors of NGOs Financed by the United States Accused of Criminal Charges

On June 1, Christian Mendoza, aka “VIPER”, a known gang leader, was captured by the national police after alleged criminal operations with members of his gang at the Polytechnic University (UPOLI) of Managua. Viper testified as a witness in his own trial and said that the president of The Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (IEEPP) Felix Maradiaga and the president of Let's Make Democracy Luciano García arrived on Upoli on several occasions to deliver money, weapons and distributed a document titled “Strategy to save democracy in Nicaragua”, which contained guidance on how to create situations of instability for overthrow the government (“NSCAG Statement and Briefing”, 2018). Viper also stated in court that “Félix Maradiaga and Luciano García delegated the coordination of

the Upoli groups to Pío Arellano, who ordered the gang members to burn public transport units and state vehicles”.

Viper wanted to disclaim responsibility for some crimes, saying that he only came to Upoli as a specialist in computing and social networks. He said that, when he noticed that the situation got out of control, he wanted to get out of Upoli along with several students, but he was prevented from doing it because Maradiaga and Garcia ordered them to be arrested and killed because of the amount of information owned in relation to the conspiracy against the Government.

Mariadaga described the accusations as “political persecution” and “ridiculous”, but did not return to Nicaragua (Luna, July 2018). However, the Acting Assistant Secretary for U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Michael G. Kozak on June 6th, shared a tweet text: *Inspired by #HumanRights & #democracy advocates who came to the US for #OASassembly & @IACHumanRights meetings. We strongly support all human rights defenders in #Nicaragua, including Felix @maradiaga & @RadioDarioNi's Anibal Toruño, & urge the Ortega gov't to ensure their safety*” (Kozak, 2018).

On September 24, the Public Ministry issued an arrest order for Felix Alejandro Maradiaga and two others with the accusation of organized crime and financing terrorism. Following the charge, Félix Maradiaga Blandón¹⁷, *“as part of his criminal plan, managed at the national and international level, at the service and with the support of national and international criminal groups, financial resources that he gained and channeled using as a means of financing the Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policies (IEEPP)”* (Estado de Nicaragua, 2018).

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=34426>

- The accusatory libel stated that Maradiaga, *“developed under the facade of “leadership courses”, recruitment methods by which participants were induced to violence, radicalism and extremism to cause chaos and terror, as well as resizing social unrest against the government's public policies, using social networks as a mass media channel to generate serious alterations to public order”*;
- According to the Prosecutor's Office, Maradiaga Blandón was *“one of the promoters of the Civil Society Leadership Institute project, which aimed at training young people and people from different departments, under the facade of “leaders in the struggle for human rights and democracy”, which was in fact a method for training terrorist activities”*;
- The training consisted in some cases of topics such as “digital security”, with which systems engineers taught people how to create digital platforms with false profiles and the diversion of the IP (Personal Identifier), so that the origin of the source could not be traced and thus contribute to creating the media terrorism that affected Nicaraguans through social networks;
- Maradiaga was also accused of using to destabilize the country a manual called “Strategy to save democracy in Nicaragua”, which was implemented at the beginning of April through the digital platforms “Nicaragua 2.0” and “Mission Bosawás”.

On October 4 2018, the representative of the Public Ministry, Jorge Luis Ruby, presented before the Ninth Judge of Judgment Edgard Altamirano new evidence against Cristhian Joshua Mendoza, in which the Executive Director of the IEEPP Felix Maradiaga was involved. This new evidence indicated that Maradiaga had used this agency to receive financing from international drug trafficking and organized crime. According to the claim, Maradiaga had met several times in the IEEPP offices with the drug trafficker Julio Cesar

Basbarella, aka “The King of Synthetic Drugs” and also with “The Mexican” (“Conferencia Episcopal”, 2018).

The investigation carried out by DAJ (Direction of Judicial Assistance) identified that Maradiaga had three sources of financing: drug trafficking structures led by Basbarella and El Mexicano, in addition to funds obtained from USAID and other American organizations. With these funds, Maradiaga financed “terrorist” activities that were masked with courses and diplomas called “Democratic Governance” received by young people.

Student Delegation Visit to Washington

In June, 2018, Maradiaga directed a student delegation to Washington to denounce the Sandinista government before the General Assembly of the American States. These student leaders raised claims against Ortega in Washington, pressing the Trump administration to help them overthrow the president. Among the US officials who received the students was USAID director Mark Green. The trip of Nicaraguan students to Washington was paid by Freedom House (Dada, June 2018), a NED partner funded by the United States government.

Freedom House developed an itinerary for students with a final photo session with some of Washington's Republicans, among whom Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. In Managua, student leader Harley Morales felt denounced great disgust at the appearance of his partners at the Capitol stating that “it was terrible, they (Cruz, Rubio and Ros-Lehtinen) are the extreme Republican right” [...] we are very dissatisfied with this trip; they were paid by the United States and an agenda was imposed. We have made a terrible image”. Morales admitted that the pressure of the interests of the powerful outsiders on the protesting student protesters was intensifying. “All movements now have advisors, agitators. Children of politicians, entrepreneurs... They all have a very clear political line”. (Dada, 2018).

United States Vice President Mike Pence also said on Twitter that “State-sponsored violence in Nicaragua is undeniable. Ortega’s propaganda fools no one and changes nothing. 350+ dead at the hands of the regime. The US calls on the Ortega government to end the violence NOW and hold early elections—the world is watching!” (Pence, 2018). Kenneth Roth¹⁸ claimed on his personal Twitter account that “According to Nicaragua's Pres Ortega, everyone is to blame for the killing of some 300 demonstrators against his corrupt and repressive rule other than himself” (Roth, 2018).

Manipulation of Death Toll by Human Rights Organisations

The United States Congress, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and international “soft power” organizations such as Human Rights Watch had placed their solid confidence in the numbers registered by the two non-governmental human rights organizations, i.e. the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), and the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights (ANPDH).

The ANPDH was founded in Miami in the 80's through the financing of National Endowment for Democracy (NED) (Zeese and McCune, July 2018), with the purpose of representing the Contras as victims of the Sandinistas (De Volo, 2004). Today, the group remains a preferred political weapon against the Sandinistas. In an interview with the american journalist Max Blumenthal, Ramón Avellán, Police Commissioner of Masaya, told that ANPDH staff members repeatedly went to his police station along with opposition activists to beg him to surrender. This act, which, according to Avellan, would have resulted in the total seizure of the city by the armed opposition, included a strong representation of local “criminal groups¹⁹” (Blumenthal, August 2018).

¹⁸ American attorney who has been the executive director of Human Rights Watch since 1993

¹⁹ Term used by Commissioner Avellan

Despite the mentioned facts, USAID, through the Pan American Development Foundation-PAFD, funded the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH). In the same article, Blumenthal claimed that three students from the National University of Nicaragua (UNAN) testified that the legal advisor of CENIDH, Gonzalo Carrión, was present with students and opposition militants while taking the campus and witnessed the violence with which they acted.

Independent researcher Enrique Hendrix published on July 8, 2018, a detailed study of the death toll in Nicaragua. He found that human rights groups in Nicaragua had included in the count the unnatural deaths that occurred throughout the country between April 19 and June 25. According to Hendrix, reports by CENIDH and ANPDH were padded with the deaths of “victims of traffic accidents, altercations between gangs, murders by robbery, those killed by accidental firing of a firearm and even more absurdly, a suicide” (Hendrix, 2018).

Hendrix found that seven categories of deaths were included in the Human Rights reports. All categories except for one were totally unrelated to government violence. They included the following:

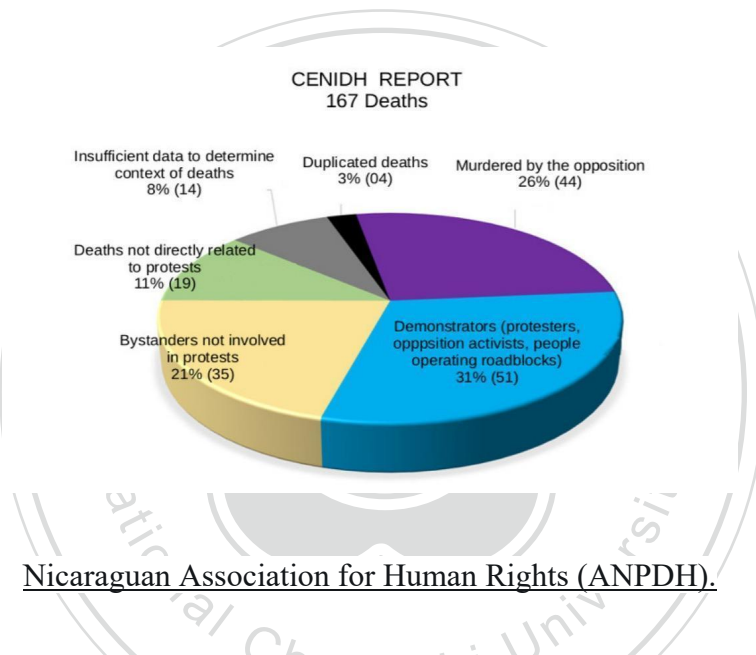
- Duplicated names;
- Deaths unrelated to protests;
- People murdered by the opposition;
- Opposition activists, including those involved in the violent tranques;
- Innocent bystanders;
- Names without significant data to determine the cause of death;
- Deaths omitted from each list.

The Human Rights organizations began their work of compiling the names of the deceased citizens within the context of the protests. Three organizations stood out: The

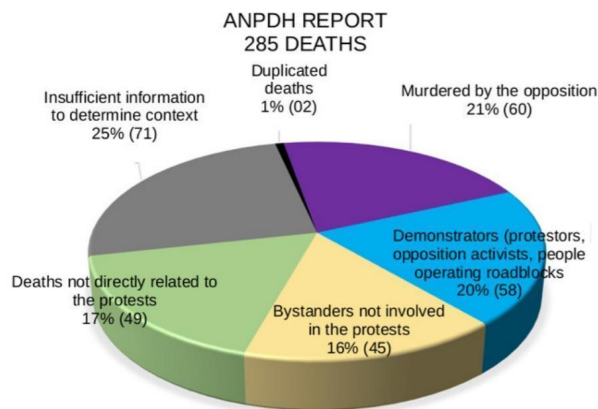
Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), the first body to pronounce itself; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), whose participation was requested by the government of Nicaragua on May 13; the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights (ANPDH), the body that has been most active in relation to the death list (Hendrix, 2018).

The following graphs are taken from Hendrix Study *Monopolizing death: Or how to frame a government by inflating a list of the dead* (2018):²⁰

Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH)

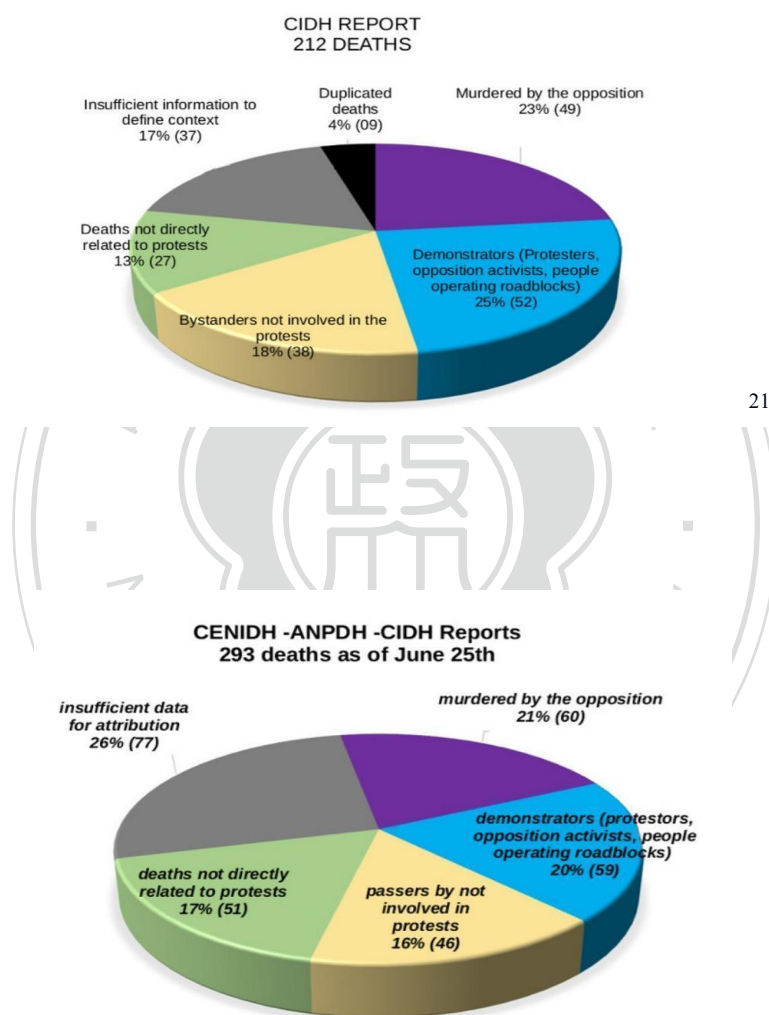


Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights (ANPDH)



²⁰http://www.tortillaconsal.com/nicaragua_monopoly_of_death.pdf

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)



The above graphs suggest that human rights organizations took control over the lists recording the overall deaths of the citizens in the country, and used the variables within those

²¹ Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (CIDH) Spanish name of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

lists to bloat the number of deaths in the protests. The latter count was in fact inflated by 53%, which can be disaggregated as follows: 3% repeated names; 20% deaths not directly related to the protests; and 30% cases with incomplete, imprecise or non-existent data.

The death toll was the centerpiece of the July 25 harangue of Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to the US House of Representatives. The republican Congresswoman, while trying to get support for a bipartisan resolution, mentioned: “Mr. President, four hundred and fifty! This is the number of Nicaraguans killed by the Ortega regime and their thugs since April of this year” (Blumenthal, 2018).

Media Coverage

The main means of communication in Nicaragua are by the time of writing still controlled by the opposition. The two main newspapers are La Prensa which, as mentioned, was funded by NED in the 1980's, and El Nuevo Diario. The New Yorker states in an article that La Prensa “is the only daily newspaper in the country that stands in opposition to the government” (Anderson, April 27 2018). It also presents the digital newspaper *Confidencial* as a brave and independent news source run by a small editorial team. The editor-in-chief of *Confidencial* is Carlos Fernando Chamorro²², son of former president Violeta Chamorro.

As Tom Ricker (2018) points out, *Confidencial*'s framework of taking on Ortega with “uncommon valor” is funded, at least in part, by the National Endowment for Democracy. In 2014, for example, INVERMEDIA²³ received a \$60,000 (Perry, 2019, p.216) grant in order to “foster independent digital media in Nicaragua” and an additional \$175,000 in subsequent years. Chamorro's “[...] non-stop, brazen propaganda accuses President Daniel Ortega of attacking democracy while Chamorro himself uses *Confidencial* to destroy meaningful

²² Only Nicaraguan member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)

²³ Private company, producer of the newspaper *Confidencial*

democratic processes by constantly and deliberately misleading its readers” (Richards, 2019). The international media repeats what the local media financed by the United States publishes.

Social Media

After the Facebook privacy scandal in 2016, its Chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg held many hearings at a House Financial Services Committee. In Nicaragua, during the first few days of turmoil, Facebook became the main source of fake news in Nicaragua. Young Nicaraguans would share Facebook ads which, once shared, would no longer be categorized as fake. Through this method, a number of false news reports were disseminated throughout the country, among which the reporting of deaths that had not occurred and even accusing the government of installing snipers to kill civilians (Luna, 2019).

This explosion of digital information stirred a sense of solidarity among the youth and society for the “defenseless protesters” and against the government. This kind of narrative holds a frame in Nicaraguan society, because of the long and heroic struggle of students against the Somoza dictatorship. It did not matter so much that the events were untrue; what mattered was that they had achieved the capacity to repeat such messages hundreds of thousands of times, through all media outlets available to the Nicaraguan people (Hendrix, 2018). Among the scenes posted, there were fake photographs and photos from other countries and other times, along with manipulated videos and still shots, which were spread as Facebook ads through sophisticated campaigns (Trucchi, 2018).

As former president Ronald Reagan paid \$300,000 in the Contra affairs in the 1980’s to turn the steering wheel of media publications, evidence seems to show the same strategy in 2018 events.

The Concealed Reality

The Spontaneity of the Conflict

Private university students marched against the social security reforms that allegedly threatened the rights of workers and pensioners. On April 18, the first day of protests, a coordinated social media campaign was launched, which began immediately and simultaneously in several cities, along with thousands of fake profiles and sponsored ads on Facebook and millions of WhatsApp messages (Lárcom, 2019).

The media strategy induced by large corporations presented government reforms as regressive. COSEP, together with non-governmental organizations, called for protests against Ortega's reforms, urging workers to march along with the aforementioned students (Losaiga and Bejarano, 2018). This gave rise to a series of violent events that destroyed public order throughout the country. The groups also seized the universities and created organized crime centers based in Upoli university. Some opposition activists also took part in student protests. In several parts of Nicaragua, hospitals, government, municipal offices and universities were under attack.

By April 19, it was already too late. The coup d'etat was underway and its leaders had taken control over the frame nationally and internationally, with the help of corporate media and human rights groups aligned with US interests. Indeed, there is evidence to consider that the first deceased were police officer Jilton Manzanares who died of a shotgun and 17-year-old Richard Pavon who died of a bullet for trying to defend the Town Hall of the city of Tipitapa that was under attack (“Protestas en Nicaragua dejan tres muertos”, 2018).

Criminal Gangs

Increasingly more tranques were erected as the days went by; however, they were often not operated or guarded by common Nicaraguan citizens protesting, instead by criminal

elements (Barahona, November 2018). The employment of criminal gangs to create chaos to overthrow governments was not a new strategy. In fact, it had already been documented in other Latin American countries and in Nicaragua already in the past (Lárcom, 2018).

The Polytechnic University (UPOLI) student Verónica Gutiérrez, spoke in an interview (Goette-Luciak, 2018) about episodes of deception occurred during the first days of the protest, as people who were not students joined the student protests, heavily armed controlling the third floor of said university. Additional details about the UPOLI case were provided by the Viper, mentioned in the above paragraphs, who confessed his connections with his own gang and with organized crime in general. Viper used Upoli as a meeting place, bringing up to 35 armed people, preparing Molotov cocktails and urging young people to attack government symbols. The third floor was prohibited to those who occupied the university, except for the Viper gang. It was reported that some of the captured victims were tortured on the third floor (Ramírez, 2018).

The Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS)

From a political organization and former political party opposing the government is student Dania Valeska, who remained at the center of the stage through her participation in the 24-hour siege massacre at UNAN. In the course of that event, in a video, she called her mother to apologize, as if she was about to be killed. Some felt that the incident was scheduled to hide the Morrito massacre, an incident led by the opposition in a remote area of the country that left behind five dead people, among which four policemen and one teacher (Moore, November 2018). Valeska was arrested by the National Nicaraguan Police Force and sent to El Chipote prison, where she gave testimony in an interview recorded on July 20 (Lárcom, 2018).

In the testimony, she reported that, during the occupation of the National University (UNAN), she worked with a young woman responding to the name Yesbeling, aka Pancha. Reportedly, among those who took over the university, Panche enjoyed mid-level authority in the MRS. Pancha confessed to Valeska that she was in regular contact with Dora Maria Tellez, i.e. the founder of MRS, and that she had received funds from her to be used by the UNAN occupants. Inside the university order was kept by means of a hierarchical organizational structure: those students occupying the lower stories of the building did not benefit from these funds, and were reported to be complaining about the lack of water and food; on the other hand, robberies were taking place in the upper floors of the university.

Evidence stands out of the participation of MRS in the UPOLI occupation. Verónica Gutiérrez, Leonel Morales and other representatives of UNEN gave a press conference on April 26, 2018 (Jarquin, April 2018), denouncing the occupation of their university by people who were not students, claiming they were being funded by the MRS, who reportedly brought weapons, clothing and food to said people. Students reported seeing several MRS leaders in UPOLI during this period, among which Victor Hugo Tinoco, meeting with those covering high-level positions in the occupation.

The Catholic Church

During Sunday masses, support was being raised by the Civic Alliance toward the collective opposition to the government. In a private meeting held at the beginning of June 2018, the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua (CEN) delivered a letter (Delcid, June 2018) to Daniel Ortega stipulating the conditions to be met for an agreement. Additionally, CEN Secretary Monsignor Mata made a public call to President Ortega to resign, threatening him of his safety or that of his family. Overall, the Catholic leaders placed themselves in a serious conflict of interest.

Among them, in particular Monsignor Báez “emerged as the face of the opposition, with a dominant presence in social communication networks” (Robles and Malkin, July 2018). He argued that there was no contradiction between the functions of mediator and defender: “one thing that should be clear is that being mediators of a dialogue does not make us neutral before injustice, before human rights violations, before the death of innocents” (Robles and Malkin, July 2018).

In some cases, groups of people turned their back to the Church leaders. An example of this occurred during July 2018 in Diriamba, a location about one hour from Managua, where Catholic exponents, including Monsignor Baez, traveled to rescue a group of “Franciscan missionaries and paramedics”, allegedly trapped in the basilica. Upon arrival, they were approached by an enraged crowd that accused the missionaries and paramedics of being murderers. Monsignor Baez's shirt was torn and he was harmed by a cut on his arm (Lárcom, 2019, p.48).

The above facts were a direct consequence of opposition and criminal elements taking control of local churches in locations around Nicaragua. Some sources describe that people discovered arsenals of weapons in the churches (Lárcom, 2019, p. 48), and a large number of stolen medical supplies was also found. Moreover, at least one person had been kidnapped and held for several days in a church until people rescued her. Finally, it must be highlighted that, the residents of Diriamba endured more than a month of violence in the local barricades without any priest or bishop coming to their help or rescue (Lárcom, 2019).

While the news of the minor injury suffered by Monsignor Báez spread throughout the world, the underlying causes did not receive much attention, and the enraged crowd was internationally labeled as “paramilitaries” (Agren, July 2018).

Several sectors were identified for their long-term participation in this apparently sudden “uprising”: The United States government, through USAID, NED, certain members of Congress and the NICA Law; NGOs and a youth movement funded by the NED and USAID; the Superior Council for Private Enterprise represented by COSEP; criminal gangs; some university students; the Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS); and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Violent Protests

While opposition media and international media labeled them as peaceful protests, the crisis was fundamentally based on the violence carried out by groups opposed to the government. According to Amnesty International, the largely peaceful protests on the social security reform provoked an exaggerated reaction from the state, which used force against protesters who respected the law or had very limited weapons carried exclusively for purposes of self-defense. In the same way, organizations such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) echoed the same words, claiming that armed protesters only owned “homemade mortars filled with gunpowder” (“An evaluation of and response to Amnesty International’s” 2018, p.9).

Some of the attacks from the opponents directed to specific people included the following:

- Leonel Morales, another UNEN representative, also spoke strongly at the press conference, and later in the national dialogue, against the occupation of the university by people who were not students and the financing of weapons by the MRS in UPOLI. In retaliation, he was attacked by criminal gangs. They dragged him out of his girlfriend's house, beat him, shot him three times and left him dead in a ditch on

the side of the road (Dick and Emanuelsson, June 2018). He was rescued and survived after months of medical treatment;

- On June 15, Sandinista lawyer and activist Marlon Medina Tobal was shot dead while walking along a roadblock in the city of León (“Militantes sandinista es asesinado”, 2018).

The Following events were published by the newspaper “La Tercera Información” on June 26, 2018, by journalist Alex Anfruns:

- On May 28, Masaya prosecutor's office was set on fire, while police reported an attack carried out to their offices;
- On May 29, protesters set fire to the offices of Tu Nueva Radio Ya, for being considered a pro-government instrument;
- On May 31, the offices of Caruna, a financial services cooperative, were burnt down;
- On June 9, Radio Nicaragua was destroyed by a fire. That same day, a young Sandinista activist died in a motorcycle accident while trying to dodge a roadblock in San José de Jinotepe, Carazo;
- On June 12, a gang brutally kidnapped and tortured 3 workers at Colegio San José in Jinotepe. In the context of the clashes, 2 historic Sandinista militants were killed. In addition, that day the mayor's house was ransacked and burned;
- On June 15, Sandinista lawyer and activist Marlon Medina Tobal was shot dead while walking along a roadblock in the city of León. On the same day, protesters armed with mortars were found in the city of Jinotepe;
- On June 18, criminals threw a burning tire inside the house of Rosa Argentina Solís, a 60-year-old communal leader for having fully supported the government of constitutional president Daniel Ortega and remembering that he had "won the

elections by majority vote”. On the same day, the house of the mother of Sandinista deputy José Ramón Sarria Morales was subjected to arson. Subsequently, 9 members of his family were kidnapped and tortured;

- On June 22, an anti-Sandinista group opened fire to Master Mayra Garmendia's house in Jinotega and set fire to the building where her family was. The family was eventually able to escape;
- On June 22, an anti-Sandinista group shot at the house of Sandinista teacher Mayra Garmendia in Jinotega and set fire to the building where her family was, who was able to run away.

The following events were published by other newspapers:

- Yener Berrios was intercepted on his motorcycle in a roadblock by two men armed with guns. After the men found his FSLN card, he was kidnapped and taken to the third floor of the UPOLI where he was tortured by Viper and his equipe members. After hitting him, the man was undressed and the opponents sprayed acid between his genitals, shouting "Orteguista" (i.e. someone who identifies with Ortega) and "damn police", while others said “Viper, kill him!”. He was tortured until 2:00 a.m. the next day (Gomez, October 2018);
- On June 18, Sandinista activist Yosep Joel Mendoza Sequeira, a resident of the Simón Bolívar neighborhood of Matagalpa, was held captive and tortured. On the same day, a video was broadcast through social media where a young woman accused of sympathizing with the government was being humiliated and treated brutally during an interrogation Nicaragua:(“Nicaragua: Violent Opposition Torture the Poor”, 2018);
- On June 21, after being held in the Zaragoza and Subtiaba tranques in Leon, the young Sandinista youth activist Sander Bonilla was tortured under the impassive supervision of a priest (“Nicaragua: Violent Opposition Torture the Poor”, 2018);

- The police stations of two major cities, Masaya and Jinotepe, were attacked with mortars, Molotov cocktails and gunfire every day for more than a month (“An evaluation of and response to Amnesty International’s” 2018). The police, ordered by President Ortega not to confront the protesters, remained in their barracks. The police station and the municipality of El Morrito, Department of Río San Juan were attacked by people armed with assault firearms from a caravan of vehicles. Four police officers and a school teacher were killed, and nine police officers were kidnapped and threatened of death before being released;
- On July 15, Gabriel Vado Ruiz, specialized policeman in the anti-narcotics unit, was brutally tortured and then burned in front of a tranque (“Terroristas en Masaya asesinan” 2018)).

Differently from what was claimed by the opposition, of the 253 deaths confirmed related to the crisis, 48 were identified as Sandinistas and 22 as police officers. These figures may surprise some readers, as they contrast with the 31 deceased people who belonged to “groups of self-called protesters. For what concerns the remaining 152, reliable information about their political affiliation is not available. In total, 140 deaths are attributed to the hundreds of blocks erected by the opposition throughout the country (CVJP Report, page 6). This report does not cover the total kill count by the government.

Some well-known Sandinista figures seem to have been killed because of their support to FSLN. Lenin Mendiola, for example, was shot dead by armed criminals who participated in a march run by the opposition in Matagalpa on August 11, 2018 (Alvarez, 2018).

According to the report (page 31) published by the Truth, Justice and Peace Commission (CVJP) in July 2018, “55% of municipalities (84 of 153) suffered serious damage to public infrastructure by a total amount of almost 28 million dollars. The

municipalities most affected by the criminal groups were Masaya (27% of total damage), Managua (19%) and Matagalpa (17%)”.

Although Nicaraguan police were accused of firing bullets at protesters, there is evidence that such actions were carried out instead by non-police. For example, on May 30, peaceful Mother's Day protesters were tragically killed by snipers. The police were accused of these murders, while the source of the shooting remains undetermined. During the same day, twenty policemen suffered injuries caused by sniper bullets (Sefton, June 2018).

The Road Blocks “Tranques”

The road blocks required a sophisticated organization, and they were linked to the other opposition activities in the respective areas, including violent attacks against the police. Generally, where there was a sophisticated network to organize the tranques, as in Masaya or Jinotepe, there were also people specifically responsible for the organization of supplies, which included money, food, medical supplies, alcohol or drugs, weapons and ammunition.

Urban tranques were handled by a mixture of local and foreign people, and the latter were often brought to lead the operation or to behave more aggressively with drivers and bystanders. It was reported that in one of the cities wages for operators were C300 to C500 (\$9 to \$16) per night, approximately double the daily salary of a farm worker (Witschge, August 2018).

The purpose of the tranques was mainly defensive / offensive: to defend an area, preventing the entrance of the police and to serve as a meeting point for the attacks. On the main roads, the primary objective was to prevent or limit traffic from passing or extorting money. In most cases, a physical hole facilitated the passage of people and motorcycles, while limiting larger vehicles. When a large area was enclosed by tranques, such as, for

example, Monimbó, Masaya, separate medical facilities and a headquarters were available to those directing the tranques, often located in houses or in the local Catholic church.

The tranques created “forbidden areas” in the cities, preventing entry to the police or state agencies and therefore lacking law enforcement. The tranques were means to control the resident population, who was subject to verification of their documentation, threats and, in many cases, theft, violence or even kidnapping, rape, torture and death when trying to pass through the tranques. Occasionally, gangs threatened the inhabitants at night or looted or set fire to their homes (Lárcom, 2019).

The tranques paralyzed the economy, not only of Nicaragua, but also of neighboring countries. More than 400 truck drivers from several Central American countries were blocked in Jinotepe traps for more than a month, being unable to transport the goods to their destination or more simply get away (Ana, July 2018). Eventually, the ambassadors of their countries and others insisted on a meeting with the president of the Nicaraguan legislature, Gustavo Porras. The situation had become an international incident, and the ambassadors demanded that the Nicaraguan government do something to free the truckers and their vehicles. Until then, the police had remained in their barracks by order of President Ortega.

In some cases, the police were accused of murdering Nicaraguan citizens, while this would have been almost impossible. For example, the Velásquez family in Managua was burned alive in the Carlos Marx neighborhood and the police were accused of their murder. However, the whole neighborhood was surrounded by tranques and not even firefighters could enter. A video allegedly showing the police entering the neighborhood went viral, but that was later shown to have been filmed on April 21, 2018, weeks before the tragedy took place (Lárcom, 2019).

Political Prisoners

Political prisoners are, according to the opposition media, a selected group composed of the following categories: peasant leaders, student leaders, representatives of the local expressions of April 19 Movement, who raised their voices to claim for truth, justice and freedom after the “Orteguist massacre”; journalists “illegally imprisoned for exercising their profession”, denouncing the violations committed by the dictatorship; ex-military or historical combatants “who broke with the orteguism”; and citizens who raised their voice “against repression” (Cerdeña, 2018).

The Nicaraguan government was also accused of retaining and torturing up to 1,000 political prisoners who had done nothing but expressing themselves peacefully against the government (“*Crisis en Nicaragua: más de 100 detenidos*”, 2019). In February 2019, the Truth, Justice and Peace Commission²⁴ (Comisión de la Verdad, Justicia y Paz, 2019) published a report confirming the presence of 438 people imprisoned in the main jails of the country following the violent events of 2018. New reviews made in January 2019 confirmed that 76 people had been declared innocent, leaving a total of 362 inmates (page 15 of the report).

Analysis Chapter III

The crisis that burst in Nicaragua in April 2018 was characterized by the clash between the two sides of a population that was already polarized since the 19th century. On the one hand, there was the government with its supporters; on the other one, a coalition formed by businessmen, traditional oligarchs, a student movement, and the high ranks of the Catholic Church was demanding the resignation of President Ortega. What started the

²⁴ Nicaraguan commission created by the National Assembly to investigate the deaths and damages caused during the protests initiated on April 18, 2018.

conflict was the inevitable reform of the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute that had been pushed back for numerous consecutive government mandates. The spread of false news on social media during the early days of the conflict triggered a sudden escalation. The events were fueled mostly by COSEP instigating a huge student population to engage into violent protests, that were instead framed by the international media as peaceful and carried out by innocent civilians.

Despite all the versions of the story broadcast by different media sources, the reality was that the country was immersed in an environment of chaos. Through the construction of the Tranques and various other acts of violence, the opposition managed to paralyze almost the entire Nicaraguan economy and leveraged this as a main weapon to demand the resignation of President Ortega. The violence was a means to stop economic growth, the development, violate the security system and create chaos, which resulted in a sharp decline in tourism and foreign investment. The consequent capital flight and job losses were, they claimed, the necessary price that all Nicaraguans had to pay to achieve the resignation of president Ortega.

Evidence emerging from the testimony of CIA former undercover agent Raul Capote suggests similarities between the events that occurred during 2018 in Nicaragua and American-funded NGO operations in other countries. Capote explained that the objective was to recruit young university students behind the promise of fully paid education in order to turn them into leaders for when “the time is right”, i.e. popular uprisings where these young leaders would become revolutionaries. Continuing with Capote, the instructions provided that, to achieve this uprising, it was necessary to provoke the authorities, and when that would happen the media would do the rest and spread a feeling of chaos and ungovernability. The USAID, especially through NED, spent millions of dollars in Nicaragua to grant the education of young students in topics such as civic participation to local pro-democracy

efforts, security and violence, governance, democratic ideas and values, and many more. The NGO also devoted some funding to building anonymous organizations to offer training for pro-democracy activists, strengthen independent media and citizen journalism and social media activities.

The amount of this investment, plus the time that was spent on it, can be claimed to be devoted to, as some journalists argued, thousands of trained and aligned students for when, as Capote said, “the time is right”, in reactionary spaces and social networks. If analyzed carefully, the protests were triggered by the INSS reforms, reforms that however were revoked three days later, so it would seem intuitive that the protests should have stopped. Another interesting fact is that, on the first day, the protests were carried out by university students who did not have direct relations with the outcomes of the reforms. Despite the fact that the media framed it as a spontaneous rebellion, evidence leads to consider the authenticity of the statements of what the inside-interview revealed about the NED’s courses, i.e. it “felt as if they were preparing an army for combat”. In a similar way, former US Congressman Ron Paul had also said that NED was a tool to subvert democracy and underwrite color-coded revolutions that looked more like Lenin’s writing on stealing power than democratic movements.

Further evidence points to Felix Maradiaga and Luciano Garcia, presidents of two NGOs that offered training courses for young leaders, who were also found guilty of providing money and weapons to the gang members who took over the Polytechnic University (UPOLI). The two NGOs presidents handled a manual called “Strategy to Save Democracy in Nicaragua”, which contains guidance on how to create chaos. Examples of the strategies included in the guidebook were burning public transportation and state vehicles in order to create instability and terror. Without need to take a deeper dive into the veracity of the witness’s testimony, the manual represents a common tool in the traditional methods used

by the American institutions to seek violent ways of achieving their objectives in Nicaragua. Examples of other similar instructions books include: “Small Wars Operations”, during the Dollar Diplomacy to protect capitalist economy; “Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare” to the Contras on how armed propaganda could build political support; “Freedom Fighter’s Manual”, airdropped to cause civil disorder and sabotaging the economy; and last but not least a State Department report named “Bringing war to Nicaragua”.

Felix Maradiaga also led the student delegation to Washington to seek political support from the United States. Interesting fact is that this trip was paid by the US NGO Freedom House and among the US officials who received them was USAID director Mark Green. One of the student leaders in Nicaragua affirmed that, during the trip, the pressure on the student protesters to achieve outsiders’ interests intensified, an agenda was imposed and all the next protesting movements were endowed with specifically selected “advisors and agitators”. Parallely, the crimes allegedly committed by Maradiaga were coming to light and those US government officials supporting him contributed to the creation of his public image as a “human right defender”.

International Development Agencies of the United States were furthermore directing funds to independent media. As Capote said, it was needed to provoke the authorities to trigger a popular uprising, and subsequently the media would be in charge of framing a campaign depicting chaos and ungovernability. In Nicaragua, indeed, the protest began with the destruction of public and private properties such as town halls, radio stations and government institutions. It is worth mentioning that no media attention was dedicated to the 17-year-old boy who died defending the town hall of his city under attack and the police officer who was shot and died. Overall, the media headlines were aimed at publicly framing the protests as peaceful, and this fake news was the main source of public information.

CENIDH and ANPDH were two further institutions founded and are financed by the American development agencies. As previously verified during this investigation, these entities had the objective of distorting the data which the United States used to leverage as an excuse to intercede and apply economic sanctions.

Many different versions of the same events emerged during the Nicaraguan crisis. To shed some light on it, this chapter uncovered the following facts: 1) the United States invested millions of dollars over the years in creating a mass of students with a pro-American and anti-Sandinista vision; 2) the media framed the regime change process as a peaceful protest while the reality was very different; 3) the main weapons against Ortega were chaos, violence and sabotage of the economy; 4) The United States leveraged the human rights NGOs that they themselves financed to get involved in the conflict and apply economic sanctions.

Conclusion

This paper aims to reveal the mechanisms deployed during the attempted regime change in Nicaragua in 2018. By presenting this data alongside the long history of United States interactions in Nicaraguan politics, the similarities can clearly be seen. The evidence provided in the final section, while still raw and contested, demonstrates a specific framework through which the 2018 destabilization of Nicaragua occurred.

First, the research uncovered that international cooperation models on a framework that doesn't naturally originate from the mere needs of the recipient countries; instead, it is built on a scaffolding constructed on the own experiences (and objectives) of the donors. As suggested by Goffman, the importation of development models such as the Marshall Plan and the Washington Consensus were imported to Latin America and proposed together with messages that would logically suggest benefit for the recipients through the application of a

new international order. However, Bateson's theories reveal that the message sent by the donors of aid and development is more often than not hiding a much more unfavorable destiny for the recipients.

Generally speaking, from a theoretical standpoint, international cooperation is guided by human intentions, and the creation of social frameworks constitutes a pillar of it. Via its mutating and numerous interpretations of development over time, international cooperation has created specific frameworks of interpretation for receiving countries to be nestled with cooperation messages and practices. The permanent activity of the donors in the recipient countries establishes the edges between which the former impose control and limit the activity of the latter. The framework created by international cooperation provides a logical interpretation for recipients, but also limits alternative interpretations.

The next piece of the puzzle underlines the prevalence of political and military objectives in American international aid strategies: internal security is a priority and it commands that the United States have a "moral duty" to intervene in territories considered a threat to it. From this standpoint, international cooperation is defined as a political weapon: first, with the objective of preventing risks from entering the borders; secondly, as an international strategy aimed at protecting the world from humanitarian threats. As international security is the main outcome of international strategy, it naturally follows that the United States guides international aid under its own interpretations of solidarity and threats, placing its political security above any legitimate behavior.

Interestingly, this research outlines how each plan for United States foreign policies in Latin America included a message of cooperation and development, while the reality was always a consequent political disaster. The "Dollar Diplomacy" intended to modernize the country, instead it brought about a coup d'état, military occupation and confrontations. In

other words, the United States instrumentalized foreign aid tools to willingly cause violent events which outcome would benefit the United States and the Nicaraguan oligarchy. The “Good Neighbor Policy” came with the promise of non-intervention and exchange of merchandise, however it soon began arming, training and guiding the National Guard - internationally accused of violation of human rights -, with the objective of organizing a coup d'état which would result in 43 years of family autocracy. Despite its bloody governance methods, which included up to the violation of the human rights of the Nicaraguan people, this new (imposed) government would grant the American interests and conserve the preservation of United States internal security. Overall, the mentioned facts seem to suggest that, since the beginning of the 20th century, the United States stood on the side of a group that would engage in violence to take power and grant the preservation of the American interests, under the cover of doing what would come to the benefit of Nicaragua.

Continuing with American foreign policy strategies, the next piece of the puzzle deserves particular attention: the manipulation of people's thoughts. The cold war was based on an ideological clash, and the winner of the battle would be the one who could guide the greatest number of minds in its favor, through the work of intelligence agencies. In 1979, the Sandinistas ended one of the bloodiest dictatorships in the history of Latin America and installed a government that was internationally praised for the promotion of certain social projects that greatly benefitted the Nicaraguan population. Despite this, Nicaragua represented a threat to the United States, as its ideological outline clashed with the American ideals. The exploration of the role played by the CIA along with the US government during this time, allows us to understand up to which level of gravity of crimes and manipulation the United States were willing to get in order to eliminate what was not aligned with its ideology.

During the cold war, the United States through the CIA financed and advised the Contra with the purpose of causing fatalities, chaos, violence and all the consequences of a

proper war, including a major hit on the country's economy. At the same time, the United States government applied an economic embargo, and to ensure that no one traded with Nicaragua, the CIA placed mines in the most important seaports in Nicaragua, on top of that, a civil disobedience manual was distributed to the population to help sabotage the Nicaraguan economy. Despite the obvious economic damage, the United States hired public relations firms and media to frame the creators of such violence as heroes, and picture instead the Sandinistas as the evil communists.

These ongoing efforts to stir the population away from the communists marked the Sandinista era in the 80's. Tired from the war and the overall economic and social unrest, the Nicaraguan population, influenced also by the US-sponsored political campaign claiming that would achieve peace (from a conflict that the United States itself caused), voted for the opposition party. Overall, it can be said that the United States manipulated not only the actions, but also the minds and thoughts of people through falsified information, with the aim of displaying a constructed reality more in line with the American interest. To do so, the most common methods were framing as heroic and / or cover-up violent acts, sabotaging the economy and fostering civil disobedience. In other words, the United States instigated conflicts wherever the local governments wouldn't align with the American ideas, with the overarching objective of reinstating a new political structure able to let the United States exercise its power and maintain its status quo.

Adding another piece to the puzzle, at the beginning of the 21st century, restructuring national defense strategies, the United States placed the International Development Agencies together with national defense and diplomacy as the main soft power tools to stir the alignment of recipient countries to the "American philosophy". After the Sandinistas' electoral defeat in 1990, the United States forced the new government, i.e the so-called "bourgeois democracy", to make economic readjustments of neoliberal characteristics in

exchange for international cooperation. It didn't matter that issues such as poverty were increasingly pressing, as long as these neoliberal governments followed the American philosophy.

For the first time in Latin America, in the first decade of the 21st century a left-leaning political bloc was born that ideologically collided with (and confronted) the American philosophy. The United States soon started feeling some challenge coming from its “backyard”. When Sandinista president Daniel Ortega won the elections in 2006, Nicaragua joined this new integration project called ALBA. Similar parallels to what had happened in the 1980s during the administration of Ronald Reagan, the United States brought efforts in order to align countries with the American philosophy to fight the communist threat and grant the American status quo. However, this time it was not happening through the Good Neighbor policy, Dollar Diplomacy and the CIA, but via International Development Agencies.

In Nicaragua, the International Development Agencies channeled their cooperation onto local NGOs. Some of these NGOs were directed to the development of topics such as education, with special focus on granting scholarships for university students to take courses on issues of democracy, activism, social networks, leadership, and others. These organizations were funded by the US and, as such, pursued the objective of aligning the recipients with the American philosophy. Quoting the founder of NED, “a lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA”, or as former congressman Ron Paul said, “It underwrites color-coded 'people's revolutions' overseas that look more like pages out of Lenin's writings on stealing power than genuine indigenous democratic movements”. One of the students of these courses was interviewed and claimed that many of the strategies used to provoke the crisis of Nicaragua “were ideas that were born in those courses”, that were supposed to train students to react when “the moment is right”.

The crisis in Nicaragua was triggered by a reform of the Social Security Institute, which would target primarily people close to or at pension age. Interestingly, the protest was initially led primarily by students. Taking also into account interviews claiming that these courses felt like someone was preparing an army for war, the United States could count in Nicaragua on a critical mass of young university students united by an anti-Sandinista vision, with enough training and capabilities to carry out destabilizing actions in the country. In addition to training young university students, economic sabotage was the main strategy to demand the resignation of President Ortega. The United States continued financing media to frame and / or cover up the violent activities performed by the opposition and foster an environment of chaos and ungovernability. Finally, of utmost importance is that the United States used the data recorded by only two human rights institutions (that were founded and financed by its own international development agencies) to directly intercede with sanctions.

Matching together all the pieces, the complete puzzle displays the NGOs as mechanisms of the American national security strategy to defend the national interests of the United States. It naturally follows that the NGOs that are funded by the United States International Development Agencies do not aim at the economic development of practices to benefit recipient countries, rather they aim at defending the interests of the United States, even at the cost of acting above any human right or international law. Everything indicates that the NGOs that receive American grants and offer the mentioned programs for university students manipulate the young energy to create a legacy of young people who would mark a political change in the country in favor of the interests of the United States.

Throughout history, the United States has supported groups that through violence have managed to change the ongoing regime opposed to the American interests. By the same token, in 2018, the United States received in Washington and publicly supported the groups that demanded the resignation of President Ortega. As all other groups aligned with the

United States, the Contras were financed, guided and armed by the CIA, and evidence points out that gangs were also hired to violently cause chaos and sabotage to the economy.

The Contra worked with a manual written by the CIA: as one of the gang leaders testified, Maradiaga, i.e. the president of the NGO financed by NED, gave out a manual with instructions on how to create an environment of chaos in Nicaragua. In 2018, the United States framed the Contra as heroes of democracy and in 2018, the opposition as human rights defenders.

The Sandinistas were pictured as the communist tyrants in the 80's, and in the same way in 2018 Ortega was described as a dictator and assassin; during the 80's the United States sponsored a number of public relations firms and media to make the criminals look like heroes, while in 2018 several media financed by US funds framed the opposition as the true heroes and contributed through news and articles to creating an environment of chaos and ungovernability, which was the image that was broadcast at an international level; in the 80's United States applied economic embargo to Nicaragua, in 2018 the US applied economic sanctions.

The United States always worked side by side with the traditional Nicaraguan oligarchies to accomplish its objectives. Year 2018 was no exception: the opposition was composed of a coalition of traditional oligarchs together with their traditional allies, i.e. the high ranks of the Catholic church.

Except for the Sandinista revolution, was the United States involved in all attempted coup d'états in Nicaragua? Yes.

Did the United States provide the military and economic tools to those who defend their interests even though they commit crimes against humanity? Yes.

Were the interests of the United States more important than any human right or international law? Yes.

Did the United States invest millions of dollars to arm, guide and finance groups that sabotage an economy, create chaos and violence? Yes.

Did the United States invest resources to manipulate public opinion and falsely frame the Sandinistas as the actors and root of evil? Yes.

Did the United States invest millions to frame the creators of these crimes as heroes? Yes.

Was Nicaragua an economic and social success during Ortega's presidency? Yes.

Were president Ortega's development plans aligned with the neoliberal characteristics of American philosophy? No.

Nicaragua having a Sandinista president and being the country part of ALBA, did the United States have the motivation to carry out its traditional methods of regime change? Yes.

Were the International Development Agencies the new executing arm to align countries to the American philosophy? Yes.

Were the NGOs funded by the United States International Development Agencies involved in coups? Yes, for example in Venezuela, a politically allied country of Nicaragua, in 2002.

Were leadership and democracy courses offered to college students instruments to align them to American philosophy? Every piece of the puzzle indicates that yes, they were.

With the millions of dollars invested over the years in these courses, could the United States rely on an army of student leaders willing to carry out events of the magnitude of what occurred in Nicaragua in 2018? Yes.

Did the United States have enough potential, by financing independent media and social media, to create the thousands of fake news stories that circulated on social media and frame a reality that benefited their interests? Yes.

Did the human rights institutions that the United States financed provide the necessary data to apply economic sanctions? Yes.

Overall, the evidence provided in this paper leads to consider that the International Development Agencies were a tool of the United States to carry out the plans laid out by the national security strategies. To achieve this, these agencies leveraged the education of university students, trying to create a generation of young people aligned with the American philosophy. Through courses, these agencies would enable them to become a generation called to mark serious and indelible political change. Through its educational channels, the United States used the young students to be the face of the opposition against Sandinista president Ortega.

Evidence suggests that these NGOs instrumentalize youth energy as a clash groups to create regime change movements that are aligned to US interests. Data leads to conclude that the regime change that started in April 2018 in Nicaragua was not as spontaneous as it seemed. Through its NGOs, including sponsoring media and human rights institutions the United States created a framework of interpretation for the Nicaraguan crisis that was exported internationally, and allowed the American interest to still today burden Nicaragua with economic sanctions relative to the economic embargo in the 80's, while at the same time

supporting opposition groups that eventually led the economic giant to secure the support of a political elite aligned with American interests in Nicaragua.



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