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The Role of the United States in the Democratization Process in Nicaragua

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THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN NICARAGUA, 1978 – 1990

Introduction

The intervention of the United States in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas during the 1980s represents a significant chapter in the complex history of U.S. involvement in the region. The rise of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua following the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 triggered concerns in the United States about the spread of socialist influence and the potential threat to American interests in Central America. Indeed, the Sandinista government, led by Daniel Ortega, implemented a series of socialist-oriented policies that included land redistribution, nationalization of industries, and close ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba. These actions drew the attention of the Reagan administration, which viewed in the Sandinista regime the possibility of establishment of a communist beacon in Latin America.

In response to the perceived threat, the Reagan administration adopted several measures in order to isolate and undermine the newly established regime. Indeed, an embargo was imposed in 1985 and a covert operation involved the funding of the Contras, a counterrevolutionary force composed of former members of the Somoza regime and other anti-Sandinista groups. In this context, the United States provided the Contras with financial, military, and logistical support. This assistance included training, weapons, and intelligence sharing. The Contras conducted guerrilla warfare against the Sandinista government, carrying out attacks on military and civilian targets with the aim of destabilizing the regime.

The conflict between the Sandinistas and the Contras resulted in a devastating toll on Nicaragua. The country faced widespread human rights abuses, economic devastation that impeded the effective implementation of social and welfare policies that were aimed at reconstructing the country after the Somoza-Sandinistas civil war. As a result, the United States' intervention faced international criticism for its support of the Contras and its disregard for Nicaraguan sovereignty. Indeed, critics argued that the United States violated international law and undermined the principles of self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. The conflict polarized public opinion both within the United States and globally, with some viewing the Sandinistas as progressive revolutionaries and others as Marxist dictators.

In the late 1980s, international pressure and negotiations led to a temporary cease-fire and a subsequent transition to democratic governance in Nicaragua. However, the legacy of U.S. intervention during this period continues to shape Nicaraguan politics and society. It remains a subject of historical analysis, political controversy, and ongoing debate about the extent and consequences of American involvement in Nicaragua. As a result, the United States' intervention in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas during the 1980s reflected Cold War dynamics and the Reagan administration's determination to confront perceived communist threats in the region.

This thesis aims to investigate the multifaceted role of the United States in the democratization process in Nicaragua, with a specific focus on assessing the legitimacy of U.S. intervention. By delving into the

historical context, motivations, and consequences of U.S. involvement, this study seeks to shed light on the complex dynamics that have shaped democratization efforts in Nicaragua over time.

The choice of this topic stems from the significant historical and contemporary influence exerted by the United States in the region, particularly in Nicaragua's political landscape. The United States has played a prominent role in the political development of Nicaragua, including both overt and covert actions that have impacted democratic processes. As a result, it is crucial to investigate and understand the extent and nature of U.S. intervention and its implications for democratization in Nicaragua. By comprehensively assessing this influence, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between external actors and domestic democratization efforts.

The study on the role of the United States in the democratization process in Nicaragua holds significant relevance in the fields of democratization and international relations. The United States has historically exerted substantial influence in the region, particularly in Nicaragua's political landscape. By examining the specific case of Nicaragua, this research intends to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between external actors and domestic democratization efforts.

Moreover, the study on the role of the United States in the democratization process in Nicaragua holds significant relevance not only for understanding the specific dynamics in Nicaragua but also for its broader applicability to similar cases in other countries. By examining the complexities and consequences of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua's democratization process, this research could provide an insight that can be applied to other contexts experiencing similar challenges.

Nicaragua's case offers a unique lens through which to analyze the interplay between external actors and domestic democratization efforts. Many countries around the world, particularly in Latin America, have faced external interventions in their political processes. From this perspective, the motivations, strategies, and consequences of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua can serve as valuable comparative material for assessing the impact of foreign involvement in democratization processes elsewhere. By examining the specific mechanisms through which the United States has influenced Nicaraguan politics, patterns and trends applicable to other cases could be identified, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dynamics between external actors and domestic democratization efforts globally.

Hence, the primary objective of this thesis is to evaluate the legitimacy of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua's democratization process. It seeks to critically analyze the strategies, policies and actions pursued by the United States and assess their impact on the democratic consolidation and legitimacy of political institutions in Nicaragua. By examining the motivations behind U.S. intervention and its implications for democratization, this research aims to provide insights into the broader implications of foreign intervention for democratization processes in other countries.

To achieve the research objective, this study adopts a comprehensive approach that combines qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official documents, diplomatic correspondences, and speeches, providing insights into the perspectives and intentions of U.S. policymakers. Secondary sources encompass scholarly literature, news articles, and expert analysis, offering a broader context and analysis of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. By employing a mixed-methods research design, this thesis aims to provide a holistic assessment of the United States' role in Nicaragua's democratization process. It examines both overt and covert interventions, analyzes their short and long-term effects on democratic governance, and identifies patterns and trends that can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of U.S. intervention in the democratization process.

With the aim of analyzing the evolution of U.S. foreign policy, the first part of the thesis will focus on the idea of United States democracy as a perfect model of democratic regime and institutions, which many European scholars like Alexis de Tocqueville considered as the perfect combination of rule of law, representation and separation of powers. Moreover, this part will analyze how this general idea of democracy became a focal point of U.S. foreign policy. At first, the analysis will focus on its implementation in the doctrine of the Manifest Destiny, which embodied the conviction that expanding the American territory was the best means of promoting the spread of democratic ideals and institutions. Secondly, the issue will be expanded towards the Carter and Reagan administrations and the differences in the approach to the promotion of democracy of the two administrations.

Consequently, the focus of the thesis will turn, more specifically, towards the role of the U.S. in Latin America and the need to protect democratic values and institutions in the whole American continent. In this context, the second part of the thesis will be aimed at analyzing the American idea of preserving the liberal nature of Latin America, referring to the Monroe Doctrine, whose main goal was to prevent European nations to further colonize countries and territories in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine created a precedent for the following administrations and their attitude towards Latin America, spurred by the possibility to exert greater influence, through economic and military intervention, on the newly established American Republics. Furthermore, this second part will consider the change embraced in 1933, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt implemented the Good Neighbor Policy, with the purpose of establishing friendly relations and mutual defense agreements with the nations of Latin America and how this attitude completely changed course with the end of WW2 and the consequent deterioration of United States-Latin America relations, accompanied by the rise of the "*antiyanquismo*".

Moreover, after a description of the United States foreign policy and its methodology of application in Latin America, it is of the utmost importance to consider the specific case study of Nicaragua. The third part of the thesis will open with a description of the past U.S. relations with Nicaragua at the beginning of the 20th century, focusing more specifically on the support to the rise of Somoza, with the attempt to establish a United

States-friendly government. In this context, the third part of this thesis will focus on why the United States decided to intervene in Nicaragua. In particular, this part will take into account strategic and economic interests. The former consist in the result of internal concerns vis-à-vis the possibility of the creation of a communist outpost in Central America, especially considering the Cold War scenario and past U.S. reactions to the attempt of alien powers to influence the region. The latter regards the importance of keeping Nicaragua as a United States ally, especially in terms of political and economic ideals, expressly considering the relevance of the Nicaragua Canal. The combination of these factors greatly affected the security perception in the region and turned into a major issue for the United States, which became increasingly prone to intervene in Nicaragua.

The U.S. concerns over the possibility of the establishment of a communist-friendly government in Nicaragua was embodied by the Sandinista movement, which in 1979 managed to topple the Somoza regime, ending *de facto* the authoritarian dynasty that had ruled for over three decades. In this context, the fourth part of the thesis will analyze from an historical standpoint the U.S. involvement in the political developments in Nicaragua between the decline of the Somoza regime in 1978 and the elections of 1990, focusing primarily on the different approaches that characterized the methodology of the U.S. intervention.

After deepening the historical background of the U.S. foreign policy and clarifying the causes of its intervention in Nicaragua, it is of the utmost importance highlighting how this operation impacted Nicaragua and the United States, and how it was perceived by the international community. Concerning the latter, the international community severely condemned the U.S. violations of Nicaragua's sovereignty. Indeed, in 1984 and 1986, the International Court of Justice ruled that the United States' support to the contras activities in Nicaragua could be considered as an act against the Republic of Nicaragua, thus violating the international customary law.

Concerning the outcomes in Nicaragua, it is safe to say that the three post-Sandinistas administrations encountered great challenges to reconstruct a country that had been scarred by a long civil war. Indeed, besides economic aid granted by the United States, the liberal administrations failed to impact positively a society in which the majority of the rural population had troubles having access to safe drinking water, inflation was rising and women's policies were causing more drawbacks than gains. These disappointing political results brought Daniel Ortega, former president during the Sandinista regime, to run again for the elections of 2006, eventually managing to become president in 2007. However, the authoritarian approach undertaken by the newly established administration sparked again the attention of the United States, which opposed with economic and diplomatic sanctions.

To summarize, this thesis seeks to analyze the role of the United States in the democratization process in Nicaragua, assessing the legitimacy of U.S. intervention. The United States asserted that they were not intervening in Nicaragua, but merely supporting regional self-protection efforts and seeking to promote the establishment of democratic institutions in Nicaragua. From a legal standpoint, this could be acceptable only

if the intervention was supported by evidence showing that Nicaragua was attempting at overthrowing neighboring countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica). Nevertheless, this doesn't ensure that the methods employed always align with international law. The U.S. downplayed diplomacy and peaceful resolution in their eagerness to counter Soviet influence, revealing a preference for armed force over diplomacy. Moreover, this emphasis on military action poses a serious threat to the principle of sovereignty of other nations, especially those one, like Nicaragua, which have reduced relative importance in the international scenario compared to the United States.

Chapter 1

United States foreign policy of exporting democracy

Summary: **1.1.** *Introduction*; **1.2.** *United States' interpretation of democracy*; **1.3.** *Manifest Destiny*; **1.4.** *Promotion of democracy or anti-communism?* **1.5.** *Democracy as a higher moral value.*

1.1 Introduction

American foreign policy has played a critical role in shaping global affairs for more than a century. From the Spanish-American War to the Cold War and beyond, the United States has used its power and influence to pursue a wide range of objectives, including promoting democracy, advancing its economic interests, and ensuring national security. National security has also been a central concern of American foreign policy. From the early days of the Cold War to the ongoing fight against terrorism, the United States has sought to protect its citizens and interests both at home and abroad. This has involved building alliances with other countries, deploying military forces in conflict zones, and using diplomatic means to resolve disputes. This set of initiatives has been embedded in the broader concept of exportation of democracy, aimed at spreading Western democratic features with the goal to create a more stable and peaceful global order.

Hence, the exportation of democracy has been a central feature of American foreign policy for over a century. From promoting democratic institutions and values to providing foreign aid and military support, the United States has sought to spread democracy around the world in order to advance its interests and support the aspirations of people living under authoritarian regimes. While this policy has been lauded by some as a means of promoting human rights and freedom, it has also been criticized as a form of cultural imperialism that imposes Western values on other societies. This chapter will explore the roots of the concept of "American democracy" and the crucial task represented by the need to protect its values and institutions. Furthermore, through a description of the concept of Manifest Destiny, it will be possible to analyze the holy interpretation that was linked to the idea of democracy and in particular to its promotion. This doctrine was used to justify the initial expansion of the United States Westwards throughout the 19th century and played a central role in the acquisition of Oregon, Texas and the other territories that resulted from the Mexican-American War. Besides territorial expansionism, Manifest Destiny promptly became a driving force for the development of the role of the United States at international level. Indeed, the Spanish-American War improved United States' sphere of influence and set the basis for the creation of an imperialistic nation.

In addition, the chapter will explore the interconnection between promotion of democracy and anti-communism, paying particular attention to the Reagan administration. Indeed, in 1982, President Ronald Reagan launched a project called "Democracy Program" which aimed to promote democratic values and

institutions in developing countries. The plan consisted in providing aid to different regions, including Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, in order to counter the influence of communism globally. Consequently, the last section of the chapter will deal with the idea of democracy as higher moral values. In this context, the focus will be centered on the opposition of the Reagan Doctrine and Carter's idea of promotion of democracy and the central role covered by the need to protect human rights during the containment of communism. What was intended was the pursuit of a project concerning the creation of a stable and politically sustainable global made up of democratic institutions able to respect human dignities and denounce any misconduct.

1.2 United States' interpretation of democracy

Democracy is a term that derives from the ancient Greek language. It means "rule by the people" or "sovereignty of the people". As a form of government, democracy has been practiced for over 2500 years, though in different forms, such as direct democracy of the ancient Athenian citizens and representative government in modern times. Democracy could be easily considered an indicator of the political progress of human beings and the principles behind the ancient Greeks' democratic system of government are still in use today.

The United States and many other countries throughout the modern world have adopted democratic governments to give a voice to their people. Along the centuries, many western societies have shaped their sophisticated democratic systems of government basing them on principles of free and fair elections, on the rule of law, and on the protection of individual rights and freedoms. This gives citizens the opportunity to participate actively in the political process by voting in elections, joining political parties, and engaging in public discourse.

Furthermore, modern western democracies are characterized by the separation of powers, thus referring to the division of a state's government into "*branches*", each with separate, independent powers and responsibilities, not in conflict with those of the other branches. The intention behind a system of separated powers is to prevent the concentration of power through checks and balances. According to the principle of checks and balances, each of the branches of the state should have the power to limit or check the others, creating a balance between the separate powers of the state and leaving the people free from government abuses.

Western democracies are also strongly committed to granting their citizens the fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, together with freedom of press. Hence, democracy and the rule of law provide people around the world with a means of protecting their human rights and holding each other accountable as equals under the law. The rule of law is a principle that ensures that all laws are publicly accessible, equally enforced, and independently judged, and that they adhere to

international human rights ethics. The rule of law is important because it allows all individuals and institutions (including the government itself) to be held accountable for their actions.

Not only all these principles can be detected in the American idea of democracy but also rule of law and respect for individual rights are doubtlessly milestones of American democratic ideals. In fact, by agreeing to follow the rule of law the United States can prevent abuses of power by leaders who might act as if they were above the law. Particularly, in the American understanding of democracy, strongly organized social forces, acting through freely organized political parties, should limit the state power and the government must respect the rights of its citizens and be accountable to them.

Moreover, for decades, the United States has proclaimed itself a "shining city upon a hill" a beacon of democracy that can lead broken nations out of their despotic darkness. That overconfidence has been instilled into its citizens, leading to the idea that, by promoting these values abroad, the United States can help create a more peaceful and stable world.

Since its foundation, many scholars have often analyzed and observed the United States, with the aim to better comprehend the functioning of what he called the "*experiment of democracy*". Alexis de Tocqueville spent eleven years in the United States for observing the American experiment of establishment of a democratic government that differed in whole from its European counterparts. Alexis de Tocqueville was a French political thinker and historian who traveled to the United States in 1831 to study the American democratic system.[1] In his observations, Tocqueville argued that the American newly established form of government was characterized by a number of key features. Firstly, he believed that democracy was more than just a political system; it was also a way of life. He argued that in a democracy the people have a strong sense of individualism and equality, and that this ethos pervades all aspects of society, from politics and law to religion and arts. Secondly, Tocqueville believed that democracy in America was characterized by a system of checks and balances, where power was divided among different branches of government, and where each branch served as a check on the others. This, he believed, prevented the accumulation of power in any one group or individual and ensured that the government remained accountable to the people. Thirdly, Tocqueville saw democracy in America as being marked by a high degree of social mobility. He argued that in a democracy, people had the ability to rise through the ranks and achieve success through their own hard work and talent, rather than being restricted by the social and economic hierarchies of older, aristocratic societies.[2]

Tocqueville also observed that American democracy was unique in that it was not imposed from above, but rather it grew from the people themselves. He argued that Americans have an inherent love of democracy that is deeply rooted in their history, culture, and way of life. Americans value individualism, equality, and self-government, and they see democracy as the best way to ensure that these values are upheld. For

[1] Jardin André, *Tocqueville: A biography*, trans. Lydia Davis, Robert E. Hemenway (1988).
[2] De Tocqueville Alexis, *Democracy in America*, trans. Rawlings E. T., Bevan G. (1835).

Tocqueville, democracy was more than just a political system; it was a way of life. He believed that the American commitment to democracy extended beyond the political sphere and was evident in their social and economic activities as well. Americans were driven by a desire to improve their lives, and they believed that democracy was the best way to achieve this. Tocqueville also emphasized the importance of civil society in American democracy. He argued that the strength of American democracy was rooted in the strong and active participation of citizens in a wide range of voluntary associations. These associations, such as churches, charities, and civic groups, helped build a sense of community and fostered the development of civic virtue and responsibility. Overall, Tocqueville saw American democracy as a model for the rest of the world. He believed that the American experience demonstrated that democracy was not only possible, but also desirable and beneficial for all nations.

During the 1990s, the global push for democracy made Americans question how much their century-long efforts to promote this ideology had contributed to this phenomenon. The worldwide embrace of democracy seemed to align with the United States' traditional foreign policy of advocating for a world order consisting of independent, self-governing, democratic states united by international organizations committed to peaceful conflict resolution, free trade, and mutual defense. This agenda had been in place since the early 1940s and the then global climate appeared to mirror it. Democracy was gaining ground in Eastern Europe, most of Latin America, much of the former Soviet Union, and the Pacific Rim of Asia.[3] Along with this political shift, there were calls for an international economic order considered to be a representation of liberty, and for increased cooperation through international organizations that prioritized collective security through consensus-building rather than power politics. This demand for popular sovereignty, which had been growing since the late eighteenth century, posed a challenge to traditional authoritarian government structures and required new modes of organizing power and mass participation through political parties. In the early 1800s, the idea of modern political consciousness had spread from Western Europe, North America to Latin America and, by the end of the century, it had also reached Eastern Europe, Turkey, Japan, and China. This idea of nationalism, which emphasized popular sovereignty, created significant challenges for both domestic and international political stability. World War I, therefore, was not just about addressing the growth of German power in Europe, but also about figuring out how to organize the state in the era of nationalism and create a stable international order after the collapse of many authoritarian monarchies. Following the collapse of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires, the regions that were left without a state had weak or non-existent traditions of party government. During the interwar years, there was a shift in the relative power of states, and this shift was accompanied by an ideological crisis that was unprecedented since the Reformation.

[3] Smith Tony, *The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy*, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 4-5.

Communists, fascists, and democrats struggled with one another and against authoritarian holdouts to determine the fate of Europe.[4]

American foreign policy in the post-World War II era sought to promote the spread of democracy and the establishment of stable modern states throughout the world, particularly in areas outside of Europe where nationalist demands were most evident. This belief has been reflected in various foreign policy initiatives, such as the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations, the promotion of democratic governments in Europe and Japan after World War II, and the support for democratic movements in Latin America, Africa, and Asia during the Cold War. However, the promotion of democracy has not always been consistent, and American foreign policy has often supported authoritarian regimes when it has been seen as necessary to advance other strategic interests. Despite this, the overall trend in American foreign policy has been towards promoting democracy as a key component of a stable and peaceful international order. Indeed, the values and principles of American liberal democracy have played a significant role in shaping U.S. foreign policy.

American leaders have consistently expressed their commitment to promoting democracy and human rights abroad, and have often used diplomatic, economic, and military tools to advance this goal. For example, the U.S. has provided foreign aid to support democratic institutions and civil society organizations, and has used sanctions to pressure authoritarian regimes to change their behavior. Additionally, the U.S. has been a leading advocate for international human rights standards and has supported the creation of international institutions, such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, to promote democracy and human rights around the world. Indeed, the American promotion of democracy abroad can be seen as a form of conservative radicalism.[5] On one hand, it represents a radical departure from the authoritarian regimes that have traditionally ruled many countries, and calls for a fundamental change in the way power is exercised. On the other hand, American policy has tended to reinforce traditional social power structures based on property ownership, which can be seen as a conservative impulse. This approach has sometimes been criticized for being too narrowly focused on formal democracy, rather than addressing broader issues of economic inequality and social justice. Critics argue that promoting democracy without addressing these underlying issues may ultimately lead to instability and conflict. However, proponents of the American approach argue that democracy provides the best framework for addressing these issues over the long term.

[4] Smith Tony, *The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy*, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 8-9.
[5] Smith Tony, *The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy*, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 9.

1.3 Manifest Destiny

The idea of Manifest Destiny indicates the conviction that the United States are meant to expand their territories within the American continent. The origins of Manifest Destiny are deeply rooted in the religion, supporting the idea to combine the American interest in the Western part of the continent to a holy mission and fate of the country to achieve these goals. As a result, the idea of the United States to be destined to extend its control on new areas became the main thruster of American foreign policy during the 1840s, resulting in tensions with foreign countries, as demonstrated by the outbreak of the Mexican-American War. The catchphrase Manifest Destiny was based on an everlasting idea that dates back to the colonial and the revolutionary years, remaining a mere concept linked to the idea that the United States was the country chosen by God. It was only in the Summer of 1845, when the author John O'Sullivan put into words this concept. Indeed, in an essay called "Annexation", published by the Democratic Review, O'Sullivan paid his support to the will of the then newly independent republic of Texas to enter the Union. The idea expressed by the author was that the acquisition of Texas meant the "fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."[6] On December 1845, O'Sullivan persisted in his ideological campaign on the Manifest Destiny again express his idea about United States' expansion Westwards, in particular concerning Oregon. According to O'Sullivan, the United States had a rightful claim to all of Oregon. He asserted that this claim was based on the concept of "manifest destiny", which held that it was the United States' duty to expand and occupy the entire continent that had been given to them by Providence.[7] O'Sullivan believed that this expansion was necessary for the development of the "great experiment of liberty" and self-government that had been entrusted to the United States. However, it appears that O'Sullivan did not advocate for a use of the concept of Manifest Destiny as a justification for American expansion through warfare, unlike some individuals who employed this idea during the Mexican American War. On the contrary, O'Sullivan held the view that the United States should expand gradually by encouraging settlement in new territories. He believed that these settlers would establish their own government institutions based on the American model of republican government. As a result, these communities and their governments would likely seek to become part of the Union, following the example of Texas. O'Sullivan was confident that future territories such as California and existing governments like Canada would also eventually join the Union.[8]

Advocates of Manifest Destiny typically employed three fundamental concepts to support their arguments: virtue, mission, and destiny. They pursued the idea that American citizens and society were inherently virtuous, which justified their expansionist ambitions. Furthermore, they saw it as their mission to extend their way of life and values, which they believed would have a positive impact on the rest of the world.

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[6] Sampson Robert D., *John O'Sullivan and His Times* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2003).
[7] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 10.
[8] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 11

Finally, it was their destiny as a nation to achieve these objectives.[9] John O'Sullivan, for instance, believed that the North American continent had been granted to Americans by God. He argued that the inherent virtues of agrarianism, American entrepreneurship, republican institutions, and the eventual retreat of European powers from North America reinforced the idea that the United States would spread its superior civilization throughout the continent. Under such circumstances, the United States would be able to rightfully claim its position as the preeminent continental power.

Manifest Destiny was a deeply ingrained concept in the minds of American elites even before John O'Sullivan coined the term. In fact, during the early years of the Union, territorial expansion was pursued not only for its own sake, but also to eliminate potential threats posed by neighboring superpowers' colonies in the continent. During the early 1800s, the United States greatly expanded its territory with the Louisiana Purchase. President Jefferson believed that owning western lands was important for the nation's development, so he sent representatives to France to buy New Orleans. However, France surprised everyone by offering to sell not just New Orleans, but the entire Louisiana Territory, which they had previously given to Spain after losing it in the Seven Years' War in 1763. Under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, France pressured Spain to give Louisiana back in 1800, and then sold it to the United States for around $15 million.[10] Even though President Jefferson was concerned about the abuse of executive powers and the lack of constitutional authority to purchase land, he acted without Congress consent. His worries about foreign powers controlling the important trade city of New Orleans led him to sign the treaty with France and seek approval afterwards.

Following the Revolution, the Paris peace treaty granted the former colonies all British territories located east of the Mississippi River. Nonetheless, the United States continued to regard Great Britain to the north and Spain to the south as dangerous threats. The War of 1812 allowed the United States to attack both British and Spanish territories. Although Canada remained in British hands, American forces defeated American Indian forces and opened up Florida to future expansion. After the war, the United States sought to acquire Florida, which had become a haven for escaped slaves and American Indians seeking refuge under the Spanish flag.

Spain could not defend Florida against the growing United States and, in order to avoid the humiliation of losing its territory from a new country, it decided to give it away in the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819-1821.[11] John Quincy Adams, the secretary of state at the time, led the negotiations for the United States. At first, Spain hesitant to concede both East and West Florida to the United States. On its behalf, the United States would have abandoned all claims on Texas, reassuring Spain that it would have rejected the intentions to invade the territory. As a result, both countries recognized the Sabine River, which before represented the border between

[9] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 13.
[10] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 93-95.
[11] Blodgett Ralph, Adams-Onís *Treaty* (Oklahoma Historical Society: The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture).

Louisiana and Texas, as the official border between United States and the Spanish colony, which included the relinquishing of all claims to Texas.[12] However, Adams also presented a new condition to Spain, which was for the western boundary of the territory under discussion to extend all the way to the Pacific. Such a requirement solidified American claims to Oregon and raised the prospect of the United States' gaining additional western lands in the future. Before this time, American claims always had been limited by the Rocky Mountains. With this demand, the United States asserted its calling to establish itself as a transcontinental power, with claims to coastline territory on the shores of two different oceans.

Nevertheless, United States' project of annexation of Oregon was made difficult by the claims of different superpowers. Indeed, Spanish claims to Oregon date back to 1494, two years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the continent. As a result, Spain and Portugal agreed on the negotiation of the Treaty of Tordesillas, which was primarily focused on dividing the newly discovered lands of the Americas between the two countries. The line of demarcation established by the treaty was located 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, with lands to the east being designated as Portuguese and those to the west as Spanish.[13] The exact location of the line was disputed, but it is generally accepted that it did not extend as far north as Oregon. Spain did claim the Pacific Northwest, including present-day Oregon, based on the explorations of Juan Pérez in 1774 and Bruno Heceta in 1775. Although Spain claimed the territory of Oregon, it did not establish a permanent settlement there. In the late eighteenth century, British and American explorers, traders, and fur trappers began to venture into the region, establishing a foothold there. These early contacts laid the foundation for later expansion and colonization by both nations. The absence of a solidified and well-established Spanish settlement in Oregon opened the possibility for both United States and Great Britain to lay their claims on the territory. As a result, as Spain's position as a world power declined during the late decades of the eighteenth century and Spanish claims in Oregon became less credible.

In particular, British interest in Oregon was further spurred by the rupture with the Roman Catholic Church and the cessation of the need to recognize Spanish claims in Oregon. However, when these claims were initially made, the United States was not yet an independent nation and had not yet begun to settle in or engage in diplomatic negotiations over the Oregon territory.[14] Spain, following the Treaty of Tordesillas, explored the area and persisted in asserting its ownership of the western coast. Although the Spanish laid claim to Oregon, they never established a significant presence in the region. While they maintained their claim, they never took full control of the land. Great Britain, Spain's major competitor, was one of the powers that posed a threat to Spain's hold in Oregon. Great Britain laid claims to Oregon in 1778, when Captain James Cook, in his Third Voyage landed on Vancouver Island, while attempting to find a passage that could connect the

[12] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983),109-110.

[13] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4.
[14] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 48.

Atlantic to the Pacific. Cook's discovery increased British interest in the Pacific Northwest region, which eventually led to the establishment of British fur-trading posts in the area. The British also had a stake in Oregon through the establishment of the Hudson Bay Company, which operated in the region and claimed it as part of the British Empire.[15]

Russia also staked a claim to the Oregon territory. In 1741, Vitus Bering, a Danish explorer sailing for the Russian czar, discovered the Pacific coast of North America, and the body of water separating northern Asia and North America was named after him. Initially, the Russians were content with the profitable fur trade, conducted through their outposts on the Aleutian Islands. However, in 1799, the establishment of the Russian-American Company signaled their plans to expand southward. In 1821, Czar Alexander I claimed Russian ownership of all the lands north of the 51st parallel, which was slightly above Vancouver Island. The move prompted strong disapproval from the U.S. and Great Britain, with Secretary of State John Quincy Adams openly opposing the Russian claim. The British navy's strength compelled Russia to negotiate, leading to the U.S. reaching an agreement with Russia in 1824, where Russia relinquished all claims south of 54°40' north latitude. The following year, under the Anglo-Russian Treaty, Russia abandoned its remaining claims to the land within the Oregon territory. This left the U.S. and Great Britain as the only nations with the potential to acquire the vast Oregon Country.[16]

Following the War of 1812, the U.S. sought to remove any possible danger posed by foreign countries in the southern part of the eastern seaboard of the continent. Consequently, the relationship between the U.S. and Great Britain became better, and Canada, which was America's neighboring country in the north, was no longer viewed as a pressing threat. This allowed the U.S. to concentrate on extending its territory towards the west, and the government formulated measures to address concerns like slavery and the existence of indigenous populations in these freshly acquired regions in order to stimulate migration.[17] In the early nineteenth century, the United States began to assert its claims to the Oregon Territory.[18] The first American settlement in the region was represented by commercial settlements, especially related to fur trade, like the Pacific Fur Company, established in 1811. In this context, Manifest Destiny played a crucial role, especially after Polk took the presidential oath of office on March 4, 1845. In his inaugural address, he assured Americans that he intended "to assert and maintain by all constitutional means the right of the United States to that portion of our territory which lies beyond the Rocky Mountains." Polk also maintained that American claims to the Oregon Country were "clear and unquestionable." The new president even voiced support for offering Oregon

[15] Schafer Joseph, *The British Attitude Toward the Oregon Question, 1815-1846* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association, 1911), 273-276.
[16] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 50.
[17] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 52.
[18] Lang William L., *Oregon Treaty, 1846.* (Oregon Encyclopedia, 2022). Available online at: Oregon Treaty, 1846 (oregonencyclopedia.org)

residents the full protection of American law.[19] President Polk's strong statements on American claims to Oregon set the stage for increased tensions between the United States and Britain. The two nations negotiated for several years but were unable to reach a compromise. The United States demanded control of the entire region, while Britain insisted on joint control. War seemed imminent, but both sides were hesitant to engage in conflict. Finally, in 1846, the two nations agreed to a treaty that established the border between Oregon and British North America at the 49th parallel. This compromise allowed the United States to gain control of the region south of the border, while Britain retained control of the region to the north. The Oregon Treaty was ratified by both nations in 1846, and the boundary it established remains the boundary between the United States and Canada today.[20]

President Polk's desire for territorial gain during the Mexican-American War was clear, even as he publicly denied that the war was being waged for that purpose. His statement that the United States would seek to obtain territory from Mexico to compensate claimants and cover war costs suggests that he saw territorial expansion as a means to an end. While Secretary of State Buchanan suggested that the United States declare the purpose of the war as self-defense rather than conquest, Polk rejected this idea. This decision laid the groundwork for the United States to negotiate for the acquisition of Mexican territory at the conclusion of the war.[21] While Manifest Destiny was a popular belief that the United States was destined to expand across North America, many Americans believed that expansion should occur peacefully, as advocated by John O'Sullivan, and with the consent of the people being incorporated into the nation.

However, the Mexican-American War created an opportunity for territorial expansion through armed conflict, and many Americans who had previously opposed such actions came to support the acquisition of Mexican territory. This shift in public sentiment created sharp political divisions and raised new issues regarding the morality of gaining land through conquest. In 1847 Polk sent Nicholas P. Trist as U.S. peace commissioner to conclude a treaty with Mexico. Trist's proposal was met with resistance from the Mexican government, which refused to cede its territory to the United States, leading to a long delay in the negotiations. However, as the war dragged on and the U.S. military made significant gains in Mexican territory, Trist was able to convince Mexican officials to accept a revised version of his proposal, and on February 2, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. Under the treaty, Mexico recognized the annexation of Texas by the United States and ceded a large portion of its northern territories, including California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma, to the United States. In exchange, the United States paid Mexico $15 million and assumed responsibility for settling claims of American citizens

[19] Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library, *Inaugural Address of James Knox Polk* (The Avalon Project, 2008). Available online at: The Avalon Project: Inaugural Address of James Knox Polk (yale.edu)

[20] Lang William L., *Oregon Treaty, 1846* (Oregon Encyclopedia, 2022). Available online at: Oregon Treaty, 1846 (oregonencyclopedia.org)

[21] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 97.

against Mexico and guaranteed to protect specific rights of Mexicans living in the newly American territories.[22]

The power and success of Manifest Destiny as a way to convey American ideals led to the concept's use in later years. In the 1890s, the term Manifest Destiny resurfaced, especially in the advent of the Spanish-American War of 1898. The origins of the conflict can be traced back to the late 1800s, when Cuba was struggling for independence from Spain. American interests in Cuba were growing due to the sugar industry and concerns about the treatment of American citizens living there. The situation was further complicated by the sinking of the USS Maine in Havana harbor in 1898, which led to widespread calls for war with Spain. The United States emerged victorious from the conflict and Spain was forced to drop all claims to Cuba and to cede the control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States.[23] The war had significant consequences for both the United States and Spain. For the United States, it marked the country's emergence as a global power, while for Spain, it represented the loss of its colonial empire and a decline in international influence. Despite the Spanish-American war being linked with the Monroe Doctrine concerning the forestall the Spanish claims on Cuba and its presence in the Caribbean, it is worth noting that the war could be perceived as a point of convergence between the latter doctrine and the concept of Manifest Destiny. Indeed, besides combating the interference of European powers in the Western Hemisphere, the war set the ground for the American imperialism and the rise of the United States as a global superpower.

1.4 Promotion of democracy or anti-communism?

Following the end of World War II, the United States became a superpower and took on global responsibilities. Its interests and security concerns extended beyond the Western Hemisphere and were threatened by the Soviet Union and communist bloc in regions such Europe, Africa and Asia. With its economic, military, political, and diplomatic power, the United States had the ability to exert a dominant role in international affairs as a superpower.

Ideally, the Cold War represented a sociopolitical conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the latter representing a threat to the liberal democratic values upon which the United States was founded. The superpowers engaged in a fierce competition to gain support for their respective ideologies. The United States, in particular, became the leader of the anti-communist movement, which was fueled by a combination of political, economic, and cultural factors. Domestically, anti-communism was used as a tool to

[22] Mountjoy Shane, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 2009), 98-103.
[23] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 400-404.

suppress political dissent and subversive activities, leading to the rise of McCarthyism[24] and the Red Scare.[25] Internationally, the U.S. used anti-communism as a justification for its involvement in proxy wars, such as in Korea and Vietnam, and for its support of authoritarian regimes in the developing world. Overall, the United States engaged in various initiatives, starting from the Marshall Plan, aimed at contrasting the threat posed by the Soviet Union. The need to extend the American concept of democratic values and institutions in order to strengthen the web of alliances is something that shaped United States' political agenda of the administrations that occurred during the Cold War.[26]

As a result, the United States shaped promptly its foreign agenda, implementing policies of containment for the Soviet Union. What the United States intended to do was to support, both directly and indirectly, countries that could play a crucial role in its regional and economic interests. This policy of intervention was rooted on two main ideas. First, and the most obvious one, was the belief that the Soviet Union could pose a serious threat at national, regional and international level. The second idea was based on the belief that by aiding foreign countries through economic, military and political means, these would have turned out to be important allies to the United States and its mission of promotion and protection of democratic values.

On the basis of this concept, a group of U.S. intellectuals, supported by members of both the Republican and Democratic parties in the 1970s, developed the idea that aiding democratic groups throughout the Third World could weaken leftist totalitarians in Third World states. The two primary spokesmen for this group were William Douglas, a political development academic, and Michael Samuels, a former State Department official and director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. They argued that supporting non-violent indigenous democratic movements in authoritarian states allied to the U.S. could protect its national security interests by strengthening indigenous democratic forces before regime breakdown occurred. Douglas and Samuels suggested that the U.S. government should fund political aid programs, which would bypass dictatorial governments and connect directly with sub-state democratic groups to gradually build the institutional and organizational precursors of democracy from the ground up. The purpose of political aid programs would be to assist Third World democrats with advisers, consultants, and training programs on democratic political tactics and party organization, rather than providing direct support. They believed that U.S. funding for foreign parties could be misused or destroy the credibility of these parties as independent actors with their local supporters. To combat communism, the United States Information Agency conducted public diplomacy programs that aimed to disseminate a positive image of American democracy through

[24] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 529-531.
[25] History.com Editors, *Red Scare*, (HISTORY, 2010), Available online at: Red Scare: Cold War, McCarthyism & Facts - HISTORY
[26] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 517-542.

international broadcasting, cultural diplomacy, and exchange programs,[27] but did not focus on building democratic parties or structures. Douglas and Samuels recommended that assistance to foreign democrats should begin in the authoritarian states most likely to experience a breakdown in the near future, such as the Philippines, Zaire, Honduras, and South Korea.[28]

The theory of promoting democracy is based on the belief that democracies are more likely to be peaceful, prosperous, and stable than non-democratic systems. In this way, countries that engage in a democratization process would be more like to be characterized by more accountability to their citizens, more transparence in their decision-making processes, and more responsive to the needs and desires of their people. However, the establishment of a peaceful global order presumed the elimination of the communist threat, which was believed to be undermining American values and institutions. This concept of ideal international order operable through a mission of communist eradication was truly embodied in the figure of President Ronald Reagan in what then became known as the Reagan Doctrine.

In January 1981, Ronald Reagan became president and was determined to take action against what he saw as Soviet expansionism in the developing world. As part of his efforts, his administration developed a policy initiative to support anti-Soviet insurgencies around the world by providing them with American aid. The primary objective of the Reagan Doctrine was to revoke the Brezhnev Doctrine, which held that any communist country would remain under Soviet control even if military intervention was necessary. Through guerrilla warfare tactics, international communism had made significant gains since the 1940s, which the Reagan Doctrine aimed to counter.[29]

Reagan believed that the United States had a moral obligation to help spread democracy and protect human rights, particularly in countries where people were suffering under oppressive regimes. Reagan believed that the United States had a moral duty to take the lead in world affairs, not only because of its power, but also because of its moral example. He frequently stated that "*Our mission is to nourish and defend freedom and democracy*" and that "*support freedom fighter is self-defense*".[30] According to the Reagan administration, the Soviet Union had strengthened its global influence by orchestrating revolutions in the Third World that replaced non-communist dictatorships aligned with the U.S. and expanded their sphere of influence in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Initially, the Reagan administration's Cold War strategy was based on a containment approach that aimed to exploit Soviet weaknesses by putting pressure on the Soviet system and

[27] Belmonte Laura A., *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 95.
[28] Pee Robert & Schmidli William M., *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and The Transition to Democracy Promotion* (London, United Kingdom: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 58-61.
[29] Scott James M., *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), 14.
[30] Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, vol. 21, no. 6, 1985, 1

promoting the growth of democratic processes within the Soviet bloc.[31] In 1982, the Reagan administration launched a project called "*Democracy Program*" which aimed to promote democratic values and institutions in developing countries.[32] The program included a range of activities such as providing technical assistance to developing democracies, sponsoring exchange programs for emerging leaders, supporting independent media, and promoting free and fair elections.

The plan was implemented in various regions of the world, including Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, and became a central aspect of Reagan's foreign policy. The primary goal was to counter the influence of communism globally. The program aimed to promote democratic ideology to combat Soviet influence in Western Europe and Oceania, engage in a battle of ideas with the Soviet Union in the Third World, and promote democracy in the Soviet bloc itself.[33] The United States Information Agency led the program, and funding was provided to the State Department and USAID for their initiatives. Private groups also participated, but the whole effort was coordinated by an International Political Committee within the national security apparatus to ensure a unified campaign to counter the Soviets.

The Reagan administration had a comprehensive approach that linked pressure for political reform in both the East and West. They provided increasing support for democracy movements in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, while also expanding both covert and overt security assistance to anti-communist rebels in Central America, Southern Africa, and Afghanistan. Surprisingly, the Reagan administration also encouraged transitions to democracy in Latin American and Asian dictatorships that were once U.S. allies during the global Cold War alliance. Additionally, there was an organizational alliance developed between the U.S. government and American civil society groups interested in promoting democracy, with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) serving as a symbol and organizer during the 1980s.[34] The NED was established in 1983 as a non-governmental organization with the purpose of promoting democracy worldwide, but its operations from 1984 to 1986 were primarily influenced by national security objectives. The creation of the NED was a response to both the failure of the Carter administration to develop a human rights strategy and the broader need for new approaches to promoting political stability and development in the Third World. It was within this context that democracy promotion emerged as a new and complementary approach to Human Rights, offering a means of supporting democratic transitions in countries where Human Rights were being violated. While democratic ideology did play a role in shaping NED's tactics, the need to safeguard U.S. interests in societies where it intervened took precedence. Indeed, the NED's interventions in certain countries were

[31] Pee Robert & Schmidli William M., *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and The Transition to Democracy Promotion* (London, United Kingdom: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 54.
[32] Pee Robert, *From Anti-Communism to Democracy Promotion* (Paper presented at the BISA US Foreign Policy Working Group Conference in 2015), 3.
[33] White House, *NSDD-75: US Relations with the Soviet Union* (Federation of American Scientists, January 17, 1983), 1.
[34] Pee Robert & Schmidli William M., *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and The Transition to Democracy Promotion* (London, United Kingdom: Springer International Publishing, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 4-5.

largely driven by U.S. national security concerns and the organization relied on the U.S. government for funding and support. This fusion of democracy promotion and national security interests helped justifying the NED's interventions in certain countries.[35]

Initially, Reagan's scope was to contain the Soviet Union in the Third World, leading to a policy that favored restoring U.S. alliances with important Third World authoritarian regimes like Argentina, Chile, the Philippines, and South Korea. This policy involved diminishing the emphasis on human rights and democratic reform as policy objectives.[36] In a 1979 article titled "*Dictatorships and Double Standards*", Jeane Kirkpatrick, a government professor at Georgetown University, argued that pressuring authoritarian but friendly governments to liberalize would likely result in regime collapse, particularly when the regime was threatened by radical insurgents. Consequently, the allied state would be taken over by forces hostile to the U.S. and supportive of the Soviet Union, further undermining the United States' geopolitical position in the Cold War. Although Kirkpatrick believed that authoritarian U.S. allies could potentially evolve into democracies given the appropriate conditions such as "the right kind of political culture" and "voluntary, non-official institutions," she did not suggest any specific ways in which the U.S. could help promote these conditions.[37] Therefore, the Reagan administration generally accepted the implication of the doctrine that prioritized ensuring the political stability of critical authoritarian governments over reform.

As a result, the American promotion of democracy and anti-communism were closely intertwined during the Cold War era. The United States saw the spread of democracy as a means of countering the influence of communism and advancing its own national interests. The Reagan administration saw democracy promotion as a way to combat Soviet Communism in various parts of the world, including the Third World and Western Europe. It was also seen as a means of supporting opposition forces in the Soviet Empire. The administration viewed democracy promotion as a tool of public diplomacy and political action, rather than as a means of promoting democracy for its own sake. In practice, American policy often prioritized anti-communism over democracy promotion, leading the United States to support authoritarian regimes that were seen as friendly to American interests.

However, the deployment of Universalist democratic rhetoric also opened up the question of whether the campaign for democracy should be limited to enemy totalitarian regimes or whether it should encompass friendly authoritarian countries.

[35] Pee Robert, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021), 225-227.
[36] Jacoby Tamar, *The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights* (Foreign Affairs 64, no. 5, 1986), 1067–1069.
[37] Kirkpatrick Jeane J., *Dictatorships and Double Standards*, Commentary 68, no. 5 (1979), 35–36.

1.5 Democracy as a higher moral value

Carter's interpretation of democracy as a higher moral value was slightly opposed to the Reagan Doctrine. As analyzed in the previous section, President Reagan adopted a hard approach in process of exportation of democracy to sensitive countries. In his approach to foreign policy, Reagan valued the goal of containing and, eventually, dismantle communism as the ultimate goal and interest of the United States. In this context, Reagan would also be willing to support the continuance of authoritarian regimes or the rise of new ones, all not to lose important allies and maintain political, economic and ideological influence in different countries and regions. On the contrary, Carter's approach could be described as a more universalistic approach, in which the goals do not fully justify the means. Although President Reagan and President Carter agreed on the need to pursue national interests by preventing the prevail of the communist ideology in regions of interests, the breaking point was represented by the initiatives taken by the administration to achieve its objectives. What Carter advocated for, and which was not continued with the Reagan administration, was the need to balance promotion of democracy and national interests with political morality. As a result, Carter implemented in his foreign policy agenda initiatives concerning human rights and interruption of the funding towards dictatorships.

The rise of human rights as a new foreign policy approach provided a way to address this crisis by placing U.S. intervention in a moral context, and by focusing on the promotion of democracy and human rights as a means of countering Soviet influence in the Third World. These developments led to a crisis of confidence in U.S. foreign policy towards the Third World, as the traditional Cold War anti-communist framework became increasingly inadequate to deal with the complex and varied challenges posed by these radical and anti-colonial movements. This approach was championed by a range of actors, including human rights activists, liberal politicians, and neoconservative intellectuals, who argued that the U.S. had a moral obligation to support democratic movements and to stand up for human rights around the world.[38] This approach gained traction in the late 1970s, as a series of high-profile human rights abuses, such as the killing of political dissidents in Chile, drew public attention to the issue. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter made human rights a central theme of his foreign policy, declaring that the U.S. would no longer support authoritarian regimes that violated human rights. This approach was further institutionalized through the creation of the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in 1977, which was tasked with monitoring and promoting human rights around the world.[39] The Carter administration engaged with this shift and embraced the issue for a number of pragmatic political reasons. The inclusion of Human Rights in Basket III of the Helsinki Accords provided the United States with a legal mechanism to pressure the Soviet Union to

[38] Smith Tony, *The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy*, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 239-248.
[39] U.S. Department of State, *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*, Available online at: About Us – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor - United States Department of State

undertake internal reforms towards greater openness and respect for Human Rights.[40] It was hoped that this pressure would lead to the growth of more open societies, not just in the Soviet Union, but in other countries around the world.

While the Kennedy administration aimed to introduce democracy where possible, it did not seek to overthrow pro-American dictatorships in situations where democratic forces were weak. Carter's brand of liberalism, on the other hand, was more willing to take risks and push authoritarian leaders to reform even if it risked damaging American interests. President Carter argued that the new United States' foreign policy project of ensuring the respect of democratic values and institutions through the protection of human rights necessitated a cautious approach to authoritarian allies who opposed Soviet expansion.[41] In this context, Carter declared, "*We are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear*."[42] Through this declaration, President Carter highlighted his intention to mark a break from his predecessor, which did not flinch in funding dictatorships and authoritarian regimes in order to better combat the Soviet Union. Indeed, in the first three months, the administration reduced economic and military aid to Argentina, Uruguay and Ethiopia; cut aid to Nicaragua, Uganda, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Guatemala and the Philippines; approved sanctions against Chile.[43]

The advancement of human rights ought to have been approached in a practical and sensible manner, with the ability to evaluate, at least in theory, the severity and consistency of human rights abuses, the resources available to the United States to address these issues, and, crucially, the existence of other priorities in U.S. foreign policy, such as "protecting and advancing U.S. national security […] strengthening NATO and Atlantic solidarity; the Salt accords and other aspects of defense; peace in the Middle East; the nuclear proliferation control and normalization of relations with China".[44] Regarding communist Europe, the United States' efforts should have been consistent and steady, without resorting to aggressive rhetoric. It was important to recognize that changes in communist regimes would take time, but it was possible to positively influence long-term trends and encourage limited but significant progress in the short term. Simultaneously, the Carter administration was advised to maintain its pressure on the Soviet Union for two reasons. The first reason pertained to the potential impact of human rights policy on political discussions within the United States. This was because the topic of Soviet dissent was receiving significant attention from the American public, media, and Congress. The second reason was related to the advancement of U.S. national security policies. In this

[40] Edwards Geoffrey, Human Rights and Basket III Issues: Areas of Change and Continuity (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1985), 641-642.
[41] Smith Tony, *The United States and the Global Struggle for Democracy*, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 244.
[42] Speech of May 22, 1977, Bulletin 76, no. 1981 (June 13, 1977).
[43] Tulli Umberto, *Tra diritti umani e distensione, l'amministrazione Carter e il dissenso in Urss*, (Rome, Italy: Franco Angeli: 2013), 105.
[44] Tulli Umberto, *Tra diritti umani e distensione, l'amministrazione Carter e il dissenso in Urss*, (Rome, Italy: Franco Angeli: 2013), 134.

context, the administration should have concentrated its interventions in areas where the United States possessed more leverage to influence Soviet policies.[45] On August 4, 1977, President Carter signed presidential directive 18 with the subject "U.S. National Strategy". In the text, Carter stated that relationships between U.S. and the Soviet Union would "continue to be characterized by both competition and cooperation", with attention to a possible escalation of the tensions, but at the same time with the intention and opportunity to restore relations. Moreover, President Carter argued that the U.S. would "continue to enjoy a number of critical advantages", namely "a more creative technological and economic system", a political structure that enjoys popular support and grants solutions to popular demands and it is "supported internationally by allies and friends" which share the same values.[46]

In conclusion, Carter's efforts to promote democracy and human rights were driven by a belief that American foreign policy should be guided by principles of morality and justice, rather than solely by considerations of power and self-interest. In addition, Carter recognized that authoritarian regimes often engaged in human rights abuses and political repression, which he felt being antithetical to American values. President Carter fostered an idea of democracy as a higher moral value based on a two-level analysis. The first level is related to the intention of the President to mark a break with the trend of his predecessors to support authoritarian regimes. This decision was embodied in the commitment of the administration to human rights and the decision to cut off military aid to the Argentine government during the country's "Dirty War", which provoked between 10,000 and 30,000 victims.[47] This decision was made in response to reports of widespread human rights abuses by the Argentine military, including the use of torture and extrajudicial killings. Indeed, Carter believed that the United States had a moral obligation to support democratic movements around the world. He saw the promotion of democracy as a way to enhance American security, by reducing the likelihood of conflict and promoting stability.

[45] Tulli Umberto, *Tra diritti umani e distensione, l'amministrazione Carter e il dissenso in Urss*, (Rome, Italy: Franco Angeli: 2013), 135.

[46] The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, *Presidential Directive 18: U.S. National Strategy*, Available online at: Presidential Directives (PD) - Research - The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum (jimmycarterlibrary.gov)

[47] FOIA Eletronic Reading Room, *Argentina Declassification Project – The "Dirty War" (1976-1983)*. Available online at: Argentina Declassification Project - The "Dirty War" (1976-83) | CIA FOIA (foia.cia.gov)

Chapter 2
United States intervention in Latin America

Summary: **2.1.** *Introduction*; **2.2.** *The Monroe Doctrine*; **2.3.** *Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Good Neighbor Policy*; **2.4.** *United States influence in Latin America at the end of WW2;* **2.5.** *From good to bad neighbor.*

2.1 Introduction

The United States has had a long history of intervention in Latin America dating back to the early 19th century. In this period, the United States intervened militarily in several Latin American countries, including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. These interventions were often justified by U.S. officials as a means of protecting American interests and promoting stability in the region. With the United States continuing to exercise and improve its role towards becoming a global power, its foreign policy became more and more centered on the need to secure the Western Hemisphere from potential threats. This trend intensified during the Cold War, when U.S. intervention in Latin America increased significantly, especially in means such as supporting right-wing governments and paramilitary groups in several countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, in an effort to prevent the spread of communism in the region. However, these actions were often depicted by Latin American countries as a violation of the principle of sovereignty and autonomy, since U.S. support often came at the expense of human rights and democratic values, as these governments and groups were accused of committing atrocities and suppressing dissent.

As a result, Latin American countries have responded to U.S. intervention in various ways. Some countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, have maintained diplomatic ties with the U.S. and have tried to work collaboratively on issues such as trade and immigration. On the other hand, other countries, such as Venezuela and Cuba, have been more critical of U.S. intervention and have sought to distance themselves from the United States. The election of leftist leaders in Latin American countries, such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, has also been a response to U.S. intervention, since these leaders have challenged U.S. hegemony in the region and have promoted anti-imperialist policies.

This chapter will explore how the United States foreign policy towards Latin America changed from the Monroe Doctrine to the Cold War, the degree of influence and what have been the responses from the affected countries. First, the chapter will analyze the origins and the development of the Monroe Doctrine and how it shaped permanently the United States as dominant power in the Western Hemisphere, declaring that it would not tolerate any new European colonies in the Americas or any European intervention in the affairs of the independent American states. Besides establishing the United States as the protector of the Western Hemisphere, the Doctrine also represented a crucial cornerstone in U.S. foreign policy, marking its thereon permanent involvement in global and regional affairs.

The chapter will continue with an analysis of the Good Neighbor Policy implemented by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933. In this context, the analysis will focus on describing how, despite an apparent policy of non-intervention and, eventually, non-interference, the United States continued to put great economic and political pressure on Latin American countries. Furthermore, the chapter will focus on the shift from the Good Neighbor Policy to a much clearer and overt intervention, marked by the policy of Soviet containment introduced with the Truman administration. In particular, the chapter will describe the new anti-communist foreign policy of the United States bringing two main examples: the Guatemalan coup in 1954 during the Eisenhower administration; and the economic influenced performed by JFK through the Alliance for Progress.

In conclusion, the chapter will focus on the process that led the United States to be recognized as "Bad Neighbors". In particular, the focus of the section will be centered on the reaction of Latin American countries to the intensification of U.S. interventions in the region and on the increasing trend of anti-communism that developed during the Cold War. In this context, this section will explore the sentiment of "*antiyanquismo*" in Cuba and Venezuela.

2.2 The Monroe Doctrine

On March 4th, 1817, James Monroe was inaugurated as the President of the United States, having previously played important diplomatic roles in prior administrations as an envoy to foreign nations and as Secretary of State. He appointed John Quincy Adams, who had recently served as the ambassador to Great Britain and was destined to become the President after Monroe, as his Secretary of State. During their tenure from 1817 to 1821, the main diplomatic achievements of Monroe and Adams involved addressing the significant challenges posed by the United States' major competitors for power and land on the North American continent, namely Great Britain and Spain. Adams' first task as Secretary of State was to resolve the outstanding issues between the United States and Great Britain that had not been resolved by the Treaty of Ghent.[48] As a result of negotiations, Great Britain consented to abandon its territorial claims over the Northwest Territory, and both nations committed to putting an end to the slave trade. This accord allowed the United States to increase its influence as a foreign power.[49] During a meeting with the cabinet on November 26th, 1823, John Quincy Adams argued that if the Holy Alliance, a coalition of European powers, invaded South America, it would not be to restore Spain's control over its former colonies. Instead, Adams believed that the Holy Alliance might aim to establish their own colonial empires in the region. He then postulated another scenario, suggesting that if the Holy Alliance attacked South America and Great Britain resisted them alone, without American assistance, Britain would likely emerge victorious due to its command of the sea.

[48] Renehan Edward J. & Jr., *The Monroe Doctrine: The Cornerstone of American Foreign Policy* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publication, 2007), 52.
[49] National Archives, *Treaty of Ghent (1814)*, 2022. Available online at: Treaty of Ghent (1814) | National Archives

However, this would result in South America becoming Britain's colonies instead of Spain's. Adams believed that the United States needed to act quickly and decisively by articulating a policy that would prevent any non-American powers, including France, Spain, Russia, or Great Britain, from intervening in South America.

The Monroe Doctrine was issued at a time when many Latin American nations had recently gained their independence from European colonial powers, including Spain and Portugal. The doctrine was also issued in the context of European powers expressing interest in reasserting their influence in the region. The United States saw this as a threat to its own security and sought to assert its dominance in the Western Hemisphere. The doctrine had three main components: first, the United States would not interfere in the internal affairs of European nations; second, European nations were warned not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere; and third, any attempt by a European power to colonize or establish puppet monarchs in the Western Hemisphere would be considered a hostile act against the United States. The Monroe Doctrine was not initially widely accepted, but it became an important component of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere and has been invoked by subsequent U.S. presidents to justify interventions and actions in the region.[50]

To better comprehend the reasoning behind the creation of the Monroe Doctrine, it is of the utmost importance to first analyze the situation in South America during that time, which provided a significant backdrop to the environment in which John Quincy Adams and James Monroe conducted their diplomatic work. During this era, Spain's control over its American colonies was breaking down, with the king in Madrid confronting uprisings in nearly all of his American colonies.

Following the precedents set by the American and French revolutions, and with Spain distracted and weakened by the Napoleonic Wars, independence movements gained momentum in several South American colonies, including New Granada (Venezuela and Colombia), La Plata (Paraguay and Argentina), and Peru (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile). In this context, the Spanish government found itself weakened by civil wars that continued throughout the 1820s, resulting in several difficulties to provide guidance to their colonies. As a consequence, the inability of the Spanish government to provide assurances and order in the colonies provoked the rising of local power centers throughout South America with the aim to govern the various colonies in the form of juntas.[51]

In 1822, the United States promptly recognized the newly formed Latin American republics and exchanged ambassadors with Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Colombia. By that time, Mexico was also independent from Spain and was officially recognized by the United States as a sovereign power. Meanwhile, after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, France and Russia suggested that Great Britain joined them in

[50] National Archives, *Monroe Doctrine (1823)*, 2022. Available online at: Monroe Doctrine (1823) | National Archives
[51] Renehan Edward J. & Jr., *The Monroe Doctrine: The Cornerstone of American Foreign Policy* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publication, 2007), 64.

assisting Spain in reclaiming its New World colonies. Although committed to the notion of empire and the principle of monarchies, Great Britain refused to participate, mainly for economic reasons. Indeed, South America as a whole was, at the time, a much larger market for British goods than even the United States, and Great Britain preferred the idea of conducting trade with distinct and separate Latin American states rather than with a chain of interconnected colonies under Spanish rule. However, the joint French/Russian proposal provided a strong indication of the intentions of other European powers with respect to South America and alerted the British of what would happen if measures were not taken to reinforce the defensive alliances of the new republics.[52]

In the meantime, the Monroe Doctrine established the United States as the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere and declared that the United States would not tolerate any new European colonies in the Americas or any European intervention in the affairs of the independent American states. It also stated – as said above – that the United States would refrain from interfering in the affairs of European countries or their existing colonies. This policy established the United States as the protector of the Western Hemisphere and helped to prevent European colonization of the region. The doctrine has since become a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and a symbol of American power and influence in the world.

The Monroe Doctrine promptly became a core point and a sort of starting point for the development of the United States foreign policy and its involvement in Latin America during the successive administrations.[53] Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine was frequently used by the United States to legitimize its intervention in Latin America, claiming that any effort by European powers to involve themselves in the affairs of the Americas would be seen as a danger to U.S. security. Thus, the United States believed to be invested with a moral responsibility to intervene in Latin American nations to prevent European colonization or influence.

Moreover, the Monroe Doctrine was praised and also implemented by his successors. Indeed, as it has been analyzed in the previous chapter, this resulted in a series of U.S. interventions in Latin America throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, and the occupation of Puerto Rico. In this context, the Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine intersected perfectly highlighting the dual aspect of United States foreign policy from that period on. On one side, the need to maintain the Western Hemisphere secure and cast out European powers from it in order to ensure its primary role as only regional superpower. On the other side, which comes as a direct consequence, the opportunity to export its economic and political ideas to its southern neighbors, supporting United States-friendly regimes and topple those against.

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[52] Renehan Edward J. & Jr., *The Monroe Doctrine: The Cornerstone of American Foreign Policy* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House Publication, 2007), 74-76.

[53] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 110.

Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine was perceived as an opportunity by proponents of expansionism to pursue imperialistic policies. Indeed, in 1904, in his annual message to Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt introduced a new policy towards Latin America, which became widely recognized as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This policy declared that the United States would intervene in any Latin American country that was unable to pay its debts to European nations, which aimed to prevent European nations from using force to collect debts from Latin American countries, thus upholding the principles of the Monroe Doctrine. The Roosevelt Corollary became the foundation of American foreign policy towards Latin America for many years, and the United States used it to justify its interventions in several countries in the region, including Cuba, Nicaragua, and Haiti. The Corollary was a subject of much debate and controversy, with many Latin American countries resenting the United States' involvement in their affairs. Nonetheless, it was also seen as a way for the United States to exert its influence in the region and to protect its interests there.[54]

In addition, Wilson suggested that all nations worldwide should adopt President Monroe doctrine as a global principle, where no nation would try to impose its political system on another, and every people would be free to determine their own form of governance and development without interference or fear, whether they are small or large. Wilson believed that the Monroe Doctrine allowed Latin American nations to develop their own self-rule, and he proposed extending its principles to the whole world, forming a league of nations, where all nations could experience the same level of autonomy. This approach would eliminate the need for complex alliances, and governments would be established based on the approval of the people, while ensuring the freedom of the seas and preventing the use of armed forces for aggressive purposes.[55]

In conclusion, the Monroe Doctrine played a role in creating a power imbalance in Latin America through the establishment of a U.S. sphere of influence in the region. As the regional hegemon, the U.S. had control over the political and economic affairs of Latin American nations, which often came at the cost of their sovereignty. Additionally, U.S. intervention in Latin America was fueled by economic interests, as the doctrine provided access to Latin American markets and resources such as oil, minerals, and agricultural products. Latin American countries were often subjected to U.S. economic dominance, with U.S. companies receiving preferential treatment while their Latin American counterparts had to comply with U.S. demands.

By positioning itself as the protector of the Americas, the United States became the dominant power in the region, which frequently resulted in U.S. involvement in Latin American matters. This caused discontent

[54] National Archives, *Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine* (1905), 2022. Available online at: Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1905) | National Archives

[55] Bryne Alex, *The Monroe Doctrine and The United States National Security In The Early Twentieth Century* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 146.

among Latin American nations, which believed that the United States was imposing its will on them and interfering with their sovereignty.

2.3 Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Good Neighbor Policy

In all the relations between the United States and its Latin American neighbors the question of intervention has long been a delicate one. Although the United States regarded its interventions as merely temporary interpositions exercised as a last resort and usually at the urgent request of a very considerable faction of the people, the Latin Americans distrusted and feared such threats to their sovereign status. They wanted definite assurance that no state should intervene in the internal affairs of another.

In order to answer to these requests, the United States tried to implement a set of non-interventionist policies aimed at restoring trust from Latin American countries, especially vis-à-vis the difficult period that characterized the 1930s and early 1940s. In this way, the Good Neighbor Policy represents a milestone of the foreign policy of the United States towards Latin America during the 1930s and 1940s. It was introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 and was based on the principle of non-intervention and mutual respect between the United States and its neighbors to the South. The policy marked a significant departure from the United States traditional approach to Latin America, which had been characterized by military intervention, economic domination, and political interference.

The origins of the Good Neighbor Policy can be traced back to the economic and political turmoil that swept Latin America in the early 1930s. The Great Depression hit the region hard, causing widespread poverty and social unrest. In response, many Latin American countries started to call for greater autonomy and a more equal relationship with the United States and turned to nationalist and populist leaders who were critical of U.S. economic imperialism and political meddling. As a result, President Roosevelt recognized the need to respond to these demands and to create a new approach to United States-Latin American relations. In his first inaugural address, he declared that the United States would be a "good neighbor" to its southern neighbors, treating them with respect and working with them as equal partners, alongside with a pledge to end U.S. military interventions in the region and to promote economic cooperation and cultural exchange.[56]

In 1933, when the Democrats took control, the State Department officials had a narrow interpretation of non-intervention in hemispheric affairs. They believed that it meant refraining from using military force to persuade Latin Americans to comply with American desires. However, Latin Americans saw non-intervention as a call for Americans not to use any methods to pressure them into doing things they did not want to do. Washington policymakers thought that the Latin American demand was not just for non-intervention, but also

[56] The American Presidency Project, *Inaugural Address*. Available online at: Inaugural Address | The American Presidency Project (ucsb.edu)

for non-interference. Initially, United States political élite insisted on the Good Neighbor's right to "interfere" diplomatically or economically to convince Latin Americans to adopt policies that were not harmful to perceived U.S. interests. However, security issues stemming from disturbing developments in the Old World that threatened to enter the New World created a sense of urgency in Washington to establish hemispheric solidarity against un-American meddling. At that point, Roosevelt and his advisers concluded that the U.S. had to become a better neighbor than originally intended and recognize that non-intervention was essentially synonymous with non-interference.[57]

Fortunately for Roosevelt, by the time he took office, the preceding Republican administrations had already begun to withdraw from intervention, specifically defined as the use of military force. If the Republicans had not already taken this step, Roosevelt would have had a much harder time convincing Latin American countries that the U.S. was capable of being a good neighbor. Indeed, the policies initiated by Secretary of State Stimson led to the complete withdrawal of Marines from Nicaragua in 1933 and the establishment of relatively honest elections that brought Juan B. Sacasa to the presidency, though the real power remained with Anastasio Somoza, commander of the United States-trained Guardia Nacional.[58]

In this context, Anastasio Somoza's rise to power was a significant outcome for the United States. Despite concerns about the undemocratic nature of Somoza's rule, FDR did not take action to challenge it. Roosevelt was more focused on addressing the economic challenges faced by the United States during the Great Depression, and did not want to risk damaging relations with Latin American countries. This led him to adopt a stance of non-intervention and non-interference in Latin American affairs, which was welcomed by many Latin American leaders. Such requests put Roosevelt in a difficult position, as they went against the nonintervention policy he had publicly endorsed. He had to weigh the benefits of helping these leaders against the risk of alienating other Latin American nations and undermining the credibility of his own policy. Ultimately, Roosevelt chose to reject these requests, signaling to other Latin American countries that the U.S. would not intervene in their internal affairs, even if it meant refusing to support leaders sympathetic to American interests.

Furthermore, the Good Neighbor Policy was implemented through a range of diplomatic and economic initiatives. Diplomatically, the United States sought to build closer ties with Latin American governments and to avoid any actions that could be perceived as interference in their internal affairs. In this context, the Good Neighbor Policy had a significant impact on United States-Latin American relations. It helped to improve the image of the United States in the region and to reduce anti-American sentiment and contributed to the

[57] Pike Fredrick B., *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Gentle Chaos* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), 164.
[58] Pike Fredrick B., *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Gentle Chaos* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010), 167-170.

consolidation of democratic institutions in many Latin American countries, as the policy encouraged the United States to support democratic governments rather than authoritarian regimes.

At the same time, the President was also focused on establishing a broad security network across the entire hemisphere, from northern Canada to the southern tip of South America at the Strait of Magellan. Inter-American conferences held in Lima (1938), Panama (1939), and Havana (1940) shifted their focus from keeping U.S. troops out of Latin America to creating a military alliance with Washington against the Axis powers of Germany, Japan, and Italy. The republics of the Americas pledged that an attack on any one of them would be treated as an attack on all. Indeed, during World War II, U.S. diplomats were concerned about the potential influence of the Nazis in Latin America and therefore pressured countries in the region to blacklist, deport, or imprison thousands of individuals from Axis nations who were thought to be spies or propagandists. In January 1942, Resolution 20 was passed at the Pan-American Foreign Ministers' meeting in Rio de Janeiro, which called for the internment of Japanese individuals. Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela all held prisoners in internment camps.[59]

Nevertheless, the initial objective of the Good Neighbor Policy to avoid any type of interference in internal affairs of Latin American countries was replaced by the need to build a solid circle of alliances that would prevent any negotiations with the Axis powers. In this context, the U.S. government provided military and economic assistance to authoritarian regimes, like the one of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, which was widely criticized for its human rights abuses and suppression of political dissent.

On the economic side, the Good Neighbor Policy aimed at promoting trade and investments between the United States and Latin America on more equal terms. The United States offered tariff reductions and other trade concessions, and encouraged U.S. businesses to invest in the region. The policy also included debt relief for Latin American countries struggling with external debt.

One of the keyways in which the Good Neighbor Policy reinforced U.S. economic dominance was through the promotion of American investments in Latin America. While these investments helped create jobs and promote economic development in the region, they also tended to benefit American companies more than local businesses. In addition, the Good Neighbor Policy encouraged Latin American countries to open up their economies to foreign investment and trade. While this led to increased economic growth in some sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture, it also made Latin American countries more vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economy. For example, when the global economy experienced a downturn in the 1930s, Latin American countries suffered from falling export prices and reduced demand for their products. However, the most important drawback of the Good Neighbor Policy was represented by its negative economic implication related to the exploitation of southern resources. The United States was particularly interested in Latin

[59]McPherson Alan, *A short history of US interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 134-135.

American oil and mining industries, and American companies often received preferential treatment in terms of access to these resources. This led to the extraction of natural resources at a rate that was often unsustainable, and which had negative long-term effects on the environment and the economy.

Foreign oil interests started developing concessions in the early 1900s, but the Mexican Revolution led to a nationalist sentiment that opposed foreign exploitation. This sentiment was reflected in the Constitution of 1917, which granted subsoil rights to the state. Enforcement of this provision caused problems in the 1920s, but Republican administrations found ways to preserve the private companies' holdings instead of addressing the fundamental issues. When Cardenas became president, he promoted labor unions and supported efforts to improve working conditions and wages for oil field workers. On March 18, 1938, he issued a decree expropriating the foreign oil companies' assets, declaring them to be of public utility and offering compensation to be paid over ten years. This action led to immediate reactions and measures taken by both the companies and the U.S. government.

The U.S. State Department sent diplomatic notes to the Mexican government, urging them to provide "*prompt, adequate, and effective compensation*" to the companies affected by the expropriation decree.[60] The Export-Import Bank refused to finance Mexican projects, and the companies attempted to boycott Mexican oil sales and prevent the country from purchasing oil equipment. While the companies acknowledged Mexico's sovereign right to expropriate, they insisted on immediate compensation and international arbitration of the matter. Ideally, the companies wanted complete control over their properties and management of the Mexican oil industry, but if that was not possible, they demanded immediate compensation that included payment for the subsoil resources. In response, the companies began withdrawing large sums of money from Mexico as a form of economic coercion to force the government to capitulate.[61]

Despite pressure from the U.S. government, the Mexican government refused to provide immediate compensation or accept international arbitration. In this situation, the U.S. government eventually agreed to Mexico's proposal of creating a two-man commission to determine compensation, but many companies, led by Standard Oil, continued to reject the idea. They argued that accepting compensation based on confiscatory valuation would set a negative precedent and sacrifice the principle of property rights. In November 1941, the two governments announced an agreement to settle the oil dispute and signed cooperation accords that included financial assistance to Mexico from the U.S. Treasury Department and the Export-Import Bank. As part of the agreement, the dispute over the expropriation was resolved through negotiation, resulting in the

[60] Daniels to FDR, Sept. 14, 1937, B. 16, JD; Cronon, Daniels, pp. 185-229; Meyer, Mexico and the United States, pp. 149-72.
[61] Gellman Irwin F., *Good neighbor diplomacy* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 51-52.

exit of the SONJ and the payment of a negotiated sum, of which $18,391,641 corresponded to SONJ and $3,589,158 to the Standard Oil of California group.[62]

Additionally, the policy of non-intervention was embedded in a wider regional context, represented by the Seventh Inter-American Conference held in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1933. In this occasion, following the introduction of the Good Neighbor Policy, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated that "no government need fear any intervention on the part of the United States under the Roosevelt administration."[63] In December 1936, both Hull and President Franklin D. Roosevelt attended a conference in Buenos Aires during which they endorsed a statement condemning the "*intervention by one state in the internal or external affairs of another State*" and declared that the "*forcible collection of pecuniary debts*" was illegal. The policy signaled a willingness to allow Latin Americans to manage their own political affairs, but when U.S. military forces withdrew from the former protectorates, they established constabularies or police contingents, under the auspices of U.S. occupation authorities, ostensibly to maintain constitutional order.[64]

In conclusion, the Good Neighbor Policy had both positive and negative consequences for United States-Latin American relations. On the one hand, the policy helped to improve the image of the U.S. in the region and fostered greater cooperation between the U.S. and Latin American countries. The policy emphasis on non-interventionism and respect for national sovereignty helped to allay some of the concerns about U.S. imperialism and hegemony that had been prevalent in the region. The policy also promoted cultural exchange and cooperation in areas such as education, health, and infrastructure development, which helped to build stronger ties between the U.S. and Latin America. On the other hand, the policy's emphasis on non-interventionism was clouded by the U.S. continued support to authoritarian regimes in Latin America. The policy also did not address the underlying economic and social issues that were driving anti-U.S. sentiment in Latin America and many Latin Americans saw the policy as a cosmetic change in U.S. foreign policy that was not meant to fundamentally alter U.S. relationship with the region.

2.4 United States influence in Latin America at the end of WW2

The previous section focused on the Good Neighbor Policy and how it was characterized by different shades of intervention in Latin America, raising doubts and questions about the genuine intentions of the United States to become “better neighbors”. By contrast, these doubts and debates have been promptly overcome with the beginning of the Truman administration and its projection in the Cold War scenario. Indeed,

[62] Pérez Flores Fidel & Cunha Filho Clayton M., *The Oil Nationalizations in Bolivia (1937) and Mexico (1938): A Comparative Study of Asymmetric Confrontations with the United States* (Latin American Research Review, 2020), 678-680.
[63] Gilderhus Mark, *The Second Century: U.S.–Latin American Relations since 1889* (Debrecen, Czech Republic: Centre for Arts, Humanities and Sciences (CAHS), acting on behalf of the University of Debrecen CAHS, 2000), 78.
[64] Gilderhus Mark, *The Second Century: U.S.–Latin American Relations since 1889* (Debrecen, Czech Republic: Centre for Arts, Humanities and Sciences (CAHS), acting on behalf of the University of Debrecen CAHS, 2000), 79.

from this point onward, debates would not be centered on whether the United States is intervening in a country and, consequently, the degree of intervention, but it would be centered how often it was intervening. This section will be aimed at describing the shift in U.S. foreign policy from a non-interventionist agenda, or at least overt interventionism, to a global approach based on containment policy and anti-communism. In particular, this section will focus on two main examples: the Guatemalan coup against Arbenz in 1954; and the U.S. economic influence through the Alliance for Progress proposed by Kennedy.

The United States played a significant role in shaping the political and economic landscape of Latin America after the end of World War II. As the Cold War intensified, the U.S. government sought to contain the spread of communism by supporting anti-communist regimes and promoting economic development in the region. However, this intervention often had unintended consequences and led to a complex and controversial relationship between the United States and Latin America.

The end of World War II marked the beginning of the Cold War, a period of geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. As part of its strategy to contain communism, the United States became heavily involved in Latin America, which was seen as a potential area of Soviet expansion. In 1947, the U.S. government introduced the Truman Doctrine, which pledged to provide economic and military aid to countries threatened by communism. This policy was applied globally, with a particular focus to ongoing tensions in Turkey and Greece where the Truman administration perceived the need to prevent the victory of communist factions. Nevertheless, the Doctrine was also directed towards Latin America, with the U.S. government providing aid to anti-communist governments and supporting military regimes that were hostile to leftist movements. The need to continue this trend of containment was perceived also by successive administrations, such as Eisenhower's, and became the foundation of U.S. foreign policy from that point onward.

One of the most significant examples of U.S. intervention in Latin America was the CIA involvement in the overthrow of democratically elected government in Guatemala in 1954, aimed at toppling the leftist government of Arbenz. Indeed, the U.S. supported a coup in Guatemala in order to accomplish its foreign agenda goals during the Eisenhower administration of resisting Communism in the Western Hemisphere. In addition to anti-Communist sentiment, the U.S. government was also concerned about the influence of left-wing movements in Guatemala, which it believed were sympathetic to Soviet communism. The United Fruit Company (UFCO), which had significant economic interests in Guatemala, also played a major role in shaping U.S. policy towards the country. The company, which owned a large portion of the country's land, was concerned about the possibility that the Guatemalan government's land reform policies could lead to the redistribution of some of its land holdings.

When a popular uprising against Ubico broke out in 1944, resulting in the takeover of the political power by Juan José Arevalo, despite the U.S. government's initial support to the new democratic government,

this attitude soon changed due to concerns over the new government's policies, which included land reform and nationalization of industries. Arevalo's administration implemented a series of social and economic reforms, including land reform, labor laws and public education. These reforms aimed to address the vast inequalities that existed in Guatemala, where a small group of landowners and foreign businesses held most of the wealth and power, while the majority of the population lived in poverty. The reforms were met with resistance from the wealthy elite and foreign business interests, particularly the UFCO, which saw its profits threatened by the land reform program. The Eisenhower administration, which came to power in 1953, viewed Arevalo's reforms as a threat to U.S. interests in Guatemala and in the region as a whole. The administration believed that the reforms were creating a climate of instability and opening the door for Communist influence in Guatemala. The U.S. government viewed these policies as threatening to U.S. business interests in Guatemala, particularly those of the UFCO.

In 1951, Jacobo Arbenz was democratically elected as president of Guatemala. His government continued the policies of land reform and nationalization of industries, which further raised concerns in the U.S. government. Arbenz' Agrarian Reform Law was a significant step toward land reform and social justice in Guatemala. It aimed to redistribute land to the landless peasants, who made up the majority of the population, from the large landowners who owned vast tracts of uncultivated land. This move was in line with the goals of the Guatemalan Revolution, which aimed to end the social, economic, and political inequality that had existed in Guatemala for centuries. However, the implementation of the land reform law was met with fierce opposition from the United Fruit Company, which had extensive land holdings in Guatemala. The UFCO lobbied the U.S. government to intervene, claiming that the land reform law was a Communist-inspired measure that threatened U.S. interests in the region. The Eisenhower administration, which was strongly anti-Communist, believed these claims and authorized the CIA to organize and fund a coup against Arbenz in 1954, which succeeded in overthrowing him and led to a long period of political repression and violence in Guatemala, including a brutal civil war that lasted from 1960 to 1996.

The United Fruit Company was particularly displeased with Arbenz' policies, as they directly threatened its economic interests in the country. The expropriation of uncultivated lands impacted UFCO-owned plantations, and the construction of a new port and highways threatened its monopoly on transportation and docking facilities. UFCO used its political influence in the United States to lobby the Eisenhower administration to take action against the Arbenz government. The company hired public relations firms to disseminate negative propaganda about Arbenz and his government, portraying them as Communist and anti-American.[65]

[65] Moye Laura, *The United States Intervention in Guatemala*, (Winfield, Kansas: Pi Gamma Mu: International Honor Society in Social Science, 1998), 44-50.

The Guatemalan Communists were key to labor movements, the education systems, peasant organizations, and other non-Communist groups. Merging with the Revolutionary Workers' Party of Guatemala, on order from Moscow, they became the Guatemalan Labor Party and were recognized by Arbenz in 1952. Many of them formed the National Democratic Front that served as an informal advisory committee to Arbenz on national policy. However, despite giving legal status to the Communists and relying on their support for his reforms, Arbenz insisted that his government was not Communist and that he was not a Communist. He maintained that his government was a nationalist, democratic, and progressive one that aimed to improve the living standards of the Guatemalan people. Nonetheless, his association with the Communists and his reforms made him a target of U.S. intervention.

In late 1953, due to concerns about the potential for Soviet influence in the Western Hemisphere, President Eisenhower secretly instructed the CIA to plan "Operation PBSuccess" to overthrow the government of Arbenz in Guatemala. The CIA approached Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, who had previously attempted a failed coup against Arbenz and was in exile, to lead the invasion. The U.S. provided Castillo Armas with arms, financial aid, and three old bomber planes. The CIA trained a force of several hundred Guatemalan exiles in Honduras and Nicaragua, and Castillo Armas led this force across the Guatemalan border on June 18th, 1954. The U.S. also used psychological warfare, including radio propaganda and leaflets, to undermine support for the Arbenz government.[66]

Arbenz believed that he needed weapons to protect his government from potential internal uprisings and external invasions, especially after learning about Castillo Armas' invasion plan. However, the U.S. had denied selling arms to Guatemala since 1948, and both the U.S. and Britain blocked arms sales from other countries to Guatemala. Guatemala attempted to purchase arms from several countries, including Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, and Switzerland, but these efforts were unsuccessful. As a result, Arbenz decided to purchase weapons from Czechoslovakia. This gave the U.S. a pretext to justify its intervention. Although Arbenz intended the arms to be used by peasants and workers as a balance against the military, in reality, the weapons would have been in the hands of the army, which was the only force capable of easily overthrowing him. The tensions between Arbenz' government and Honduras were further exacerbated by a general strike that erupted in Honduras in May, which was led by individuals sympathetic to the Guatemalan Revolution. There were also suspicions that these leaders may have received financial support from Arbenz, which worsened the already difficult situation.[67]

Despite Arbenz' connections with the Guatemalan Communists, it is important to note that there is no evidence that he had direct contact with the Soviet Union and was primarily focused on consolidating power

[66] Haines Gerald K., *CIA and Guatemala Assassination Proposals, 1952-1954* (CIA History Staff Analysis, 1995).
[67] Friedman Max P., *Fracas in Caracas: Latin American Diplomatic Resistance to United States Intervention in Guatemala in 1954* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2010), 672.

among peasants and workers in Guatemala. Nevertheless, the U.S. government feared that Guatemala would become a Soviet satellite state, which would be strategically located near the Panama Canal and Mexico, two countries that the U.S. deemed important to its security interests. The U.S. government believed that Arbenz' land reform and other socialist policies were not only a threat to the economic interests of American companies in Guatemala but also to American security interests in the region. For the United States, Communism represented a global threat orchestrated by Soviet Union and, therefore, the possibility of the rise of a Guatemalan Communist regime represented a major issue to Guatemalan democracy and the security of the Hemisphere.

In 1954, the United States managed to overthrow the Guatemalan government, but the reasons for doing so, the methods used, and the outcome all raised questions. The U.S. seemed to lack a proper understanding of the situation in Guatemala and had an exaggerated fear of Communism. The Guatemalan Communists were not in power and were more focused on social change and land and labor reforms than on promoting a pro-Soviet agenda. However, U.S. leaders were under pressure from U.S. business interests and public opinion, and were convinced that they had to take strong anti-Communist measures. They were willing to use any justification, even not reliable evidence, to intervene in Guatemala. This led to actions that violated international law and undermined progress toward democratic reforms.[68]

In addition to its political intervention, the United States also sought to promote economic influence in Latin America. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy introduced the Alliance for Progress, a program aimed at promoting economic growth and social progress in the region. The program involved a commitment of $20 billion over a ten-year period, with the United States providing most of the funding. The program also involved efforts to promote land reform, increase education and healthcare, and reduce economic inequality.

In March 1961, only a few weeks after becoming President of the United States, Kennedy made a significant speech on Latin America. Addressing diplomats from the Western Hemisphere and key members of Congress at the White House, Kennedy redefined the Monroe Doctrine in the context of the Cold War. He referred to figures such as Simón Bolívar, Jose de San Martin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to emphasize a shared history of freedom between North and South Americans, who were united against both historical and contemporary "*despotisms of the Old World*" that threatened the people of the New World. Kennedy did not mention the Soviet Union or China by name, nor did he refer to communism specifically. Instead, he identified "*tyranny*" as the enemy, whether it was from within or outside "*the hemisphere*"[69].

[68] Moye Laura, *The United States Intervention in Guatemala* (Winfield, Kansas: Pi Gamma Mu: International Honor Society in Social Science, 1998), 44-50.

[69] Dunne Michael, *Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America: Part I: From the White House to the Charter of Punta del Este* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 1390.

Indeed, the U.S. military interventions between 1959 and the end of the Cold War were primarily motivated by the goal of preventing the Cuban Revolution from spreading and succeeding. This revolution heightened tensions in Latin America and the Caribbean, as the United States viewed the Soviet Union as their primary opponent in the region, and any victory by the Soviets would automatically represent a loss for the United States.[70]

Kennedy's goal was to encourage a revolution of ideas and efforts in the American continent, but one that would be acceptable to Washington. In order to achieve this, the U.S. would convene and support various inter-American organizations to begin planning. This initiative would be an unprecedented effort aimed at meeting the fundamental needs of people in the region, such as access to housing, employment, land, healthcare, and education. Indeed, the U.S. would also commit funds to social goals such as combating illiteracy, diseases, poverty, reforming tax structures, and promoting land reform to demonstrate its commitment to these ideals. Kennedy's vision for the Alliance for Progress included macroeconomic initiatives such as supporting free trade areas and stabilizing commodity prices. However, the success of the Alliance was to be a collective effort by self-motivated governments, and its success would be evaluated based on the achievement of social goals such as combating illiteracy, poverty, and promoting land reform. While Kennedy's speech was inspiring, its coded language was subject to criticism, and its specific enumerations provided a checklist for evaluating the Alliance's achievements.[71]

This resistance was evident in the early years of the Alliance for Progress. Despite Kennedy's rhetoric and financial commitments, the United States remained primarily concerned with containing communism and protecting its own economic interests in the region. This led to a prioritization of military aid and security assistance to governments perceived as friendly or vulnerable to communist influence, rather than meaningful social and economic reform. Additionally, U.S. efforts to undermine or overthrow leftist governments, such as those of Cuba, Chile, and Nicaragua, created a sense of suspicion and distrust among Latin American leaders, undermining the Alliance's stated goals of promoting cooperation and self-motivation among the nations of the region. Ultimately, the Alliance for Progress fell short of its ambitious goals, failing to bring about significant and lasting change in the economic, social, and political conditions of Latin America.

Prior to the launch of the Alliance for Progress by Kennedy, many written works had already extensively covered the social and political economy of Latin America after World War II. These analyses often described the continent's geographical diversity, as well as its social, linguistic, ethnic, and economic divisions both among and within its 20 republics. Latin America was commonly described as

[70] McPherson Alan, *A short history of US interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 148-149.

[71] Dunne Michael, *Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America: Part I: From the White House to the Charter of Punta del Este* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 1391.

"*underdeveloped*" in comparison to North America and most of Western Europe, with per capita wealth being a key point of comparison. The economic inferiority of Latin America was attributed to various factors, including lack of foreign investment, unfavorable trade terms, flight of domestic capital, inflation, poor public finance management, unfair taxation policies and inefficient land use by large landowners. During the mid-1940s, the trade issues between Latin America and the United States became apparent. In 1944, the United States imported half a billion dollars' worth of primary products from Latin America, but by 1946, also due to the doubling of U.S. sales to the region, this surplus became a $300 million - trade surplus for the U.S..[72]

In 1947, U.S. exports to Latin America almost doubled again, while imports only slightly increased, resulting in a trade surplus for the U.S. of $1.7 billion.[73] Ten years later, a similar trade balance between Latin America and the U.S. demonstrated the persistence of these problems. Latin America responded by calling for U.S. aid equivalent to the scale of the Marshall Plan but, while Truman included the continent in his Point IV development program in 1949, the then Washington's policy emphasized the benefits of private capital investment and sought to reduce Latin American tariffs, exchange controls, and the role of the state at both the federal and regional levels, particularly in the southern economies. According to the argument, implementing these measures would lead to the revival of Latin America's economy. Unlike the Marshall Plan beneficiaries, Latin America was considered geopolitically stable, and the highly developed European economies needed reconstruction after the war, which was a different situation from the Latin American proponents of a Marshall Plan who wanted to industrialize and reorganize their economy.[74]

The problems unique to Latin America were gradually recognized as being systemic and historically inherited, rather than limited to the hemisphere. Latin America was economically dependent on the developed world and formed a part of the Third World, although it was relatively prosperous. Kennedy understood that supporting authoritarian regimes to suppress social disadvantage in Latin America was not the only way to protect U.S. interests in the region. JFK and his administration prioritized democracy, but believed that authoritarianism of the right was better than revolution from the left. With this socio-political perspective in mind, the incoming Kennedy administration began developing a program for hemispheric reform, starting with the appointment of a task force to address "*Immediate Latin American problems*".[75]

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[72] Dunne Michael, *Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America: Part I: From the White House to the Charter of Punta del Este* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 1397.

[73] Thomson David, *Survey of International Affairs, 1956–1958* (London and New York: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1963), 307.

[74] Dunne Michael, *Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America: Part I: From the White House to the Charter of Punta del Este* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2013), 1397.

[75] Office of the Historian, *Report from the Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems to President-elect Kennedy* (1960). Available online at: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XII, American Republics - Office of the Historian.

It is important to keep in mind the perspective from Washington when analyzing the Alliance for Progress. For Kennedy and his administration, the fundamental aim of the Alliance was to prevent another Cuba from emerging in Latin America, regardless of whether they used incentives or coercion. Kennedy started with incentives by creating the Alliance and approving the Bay of Pigs invasion, and his successors continued this approach. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson authorized the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic, and in 1973, the Nixon administration supported the Chilean military coup against the government of Salvador Allende Gossens, in line with earlier CIA destabilization efforts. In both cases, the White House rallying cry was "*No Second Cuba*." These presidential actions embody significant historical events in the economic, political, and social analysis of the Alliance for Progress as it evolved during the 1960s, before eventually being folded and subsumed under more general U.S. foreign economic policies in the early 1970s.

2.5 From good to bad neighbor

The relationship between the United States and Latin America has gone through several transformations over the years, marked by changing geopolitical and economic factors. From the early 19th century to the early 20th century, the United States and Latin America had a relationship characterized by mutual respect, with the U.S. playing a supportive role in the region's quest for independence and economic growth. Nevertheless, this period was characterized by continuous military intervention and political influence from the U.S. to Latin America, aimed at establishing a circle of allies favorable to the United States. This initial trend was partially overcome between 1933 and 1945 with the Good Neighbor Policy and FDR's commitment to distance itself from his predecessors' foreign policies of intervention. This section will be aimed at the describing how, in recent decades, this relationship has undergone a significant shift, with the U.S. coming to be viewed as a "bad neighbor" in Latin America. In addition, the section will continue with a description of the responses of Latin American countries to the United States foreign policy agenda, bringing as an example the relationship with Venezuela and Cuba in the post WW2 period.

The Cold War marked a turning point in the relationship between the United States and Latin America. The U.S. viewed Latin America as a battleground for its struggle against communism, and this led to a series of interventions and coups throughout the region. The U.S. supported right-wing dictators and militaries, suppressing left-wing movements and political opposition. This interventionist policy led to widespread resentment and distrust of the United States in the region. Latin American countries have been particularly critical of U.S. policies such as the economic embargo against Cuba, U.S. involvement in civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and the U.S. government's support for the opposition in Venezuela. Moreover, Latin Americans have always viewed economic power as the most overt and detrimental aspect of U.S. influence in the region. The exploitation and inequity they have witnessed over time have only strengthened their conviction that U.S. economic self-interest is the primary motivation behind any U.S.

presence in Latin America. The ever-widening wealth gap between the north and south in the Americas has further reinforced this belief.

In this context, Latin America, and particularly the Caribbean, experienced widespread anti-American sentiment that affected various social groups, including peasants, workers, the middle class, and the elite. This was due to feelings of exploitation and disrespect by the United States. Despite this, there was a lack of unity among Latin Americans across different social classes, which prevented them from forming effective resistance against U.S. imperialism. Over time, the U.S. government's influence extended even further, and anti-Americanism began to spread from the elites to the general population, while also rising up from the poor and shaping mainstream politics.

The emergence of "*antiyanquismo*" was a result of the intricate response to the growth and interconnectedness of the U.S. presence in Latin America. This trend was fueled by the expansion of every aspect of U.S. power - military, political, economic, and cultural - since the 19th century. Anti-Americanism developed as a fusion of these various strands, as Latin Americans increasingly rejected the notion of being dominated by the United States, viewing its industrial, military, and cultural roles as inextricably linked. Many believed that the United States had exploited Latin America's resources during World War II and did not regard its southern neighbors as equals, particularly as the Cold War intensified.[76]

Thrusting the difficult relations between the United States and the Latin American countries was the Cuban Revolution, which marked a turning point in the intensity of anti-American sentiment, taking it to new heights. The rebels successfully overthrew a dictatorship supported by the U.S. and within a year, their leader Fidel Castro severed Cuba's reliance on the United States and established an alliance with the Soviet Union. Castro also encouraged other countries in the region to launch anti-U.S. revolutions. As a result, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean became the global epicenter of anti-Americanism during this era of U.S. superpower domination. The primary opposition to U.S. interests in the region was rooted in socialist ideologies that portrayed the "Yankee" as the personification of capitalist-imperialist aggression.

After the revolution, the U.S. government imposed economic sanctions on Cuba, which severely impacted the country's economy and isolated it from the rest of the world. The Cuban government responded by promoting anti-Americanism as a means of unifying its people against what it saw as a hostile and imperialistic neighbor. This sentiment was reinforced by incidents such as the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, which heightened tensions between the two countries.

Over the years, the Cuban government has continued to promote anti-American sentiment through its state-run media and education system, portraying the United States as a capitalist and imperialist enemy that

[76] McPherson Alan, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11- 20.

seeks to undermine Cuba's sovereignty and independence. This rhetoric has been used to justify policies such as restrictions on travel and foreign investment, as well as efforts to form alliances with other countries that share similar anti-American views.

Additionally, shifting to the second example, namely the one concerning Venezuela, the United States approach to the country truly embodies the deterioration of U.S. relationship with Latin America, especially in relation to the increment of anti-American movements in the region. The approach of the U.S. towards Venezuela was represented by a plan to counteract the trend in the region towards developing an independent foreign policy, and instead reestablish U.S. dominance. It aimed at limiting the diversification of trade and investment partners, refocusing economic relations on the United States, and replace regional integration agreements with United States-centered economic integration plans. Additionally, it aimed at privatizing previously nationalized businesses. The utilization of military coups in Venezuela is a tactic intended to impose a compliant government, similar to the approach used by the U.S. in the period spanning from 1964-1983. During that time, U.S. strategists collaborated with business and military elites to overthrow nationalist and socialist governments, privatize public enterprises, and reverse social, labor, and welfare policies. The resultant client regimes implemented neoliberal policies and supported U.S.-centered integration.[77]

Venezuela has been a vocal critic of U.S. intervention in the region and truly embodied the sentiment of rejection of Latin American countries towards Washington foreign policies. Indeed, by 1958, relations between the United States and Latin America reached their lowest point in years. Latin Americans complained that the U.S. focus on the Cold War and anti-communism failed to address the pressing economic and political needs of many Latin American nations. In particular, they argued that their countries needed more basic economic assistance, not more arms to repel communism. This was the atmosphere Vice President Richard Nixon arrived in during his goodwill trip through Latin America in April and May 1958. The trip began with some controversy, as Nixon engaged in loud and bitter debates with student groups during his travels through Peru and Uruguay. In Caracas, Venezuela, however, things took a dangerous turn. A large crowd of angry Venezuelans who shouted anti-American slogans stopped Nixon’s motorcade through the capital city. They attacked the car, damaged its body and smashed the windows.[78]

The deterioration of the relationship between the U.S. and Venezuela has been ongoing for several decades and remains a significant obstacle to this day. This was further exacerbated in 1998 when Hugo Chávez was elected as President of Venezuela and declared a Bolivarian Revolution, aligning his policies with the ideals of Simón Bolívar, a revered hero and liberator of South America. Chávez' perceived animosity towards the U.S. drew increased attention, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11,

[77] Petras James & Veltmeyer Henry, *Power and Resistance: US Imperialism in Latin America* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2017), 155.
[78] History, *Vice President Nixon is attacked*, 2021. Available online at: Vice President Nixon is attacked - HISTORY

2001, which heightened sensitivities towards anti-Americanism. Chávez accused the United States of providing support to opposition groups in Venezuela and trying to destabilize the country. Following his death, his successor, Nicolás Maduro, maintained this position and has been openly critical of United States-imposed sanctions on Venezuela, claiming that they have had a detrimental impact on the nation's economy and its citizens.[79]

Moreover, these tensions were often driven also by economic concerns and the implementation, by the U.S. government, of economic policies that were perceived by Latin American countries as the constant attempt of the United States companies to increase their revenue at the expenses of the local population. Indeed, in the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. shifted its focus to promoting neoliberal economic policies in Latin America. The Washington Consensus, a set of economic policies promoted by the U.S. and international financial institutions, called for the liberalization of trade, deregulation of markets, and privatization of state-owned enterprises. These policies were implemented throughout the region, often with disastrous consequences. The privatization of public services and utilities led to skyrocketing prices and decreased access for the poor, while the liberalization of trade opened up Latin American markets to cheap imports, putting local producers out of business. The U.S. relationship with Latin America has also been strained by economic factors. The U.S. has continued to pursue neoliberal economic policies in the region, leading to growing income inequality and widespread poverty. This has fueled resentment towards the U.S. and its economic policies, with many in the region calling for greater economic sovereignty and the rejection of neoliberal policies.[80]

The difficult relationship between the United States and Latin America still continues in the 21st century. Indeed, the U.S. has continued to pursue an interventionist foreign policy, intervening in the internal affairs of several Latin American countries, including Venezuela and Bolivia. Furthermore, the United States has also maintained its embargo on Cuba, despite widespread condemnation from Latin American countries and has been criticized for its role in the drug war, which has led to widespread violence and instability in the region.

In conclusion, Latin American countries have long criticized the United States for violating their sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy. Latin American criticism of U.S. infringement of sovereignty reflects a deep-seated mistrust of U.S. intentions and a desire for greater autonomy and self-determination. While some U.S. policies in the region might have been motivated by a genuine concern for regional stability and security, they were often viewed with suspicion by Latin American countries, which feared that they are being used to advance U.S. interests at their expense.

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[79] McPherson Alan, *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Oxford, New York: Berghanan Books, 2008).
[80] Kuczynski Pedro-Pablo & Williamson John, *After the Washington Consensus: Restarting Growth and Reform in Latin America* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute, 2003).

Chapter 3

Why Nicaragua?

Summary: **3.1.** *Introduction*; **3.2.** *Past relations between United States and Nicaragua*; **3.3.** *Regional security implications*; **3.4.** *Economic implications.*

3.1 Introduction

Source: Britannica, *Nicaragua | Geography, History & Facts*. Available online at: Nicaragua | Geography, History, & Facts | Britannica

The Caribbean Sea has been a major source of concern for the United States since the Spanish-American War of 1898, as it is located in close proximity to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and offers a strategic position for commercial development and military defense. The weak and vulnerable republics in the region have made the U.S. wary of non-American aggression, leading to the expansion of the Monroe Doctrine and the creation of a separate "Caribbean Policy". This policy includes the U.S. aims to control

all canal routes between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, protect American investments, and maintain peace and stability in the region. The U.S. has exerted its influence in the area through various means, such as mediating conflicts, intervening in political affairs, expanding commercial interests, and establishing financial protectorates over weaker countries.

Nicaragua serves as a prime example of the challenges that the United States was facing in the Caribbean region. As the largest Central American state, Nicaragua possesses a valuable canal route and is strategically located near islands that could serve as naval bases. The U.S. had a strong interest in the country for military defense, protection of the Panama Canal, and commercial expansion. If a non-American power were to secure canal concessions in Nicaragua, American interests would be severely threatened. Additionally, due to the increasing trade in the region, another canal would soon be required, leading to the beginning of projects concerning the construction of a Nicaragua Canal.[81]

This chapter will explore the motivations that led the United States to intervene in Nicaragua in order to contrast the Sandinista regime. First, the chapter will describe the past relationship between United States and Nicaragua, from the mid-19th century, when the country started to be included in the list of countries that were at the center of the United States foreign interests. Then it will proceed with the analysis of the U.S. invasion of Managua in the 1920s, leading to the establishment of the Somoza rule for five decades.

Furthermore, the chapter will focus on the regional and economic interests that were involved in the matter and that played a central role in the development of the relationship between the two countries. On one hand, regional interests, represented by the importance of Nicaragua in terms of strategic position and its proximity to the Panama Canal. Moreover, an essential factor to the rise of concerns in terms of regional security was represented by the newly established diplomatic relations between Nicaragua and the Soviet Union, which could have eventually led to the spread of communism in the whole region, compromising and making more difficult for the United States to maintain deep ideological and political influence in the neighboring countries.

On the other hand, economic interests represented a major source of influence in the contrast to the regime of Sandinistas. Indeed, the chapter will explore the agrarian reforms implemented by the Sandinistas, aimed at reforming rural areas and national resources in order to decrease the level of economic disparity in the country. Additionally, the rise of a Soviet-supported regime would have also undermined the control of the United States over the Nicaragua Canal and the great contribution that it played for the U.S. economy. The combination of these factors created a concerns loophole thrusted by the fear to lose control of the whole

[81] Powell Anne I., *Relations between the United States and Nicaragua, 1898-1916* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1928), 43-45.

Western Hemisphere and, as a reiteration of the Monroe Doctrine, the need to prevent the landing of a non-American nation in the region, in particular vis-à-vis the Soviet threat.

3.2 Past relations between United States and Nicaragua

In the mid-1800s, Nicaragua's significance as a transit route across the isthmus made it a target for British and American interests. The possibility of economic benefits also attracted international business development. In 1849, due to concerns about Britain's colonial intentions, Nicaragua entered into discussions with the United States. As a result, a treaty was signed, granting the United States exclusive rights to a transit route in Nicaragua. In exchange, the United States pledged to protect Nicaragua from foreign intervention. Ephraim George Squier, the first official U.S. representative, arrived in Nicaragua on June 22, 1849, and was welcomed by both liberals and conservatives.

On August 26th, 1849, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, a U.S. businessman, and the Nicaraguan government signed a contract granting Vanderbilt's Accessory Transit Company the exclusive right to construct a transisthmian canal within twelve years. Additionally, the contract allowed Vanderbilt to use a land-and-water transit route across Nicaragua, exclusively while the canal was being built, and it was meant to be part of a larger plan to transport passengers from the eastern U.S. to California.[82]

In October 1855, American filibuster William Walker captured Granada and established a coalition government with Patricio Rivas, a conservative. However, Walker was the one with real power in Nicaragua. On November 10th, the U.S. representative to Nicaragua, John Hill Wheeler, recognized the new government without consulting the Secretary of State. Walker implemented several liberal reforms to attract foreign investments, which some considered a threat. As a result, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador declared war on Nicaragua on March 1st, 1856. Rivas fled the country, and Walker became President in June 1856. He confiscated the land of his conservative opponents, which he released to U.S. citizens, declared English the official language, and legalized slavery.

The decision to legalize slavery in Nicaragua caused fear among both conservative and liberal Nicaraguans that the United States intended to annex their country. U.S. financier Cornelius Vanderbilt began organizing opposition to the Walker government after his cross-isthmus transit company was confiscated by Walker and given to two of his former employees who had financed the filibuster. Although many southern politicians continued to support Walker, U.S. President Franklin Pierce reversed his recognition policy. From November 1856 through May 1857, the other Central American countries and Nicaraguan conservative and liberal forces, supported by the British, engaged in a destructive war against Walker's army. Whenever he was

[82] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 27.

forced to retreat, Walker would loot and destroy the surrounding areas. Rather than surrendering to the Central American forces, Walker and his army surrendered to U.S. Navy Commander C. H. Davis in Rivas. Davis returned Walker and the remnants of his army to New Orleans. Walker attempted to return to Nicaragua twice more, but was captured by the British on his last attempt in 1860, turned over to authorities in Honduras, and executed.

After William Walker's failed attempt to take over Nicaragua, a period of relative political stability followed between the conservative and liberal élite families in Nicaragua. Conservative presidents ruled the country until 1893, starting with Tomás Martínez Guerrero who served as president from 1857 to 1867. Under his leadership, the conservative government refused to ratify a treaty that would have allowed Vanderbilt's company to begin the construction of a canal, fearing more American filibustering. However, in 1862, the Dickinson-Ayon Treaty was signed, granting the United States the right to build a canal and requiring them to protect its neutrality. Nicaragua would retain sovereignty over the canal zone. Based on the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, the U.S. recognized that the construction of the canal was not an exclusive right. However, in 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant created the Inter-Oceanic Canal Commission, stating that the canal should be an "American canal, on American soil."[83]

The end of the conservative presidencies was marked by José Santos Zelaya López' presidency, which lasted from 1893 to 1909 and was characterized by a series of reforms and modernization efforts. He implemented land reforms, reformed the tax system, and expanded access to education. He also initiated a major infrastructure program that included the construction of railways and the improvement of roads, ports, and telegraph lines. Zelaya was also a strong advocate for regional integration and supported the creation of a Central American federation. However, his attempts to consolidate power and extend his influence over neighboring countries eventually led to his downfall. In 1909, he was overthrown by a coalition of conservative and liberal forces supported by the United States. The U.S. government was concerned about Zelaya's support for German interests in the region and his attempts to challenge U.S. dominance in Central America.

The presidency of liberal José Santos Zelaya Lopez, following a split in the ruling conservative party in 1893, marked a significant shift in Nicaraguan politics. The liberals quickly wrote a new constitution that attacked the privileges of the Church, provided for free secular education, guaranteed freedom of religion, and abolished the death penalty. Zelaya's economic policies and fervent nationalism brought him into conflict with the U.S. government's increasingly interventionist policy and their focus on securing rights to a cross-isthmus canal and protecting their expanding business interests.

Despite his strong nationalist beliefs, Zelaya welcomed foreign investment in Nicaragua as long as it was advantageous for the country. This led to a U.S. Banana Company gaining a monopoly on exporting

[83] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 27-32.

Nicaraguan bananas. However, Zelaya was quick to revoke concessions if he felt that they were not benefiting Nicaraguan interests or if the foreign companies did not adhere to the agreed-upon terms. For instance, when two U.S. businessmen were granted a canal commission but failed to deposit the required capital, Zelaya cancelled the concession and kept their deposit.[84]

During Zelaya's rule, the opposition from the conservative party increased as the elections were rigged in favor of the liberal party. Conservative landowners, cattle producers, and businesses, mainly located along the Mosquito Coast, were unhappy with Zelaya's policies that favored his supporters. In 1903, the United States shifted its policy toward Nicaragua to prioritize its business interests instead of gaining access to a canal. Zelaya, who was disappointed with this decision, tried to make an agreement with Japan and Germany. This made the U.S. government and its businesses even more opposed to Zelaya's administration, further fueled by his insistence on strictly enforcing agreements with U.S. businesses.

In 1909, a new revolt against Zelaya's government took place in Bluefields, led by Juan Estrada, the liberal governor of the region, Adolfo Díaz, the secretary of the La Luz and Los Angeles Mining Company, and conservative leader Emiliano Chamorro. The rebellion was supported by U.S. business interests and conservatives from Granada. Zelaya dispatched 4,000 troops to suppress the uprising, and Estrada appeared to be defeated until U.S. Major Smedley Butler arrived in Bluefields with 400 marines. In this way, the coalition managed to topple Zelaya and established a new Nicaraguan government guided by Estrada, which was supported by the U.S. government.[85]

After facing opposition from U.S. businesses and conservative Nicaraguans, Zelaya resigned from his position as president on December 16th, 1909, and fled to Mexico. José Madriz, a liberal who was supported by Zelaya, took over as president and led an attack against Juan Estrada in Bluefields the following year. However, the U.S. intervened and enforced a truce that prevented zelayistas ships from attacking Bluefields. As a result, Madriz was unable to defeat Estrada and eventually resigned and fled the country. As a result, in 1910, the United States established the Dawson Pact and installed Estrada as president and Díaz as vice-president, while Emiliano Chamorro became the leader of the Constituent Assembly and Luís Mena became Secretary of War.

The interventions carried out by the Taft administration were aimed at supporting American foreign policy by assisting the Nicaraguans in helping themselves. Secretary of State Philander Knox sought to allow the Conservative party to govern and providing financial stability to Nicaragua. The intention was for those in power to be able to effectively deal with revolts at their own expense and repay any borrowed funds. In order to accomplish this, the United States committed itself to upholding a minority government through the Dawson Pacts of October 1910 and recognized the Estrada regime in January 1911. It is noteworthy that these actions

[84] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 33-34.
[85] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 35-37.

violated the Central American Treaty of 1907 and had a negative impact on the United States' reputation in Latin America.[86]

In an effort to strengthen his position, Juan Estrada closed down the National Assembly, causing Emiliano Chamorro to flee and leading to a falling out with Luís Mena over a financial agreement with the United States. Fearing a military takeover by Mena, Estrada ordered his arrest, provoking a rebellion that led troops loyal to Mena to march on Managua. As a result, Estrada resigned in May 1911 and Díaz took over as president. However, internal disputes among members of the political élite continued to influence the country's stability and, on July 29th, 1912, when President Díaz suspended the power of General Mena, appointing General Emiliano Chamorro as head of the Army, General Mena rose up in arms and civil war broke out. Since Mena, being Minister of War, rebelled against President Adolfo Díaz Recinos in alliance with General Benjamín Zeledón. In this context, Mena captured U.S. steamships, prompting Díaz to request U.S. intervention, which was not long in coming, in the form of U.S. Marines, which arrived and defeated Mena's forces first and then Zeledòn's troops in a major battle. As a result, the U.S. achieved its foreign policy goals in Nicaragua: political stability with pro-American conservatives in power, guaranteed payments on its loans, and a pro-American business environment.[87]

In 1916, Emiliano Chamorro, the author of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty, became president with strong U.S. support. Later in 1920, Emiliano's uncle Diego Chamorro was elected president through rigged voting. The liberals complained about this unfair election, and in response, the U.S. promised fair elections in 1924 by rewriting national electoral laws. However, before the promised election, Diego Chamorro passed away in 1923, and the U.S. took a less interventionist role in the 1924 presidential election under the administration of Calvin Coolidge. As the Panama Canal was secure and Nicaragua was at peace, the American public demanded the return of U.S. Marines who had been stationed in Managua since 1912. Indeed, though the Marines were considered no longer necessary, they continued to be a source of annoyance for the liberal majority in Nicaragua. Finally, President Coolidge decided to withdraw the Marines from Nicaragua after a new president was inaugurated in 1925.[88]

After Carlos Solórzano, a conservative, became president of Nicaragua in 1925 with the support of liberal Juan Bautista Sacasa, conservative groups immediately pressured Solórzano to remove liberals from his cabinet. As a result, the liberal Minister of War José Maria Moncada and Minister of Finance Víctor Román y Reyes were dismissed. Later, in October 1925, Emiliano Chamorro took control of the army and Vice President Sacasa fled the country. The conservative-dominated Congress then replaced Solórzano with Emiliano Chamorro, who assumed the presidency in January 1926. However, this led to liberal uprisings

[86] Baylen Joseph O., *American Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-33: An Appraisal of Objectives and Results* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 1954) 131.
[87] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 38.
[88] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 39.

against the conservatives in May 1926, starting in Bluefields, leading to another intervention by the United States. In this context, U.S. Marines landed in Bluefields, and Nicaragua was once again plunged into civil war, setting the stage for significant changes in Nicaraguan politics with the emergence of Augusto César Sandino and Anastasio Somoza García.[89]

Juan Bautista Sacasa, the exiled liberal Vice-President of Nicaragua, sought the support of Mexican President Elías Calles, who was not well-liked by the United States for his actions against American oil companies in Mexico. The Calvin Coolidge administration viewed Calles as a communist and a threat to the United States. As a result, the U.S. government, along with the Nicaraguan National Guard, quelled the liberal rebellion in May 1926 at Bluefields, and another uprising in August in the west and northeast was also defeated, although a liberal army led by José Moncada managed to capture Rio Grande. The U.S. Marines prevented the liberals from taking Bluefields and, in the same year, another liberal rebellion led by Anastasio Somoza García near San Marcos was defeated by the conservative forces.[90]

The U.S. intervened in Nicaragua by using the warship Denver in the port of Corinto, which brought the opposing parties together to force an agreement, leading to the resignation of Chamorro. The U.S. maneuvered to elect Adolfo Díaz as the president because Sacasa, who had ties with Mexico and communism, was not considered an acceptable candidate. The Liberals responded by creating another government in Puerto Cabezas with Sacasa as the president, which was recognized by the government of Mexico. Sacasa fled south as U.S. Marines arrived in Puerto Cabezas, organizing a resistance to the new government. As a result, Díaz requested the U.S. Marines to return officially to help put down the liberal rebellion and, in January 1927, the Marines officially returned to Nicaragua. In early February, the Liberals seized Chinandega, but a major conservative attack by the Nicaraguan National Guard and U.S. Marines pushed them back, leading to bombing of the city by the United States, aimed at storming the liberal rebels. By the end of the month, more than 5,400 U.S. Marines occupied strategic cities throughout Nicaragua, and 11 warships were brought in Nicaraguan harbors.[91]

In this context, U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson traveled to Tipitapa, a small town near Managua, to negotiate a new agreement. Here, Stimson informed the liberals that the Marines would not allow Díaz to be defeated in a war, and he would remain president until supervised elections were held in 1928. In order to achieve a fair compromise, Stimson promised that the elections would be fair, and some liberals were added to Díaz Cabinet. As a result, the parties agreed to the terms and, as a result, the liberal and conservative armies were disarmed, and a new National Guard was established under U.S. supervision. In order to consolidate his position within the country and vis-à-vis his North American allies, Somoza began to align himself more with

[89] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 39.
[90] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 39.
[91] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 44-45.

U.S. interests, while Sandino refused to sign the agreement as long as U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua, setting the stage for a future clash between Somoza and Sandino.[92]

Indeed, Augusto César Sandino, with a small army of miners, peasants, and laborers from northern, mountainous Nicaragua, fought a six-year guerrilla war against the occupying Marines until they left in January 1933. As a result, Sandino became a hero and a symbol of Nicaraguan nationalism, independence, and freedom by defeating a superior enemy. However, before leaving the country, the United States made sure that Anastasio Somoza García was in charge of the nonpartisan National Guard. However, Somoza later murdered Sandino and then turned the Guard into an instrument of his own personal power. Having eliminated his potential political adversary, Somoza began a series of abuses and oppressions and, with the support of the Guard, he staged a coup in 1936 and claimed the presidency. As a result of the successful coup, the Somoza family then ruled Nicaragua from 1936 to 1979 and they maintained their power by amassing an economic empire, controlling the most powerful force in the country (the National Guard), manipulating both liberal and conservative agro-export elites with economic and political incentives, controlling the liberal party that governed all branches of government, and ensuring continued U.S. support for their regime.

3.3 Regional security implications

As analyzed in the previous section, throughout the 20th century, Central America has been under the control and influence of the United States, with a history of frequent military invasions and occupations, as well as economic and political interventions. Elected officials and army generals were often manipulated to align with the interests of foreign investors and strategic goals of the United States.

This section will be aimed at describing the motivations that led the United States to directly intervene in Nicaragua following the rise of the Sandinistas in 1979. First, the section will focus on the crucial role played by the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nicaragua and how these pushed the United States to a firmer opposition vis-à-vis the situation. Indeed, the United States deemed crucial for both their regional and, consequently, national security preventing the establishment of communist governments in Latin America. Especially after the Cuban revolution of 1959, the United States became more and more concerned with the need to avoid a "Second Cuba". Second, the section will take into consideration the strategic role of the Panama Canal and the infiltration of a Soviet-friendly power could represent a strategic problem for the United States both in military and economic terms.

From the late 1920s, the United States began to create "national" armies in Central America and the Caribbean to avoid repeated military interventions to suppress nationalist challenges to client rulers and protect

[92] Baylen Joseph O., *American Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-33: An Appraisal of Objectives and Results* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 1954) 137-139.

American economic and financial interests. Since World War II, many officers from the sub-region armies, navy, and air force have received training in American military training centers and political indoctrination in the values and beliefs of the dominant power, such as anti-communism, anti-nationalism, and open capitalist economies. The Department of Defense significant supply of weapons to the Central American militaries, along with the presence of U.S. army, naval, and air force missions, bilateral military agreements, and joint maneuvers, have further strengthened professional and personal relationships. The outcomes of this have been sub-regional armed forces that were ready to support the political and economic status quo and safeguard the power and prerogatives of these coercive institutions, which align with U.S. permanent interests, during periods of societal upheaval and political transition.[93]

This net of friendly armies and allies became crucial with the end of WW2 and the increase of the tensions between United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, in this period, the United States adopted a strong policy of intervention, aimed at preventing the rise and the consequent spread of communism in Latin America. In the context of Nicaragua, the United States firmly supported the authoritarian regime of Somoza, whose anti-communist policies and ideas corresponded to U.S. needs at the time. Indeed, from the late 1940s to the mid-1970s, the U.S. presidents considered the Somoza regime, which was implacably anti-communist, as a valued ally in the sub-region and pursued policies that ensured the consolidation and longevity of the Nicaraguan dynasty.

The increasing concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the Somoza family was intertwined with ongoing American political endorsements, military assistance, public economic aid, private bank loans, direct investments, trade relations, and support for Nicaraguan loan requests to multilateral development banks. In exchange for Somoza's willingness to collaborate with the U.S. strategic goals, promote an open economy, and support U.S. political positions in the Organization of American States and the United Nations, Democratic and Republican administrations alike accommodated the authoritarian rule.

Nevertheless, despite the affinity of the Somoza regime towards the United States, part of the Nicaraguan political scenario was not in accordance with Somoza's regime and, on the contrary, wanted to promote a political agenda aimed at reducing the high levels of poverty and disparity, especially in the rural areas. This provoked tensions and concerns in the United States political élite due to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Nicaraguan left-wing parties, leading to a constant increase in interest towards the establishment of a communist government in Nicaragua.

The beginning of diplomatic relations between Nicaragua and the Soviet Union dates back to the mid-1940s, when Nicaragua recognized the USSR, along with several other Latin American countries, during a period of reduced tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union due to their wartime collaboration against

[93] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 33.

the Nazis and the 1943 abolition of the Comintern, which aimed to reassure the USSR allies. During this time, Nicaragua experienced a brief political relaxation, leading to the creation of the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) in 1944, which was founded by leaders of the Nicaraguan Workers Party (PTN), a politically diverse party that had members who had fled to Costa Rica during the late 1930s.[94]

In the 1950s, the future leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), including Carlos Fonseca, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomás Borge, were recruited by the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN). However, the recruitment was not fully successful, as the young revolutionaries felt that the PSN did not do enough to fight against the Somoza regime, and they were also disappointed by the PSN's lack of commitment to armed struggle. The Sandinistas later criticized the PSN for collaborating with the Somozas, failing to support strikes, betraying peasant organizers, and even betraying Fonseca himself on one occasion. Despite their distrust of pro-Moscow parties, the Sandinistas did not harbor negative views of the USSR itself.[95]

During 1959, Fidel Castro asked the United States for economic aid and attempted to negotiate an aid program with the International Monetary Fund. He visited Washington in April of that year and expressed his desire to keep Cuba neutral between the superpowers during the global cold war, and showed his support for the West. When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, they announced their intention to join the Nonaligned Movement and establish diplomatic and economic relations with socialist countries while maintaining traditional relations with the United States and Western Europe. Their aim was to have an independent foreign policy and diversify their trading partners and, unlike Cuba in 1959, Nicaragua in 1979 had more opportunities to achieve these objectives. Indeed, Nicaragua developed bilateral political and economic relationships with various countries in Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Moreover, Nicaragua was not as reliant on the United States for its foreign trade as Cuba was two decades earlier, and therefore, it had greater prospects for expanding and diversifying trade relations. In this context, the U.S. political élite was worried about the links that the Sandinistas had made with the Soviet Union and their domestic socialist orientation.[96]

These concerns were mainly related to the increasing relations between Nicaragua and the Soviet Union both on diplomatic and economic level. Indeed, on 19th October 1979, the Soviet Union and Nicaragua signed a joint communique, normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries. In March 1980, a high-level delegation from Nicaragua's government visited Moscow and signed the first-ever bilateral trade agreement between the two countries. During this visit, a series of agreements were signed, including a protocol establishing trade agencies in both countries, an agreement on economic and technical cooperation covering

[94] Edelman Marc, *Soviet-Nicaraguan Relations and the Contra War* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1988), 47.
[95] Edelman Marc, *Soviet-Nicaraguan Relations and the Contra War* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1988), 47-48.
[96] Shearman Peter, *The Soviet Challenge in Central America* (New York City, New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1987), 212-213.

various sectors such as mining, agriculture, energy, transport, communications, and professional training of cadres. Additionally, an agreement on air travel and an agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation were also signed.[97]

Furthermore, in 1982, Nicaragua's primary exports to the Soviet Union are coffee and sugar, and it has become increasingly reliant on importing oil and machinery from the Soviet Union. Nicaragua was also granted observer status at meetings of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and established trade relations with other Eastern European nations. By the mid-1980s, Nicaragua, under the Sandinistas, had developed strong economic and diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union. The country had taken a significant step towards full integration within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).[98]

Moreover, as a sign of diplomatic closeness, Nicaragua failed to vote in favor of an unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and, with Soviet aid, established a militarily powerful presence in the region. Indeed, the buildup of the Sandinistas' armed forces represented a strong justification used to support a military solution to the "Nicaraguan question." In this context, Central American countries experienced an arms race since the Nicaraguan Revolution and the civil war in El Salvador, which was partly due to internal factors and partly due to the influence of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

However, while the growth of the armed forces in El Salvador can be attributed to internal factors, the United States considered the Nicaraguan Revolution as a threat to its security and the stability of the Western hemisphere. As a result of the shift of the Soviet-American rivalry to the region, tensions within the different countries rose, leading to a dangerous pace of militarization. This trend also concerned the Sandinistas, which, feeling threatened by the United States, turned to the Soviet Union for arms to defend their revolution.

The United States viewed the Sandinistas as a threat to regional stability because of their Marxist-Leninist ideology and their alliance with the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration believed that the Sandinistas were intent on spreading communism throughout Central America and that their ultimate goal was to establish a Soviet-style regime in Nicaragua. This, in turn, would have threatened the stability of neighboring countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, which were also embroiled in civil wars at the time. The United States feared that if Nicaragua fell under Soviet influence, it could become a base for Soviet military operations in the region, posing a direct threat to U.S. national security.

In conclusion, the U.S. government also feared that the Sandinistas would threaten its strategic interests in the region. One of these interests was the control of the Panama Canal, which the United States had

[97] Shearman Peter, *The Soviet Challenge in Central America* (New York City, New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1987), 213.
[98] Shearman Peter, *The Soviet Challenge in Central America* (New York City, New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1987), 213-214.

maintained since the early 20th century. The U.S. government believed that the Sandinistas could use their influence in the region to challenge U.S. control of the canal, which was critical to the U.S. economy and military. Indeed, the strategic significance of Nicaragua increased significantly in the vision of the U.S. State Department after the Spanish-American War of 1898, particularly with the decision to construct the Panama Canal in 1903. The canal route was safeguarded by naval bases, and the U.S. deployed Marines and gunboats to protect American investments.[99]

Indeed, the Panama Canal has played a vital role in U.S. national security since its construction in the early 20th century. One of the primary reasons for the canal's construction was to provide the U.S. with a shorter and safer trade route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, but it also had significant strategic value for the country. The canal has allowed the U.S. to move its naval forces quickly between the two oceans, giving the country a significant advantage in terms of military capabilities. During both World War I and World War II, the canal played a crucial role in the movement of troops and supplies. For example, the U.S. was able to transport troops and equipment quickly and efficiently to the Pacific Theater during World War II, helping to secure a decisive victory in the region.

3.4 Economic implications

The United States has historically had economic interests in Nicaragua centered on maintaining access to Nicaragua's natural resources, such as its fertile land and mineral deposits, as well as ensuring political stability in the region. In the early 20th century, the United States exerted significant economic influence over Nicaragua through its support for the Somoza regime, which allowed American companies to exploit the country's resources. However, political instability, corruption, and concerns over human rights violations have complicated U.S. economic interests in the country. This section will be aimed at describing the process that led Nicaragua become a major actor for the United States economic interests. In particular, the section will focus on the role linked to the creation of the Nicaraguan Canal and how this represented a great opportunity for the different U.S. industrial areas. Subsequently, the section will describe Sandinistas' agrarian reforms and their impact on U.S. companies located in Nicaragua.

In the late 19th century, there was a strong belief in the United States that the Nicaragua route, which used the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua, was the only suitable route for an interoceanic canal across the American Isthmus. This general idea was also supported by concerns on recent construction works by France, aimed at creating a Panama Canal, opposing to the U.S. idea of keeping non-American country's business outside of the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, influential figures in the United States, such as President Hayes

[99] Gismondi Michael & Mouat Jeremy, *Merchants, Mining and Concessions on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast: Reassessing the American Presence, 1895-1912* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 846.

and General Grant, feared foreign monopoly of a single interoceanic waterway at a time when they regarded free access to such a transit as essential to the national interest.

The Nicaragua Canal was expected to have two general economic effects. Firstly, it was meant to provide a wider market for raw materials obtained from agriculture, mining, forestry, and other extractive industries. Secondly, it would have assisted American manufacturers by reducing transportation costs, which would lead to a wider range of markets for finished goods and a lower cost of raw materials. This would then enable American manufacturers to compete more effectively for both domestic and foreign markets. In this context, the Nicaragua Canal was expected to stimulate the production of raw materials and increase American manufacturing by reducing transportation costs and expanding the market for raw and finished products. Analyzing the services provided by the waterway, it appears clear how the latter would also provide American industries with a new and efficient water highway for domestic commerce, supply a shorter and more direct route for the foreign trade of the eastern and central parts of the United States to countries bordering the Pacific, and provide a shorter highway for the foreign trade of the Western States to Europe.[100]

The construction of an inter-oceanic canal was meant to provide easier access for the finished products of mills and factories in the eastern region to emerging markets in the western States. For the northeastern part of the United States, the Nicaragua canal would represent an opportunity to create wider markets for its manufactured goods. Although cotton production was still the leading industry in the South, with production surpassing marketing possibilities, industries in the southern part of the United States were also focused on extraction, in particular coal and iron mining, which were rapidly developing in the region, leading to growth in the manufacturing industry. The South was so seeking to expand its market for agricultural products, coal, and iron, and would soon require more extensive domestic and foreign markets to sell its manufactured goods.[101]

The States of the Pacific Slope were relatively isolated from the markets in the rest of the United States compared to other regions. Farming, lumber production, and stock raising were the leading industries in this region. The far West has emphasized the need to connect the eastern and western parts of the United States with a commercial highway, such as the Nicaragua Canal, more strongly than any other region. This is because, under the then transportation conditions, either by rail over the mountains or by the circuitous water route around Cape Horn, a significant portion of its productions were excluded from the best markets for the products that the West had to offer.[102]

[100] Johnson Emory, *Nicaragua and the Economic Development of the United States* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1896), 38.
[101] Johnson Emory, *Nicaragua and the Economic Development of the United States* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1896), 39.
[102] Johnson Emory, *Nicaragua and the Economic Development of the United States* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1896), 40.

The post-World War II period saw a significant expansion of the United States economic interests in Nicaragua. During this time, American corporations and the U.S. government became increasingly focused on securing access to the country's natural resources and establishing a foothold in the region's growing economy. In the context of the Cold War, the United States viewed Nicaragua as an important strategic location in the fight against communism, and the U.S. government began to take a more active role in shaping the country's political and economic landscape.

One of the ways in which the United States sought to exert its influence in Nicaragua was through economic means. Indeed, American corporations like United Fruit Company and Standard Fruit Company had long been involved in the country's agricultural sector, controlling vast swaths of land and employing thousands of workers. However, in the post-World War II period, the U.S. government began to provide significant financial support to these companies, helping them to expand their operations and further cement their dominance in the country's economy.

Moreover, the United States' interests in Nicaragua's politics and economy was not always smooth and without concerns at a stability level. Indeed, Nicaragua country experienced significant political turmoil in the 1970s and 1980s, with the socialist government led by the Sandinistas coming to power and establishing close ties with the Soviet Union. In this context, the Sandinista government implemented significant initiatives to transform prevailing economic and political relationships in agriculture. The primary objective was to address historical inequalities that had marginalized a significant proportion of the agrarian population. Prior to the Sandinista's victory in 1979, this population had low income, illiteracy, malnutrition, poor health, no political representation, and faced repression by governmental and non-governmental entities.

Furthermore, the Sandinistas recognized that various efforts were necessary to improve the conditions of direct agricultural producers such as workers and peasants. These included redistributing land to establish state farms and production cooperatives, improving living and working conditions for permanent and temporary wage workers on state farms, and enhancing the conditions of poor and landless peasants in production cooperatives. Complementary policies were also established to support state farms, cooperatives, and individual peasant producers who already had permanent or temporary access to land.[103]

Additionally, Sandinistas' economic policies provided guaranteed state prices, state marketing services, bank credit, technical assistance, agricultural research, support for mass organizations of peasants and workers, and social services to the broadly defined reformed state and reformed and non-reformed peasant sectors. These resources and services were seen as essential measures to create a reasonable or at least improved standard of living for the vast majority of the agrarian population. In this way, the Sandinista government hoped that their agrarian policies would have other positive effects, such as increased food

[103] Zalkin Michael, *The Sandinista Agrarian Reform: 1979–1990?* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 1990), 47.

marketing to benefit the urban working class, state workers, and informal sector members. They also aimed to boost agro-export production to generate foreign exchange and accumulate agrarian surplus through state farm profits, urban/rural trade terms, and taxes on agro-exports. The agrarian surplus was to be directed towards productive and social investments to create future benefits for both rural and urban populations.[104]

Until the end of the 1970s, American investment and banking capital in Central America closely collaborated with the U.S. and its right-wing authoritarian allies. However, there have been instances of political crisis and regime change where these groups have shown some differences, particularly when the United States lost its power to enforce its agenda. During these times, the U.S. has exhibited various stances toward the ruling regime, ranging from compromise to outright opposition.

When the Chamorro assassination and general strike occurred in January 1978, the American business community did not believe that anything terrible would happen. They believed that the Somoza's military power was strong enough to resist any opposition challenge. However, in July 1979, when the Sandinistas took control of the political power in Nicaragua, American economic interests adopted a generally cooperative and cautious approach rather than a confrontational or hostile one. The cautious and pragmatic response of the bankers and multinational corporations was driven by a desire to avoid policies that could be harmful and result in radical socioeconomic changes, such as rejecting foreign debt and dismantling the private sector. This was particularly important when the U.S. government was unable to influence the Sandinista leadership in ways that were favorable to foreign capital. This flexible behavior was also influenced by the belief that the needs of underdeveloped countries, exacerbated by the economic destruction caused by the civil war, would eventually compel the revolutionaries to accommodate the demands and necessities of foreign investors.[105]

As the intensity of political and class conflict escalated, U.S. investors grew increasingly disenchanted with what they perceived to be the Carter administration's indecisiveness and lack of firm action to bring about a solution that would prevent a radical outcome. The political and military collapse of the Somoza family dynasty in July 1979 elicited a mixed reaction from the U.S. business community. On the one hand, there was a sense of relief that the civil war, which had caused extensive damage to physical infrastructure and the closure of businesses, had come to an end. On the other hand, there was concern over what would happen next and what the future held.[106]

Given the dependence of the Nicaraguan economy on foreign resources, combined with the significant damage caused by war to physical infrastructure and communication networks, the country presented significant opportunities for overseas investors, bankers, traders, and technological rentiers to increase their

[104] Zalkin Michael, *The Sandinista Agrarian Reform: 1979–1990?* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 1990), 47.
[105] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 258.
[106] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 258-259.

profits during the reconstruction period. The country's agricultural and industrial infrastructure relied heavily on access to foreign machinery, spare parts, raw materials, technology, and capital to maintain production levels at their maximum operating capacity. Furthermore, the Sandinistas' plan to increase the state's economic role through nationalization, while also pursuing a development model that blends public and private capital, opened up new prospects for joint ventures with a regime lacking the necessary capital resources and skilled managerial and technical personnel. However, the American corporate community was hesitant to make new investments until the Sandinista government provided clarification on its economic policies and future relationship with Washington.[107]

In 1980, the Sandinistas began to show more pragmatic behavior in their interactions with the multinational business community. Firstly, with the exception of the mining industry, foreign companies were not included in the nationalization program. Moreover, the takeover of properties that were predominantly owned or controlled by the Somoza regime only resulted in a change of ownership, and did not reduce their reliance on overseas capital, technology, and goods. While the state role in the economy increased, the shortage of funds, machinery, and skilled managerial and technical expertise created new opportunities for American entrepreneurs to develop profitable relationships with the expanding public sector. Indeed, most businesses affected by the regime's freeze on overseas bank accounts indicated that the revolutionary regime had been helpful in providing funds for wages. Companies that suffered significant losses during the war were provided with operating capital loans to aid in their rebuilding and resumption of operations. However, the emergence of a more organized and politically powerful working class demanding changes in labor-capital relations, including greater participation in decision-making processes, did create temporary challenges for some foreign-owned subsidiaries.[108]

Secondly, the Sandinista regime engaged in compensation negotiations with the two affected U.S. enterprises, which reached successful conclusions between 1982 and 1983. During the prolonged negotiations, the mine owners did not feel the need to pressure the Carter or Reagan administrations to apply diplomatic or economic pressure on Managua to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Thirdly, new foreign investment regulations in the agricultural export sector were not always strictly enforced, and were even revoked on occasion when targeted multinationals threatened retaliation that could significantly disrupt the nation's trade. One such instance involved Nicaragua's primary banana exporter, the Standard Fruit & Steamship unit owned by Castle & Cooke, based in Honolulu. The company purchased around $24 million worth of bananas annually for export. In December 1980, the Ministry of Agriculture declared that the state would take over all banana production and marketing activities. The American

[107] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 259.
[108] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 266.

multinational warned that Nicaragua could have lost a valuable source of foreign exchange if it implemented such a policy. In a show of strength, it compelled the government to retract its decision and, instead of responding with retaliation, the Sandinistas, through Ambassador Pezzullo, offered to negotiate with Standard Fruit & Steamship. In this context, Sergio Ramirez, a member of the junta, informed the ambassador that every effort would be made to persuade the company to stay, more for political than economic reasons. United Fruit and other firms had expressed their interest in marketing the bananas, but the government was concerned that Standard's departure at this critical juncture when the economy was fragile and the Government of National Reconstruction was attempting to attract private investment and maintain a favorable international image would have devastating political consequences. The new five-year contract that Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock and the company worked out was almost identical to the previous one negotiated with the Somoza regime.[109]

Fourthly, the need to increase productivity and exports led to a shift in Sandinista labor policy from supporting strikes, factory takeovers, and workplace demands to measure aimed at containing union militancy and a willingness to implement wage restraints. As a result, the regime became more involved in mediating and resolving labor-capital disputes. One such dispute involved the Texaco subsidiary, where, in June 1980, after seven months of unsuccessful negotiations with the Union of Petrochemical Workers, the employees halted talks and occupied the plant, demanding pay hikes and participation in the management of the distribution business.[110]

Despite the changes in the economic environment, few boards of American companies believed that the Sandinista economic program would create an unbearable situation for foreign investment and private sector operations. The majority of United States-owned businesses that resumed their operations after the end of the conflict were those that experienced minimal damage to their physical plant, those with significant fixed investments that would be too costly to terminate, and those with little or no war-related losses, particularly if the economic stake was relatively small.

Nevertheless, although a majority of American and other foreign firms adopted a pragmatic or "wait and see" approach during the first twelve to eighteen months of Sandinista rule, some sectors of the overseas business community made gloomier, more pessimistic, and sometimes hostile statements. Indeed, for a minority of American investors, the shift from a largely unregulated economy to one in which the state had greater control over the processes of capital accumulation was an unacceptable development. This was the case of Bruce Cuthbertson, President of the American-Nicaraguan Chamber of Commerce and secretary-treasurer of a group of construction companies with majority Nicaraguan ownership, who accused the

[109] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 266-267.
[110] Rodman Kenneth A., *Sanctions at bay? Hegemonic decline, multinational corporations, and U.S. economic sanctions since the pipeline case* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13.

Sandinistas of attempting to weaken and eliminate the private sector by encouraging labor unions to make unreasonable demands and controlling the financial system and foreign exchange earnings. He also believed that Washington was partly to blame and that the Carter administration, instead of providing them with money in the hope of moderating their stance, should have either ruptured relations entirely or pursued a strategy to pressure them in some way. He thought that consistent and persistent pressure could have changed them, and that the only policy likely to have worked would have been a tough line immediately to moderate them.[111]

In conclusion, considering the different factors discussed in this and the previous section, it can be noted that the driven factor that led the United States to adopt unfriendly relations with the Sandinistas, is given primarily by regional security regions. Indeed, the United States considered Nicaragua as a threat not from an economic point of view, since the openness of the Sandinista government towards a diplomatic dialogue with U.S. companies, but on a strategic sense, since it constituted a safe harbor for Soviet interests and perhaps troops.

In compliance with its foreign policy history and, in particular, with the Monroe Doctrine, the United States sought to deal with this allegedly concerning situation as soon as possible. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, in order to prevent Nicaragua to become a “Second Cuba” and pose serious threat to the United States hegemony and strategic influence on the region, the Reagan administration implemented a policy of "rollback", aimed at destabilizing the Sandinista government. This included providing military and financial support to anti-Sandinista guerrilla forces, known as the Contras, who carried out attacks against the Sandinistas and their supporters, alongside with economic sanctions, including a trade embargo and a freeze on its assets in U.S. banks.

[111] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 268.

Chapter 4

United States intervention in the democratization process in Nicaragua, 1978-1990.

Summary: **4.1** *Introduction*; **4.2** *The fall of Somoza and the Sandinistas years*; **4.3** *United States domestic reaction to the rise of the Sandinistas*; **4.4** *Methodology of intervention*; **4.4.1** *The carrot*; **4.4.1.1** *Diplomacy*; **4.4.2** *The stick*; **4.4.2.1** *Embargo*; **4.4.2.2** *Funding the Contras*; **4.5** *Attempt of recognition and the elections of 1990*.

4.1 Introduction

The Sandinista Revolution was a pivotal event in Central American history that had profound impacts on the region and the whole Western Hemisphere. Indeed, the revolution was a popular uprising against the decades-long dictatorship of the Somoza family, who had ruled the country with an iron fist and with the support of the United States, later toppled by the leftist group of the Sandinistas in 1979 taking control of the country and setting in motion a series of events that would have lasting effects on Nicaragua and the United States.

For this reason, the analysis of the Sandinista revolution is of utmost importance because it sheds light on the complex political, economic, and social forces that shaped the conflict in Nicaragua and the region. The revolution was not just a struggle between opposing ideologies but also a reflection of deep-seated inequalities, poverty, and corruption that had plagued the country for decades. The Sandinistas' rise to power was the result of years of popular mobilization and resistance to the Somoza dictatorship, as well as the support of other leftist movements in the region and beyond. However, the Sandinistas faced significant challenges, including internal divisions and the hostility of the United States, which managed to impose economic sanctions and organize a counter-revolution against the Sandinistas.

The effect of the Sandinista Revolution on Nicaragua and the United States cannot be overstated. In Nicaragua, the revolution brought significant changes in the country's political and social landscape, impacting on the lives of many Nicaraguans, particularly the poor and marginalized. On the other hand, in the United States, the Sandinista Revolution became a key foreign policy issue, which shaped the foreign policy of three administrations. In particular, a prominent role was played by the Reagan administration, which launched a campaign to destabilize the Sandinista government.

The Contra War, which was fought between United States-backed Contras and the Sandinista government, resulted in widespread violence, human rights abuses, and economic devastation in Nicaragua. The U.S. government actions in Nicaragua also had broader implications for United States-Latin American relations, as well as the global balance of power during the Cold War.

This chapter will focus on the role of the United States in the democratization process in Nicaragua between the rise of the Sandinistas and the 1990 elections, marking the end of the leftist regime. Firstly, the chapter will describe the process that led the Somoza dynasty from exerting control all over the country with the coercive assistance of the National Guard to the decline of the regime through the enmity of both the Nicaraguan people and the Church. In this context, the first section will then focus on the takeover of the political power by the Sandinistas and the adoption of political initiatives marked by democratic features, such as pluralism.

Secondly, the chapter will analyze the effects of the Sandinista revolution on the United States political élite and public opinion. To do so, this section will take into account the different reactions and initiatives adopted by both President Carter and President Reagan, highlighting the need for both administrations to deal in the most direct and effective way in order to seize what was considered as a communist government. Moreover, important will also be the analysis of the polls conducted in the early and then in the mid-1980s to observe the perception of this issue by the public opinion.

Thirdly, the chapter will focus on the methodology of intervention of the United States in Nicaragua in the 1980s. In particular, the section will be divided into two main parts: the carrot and the stick. The former will deal with the diplomatic approach adopted by the United States to try to mitigate the possible aftermath of the creation of a socialist government in Central America. On the other hand, the latter will deal with the adoption of strong measures, such as economic sanctions and the funding of the Contras, aimed at destabilizing in every way possible the Sandinistas.

To conclude, the chapter will take into consideration the 1990 elections and their importance from both an internal and external standpoint. Indeed, the performance of internationally recognized democratic elections provided the Sandinistas the possibility not only to further increment their solidity in terms of political power within the country, but also to avoid further direct interference from the United States in internal matters.

4.2 The fall of Somoza and the Sandinistas years

At a gathering in the city of León on September 21st, 1956, Rigoberto López Pérez, a young poet and musician, shot Anastasio Somoza García in the chest. Although Somoza's bodyguards immediately killed López, the president's injuries proved fatal on September 29th. López was later recognized as a national hero by the Sandinista government. Following his death, Somoza's eldest son, Luís Somoza Debayle, succeeded him, perpetuating the dynasty that his father had established.[112]

[112] Greelane, *Biografía de Anastasio Somoza García, presidente de Nicaragua*. Available Online at: Biografía de Anastasio Somoza García, presidente de Nicaragua (greelane.com)

During the period from 1957 to 1967, Luís Somoza Debayle played a prominent role in Nicaragua's political landscape. He presented himself as a proponent of democratic politics and was dedicated to modernizing and advancing the country's technical and economic sectors. As the elder and more experienced of the two Somoza brothers, Luís, believed that in order to maintain their power and safeguard their interests, the family needed to reduce their involvement in politics and business. His ideas and values aligned with the principles and objectives of the United States supported Alliance for Progress, which was being launched with much excitement during this time.[113]

Despite the outward appearance of progress and development during this time, there were underlying issues that persisted. The Alliance for Progress initiative, although it did create jobs for a growing bureaucracy and offered more opportunities for the privileged to become even wealthier, did not significantly improve the living conditions of the majority of impoverished Nicaraguans. Furthermore, the supposed "democracy" was merely a front, as elections were manipulated and the National Guard continued to ensure that no significant reforms could be made to the political system. As a consequence, there were several efforts to topple the political system through violent uprisings due to these underlying issues. Some of these attempts were made by younger members of the traditional parties, while others were led by a surviving member of Sandino's army. Starting from 1961, a new guerrilla organization emerged, the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN), which carried out a number of operations. In response to these perceived "subversive" activities, the dictatorship frequently declared a state of siege and received assistance from Washington in boosting the National Guard's counterinsurgency abilities.[114]

Consequently, in June 1967, following a clearly manipulated election, Anastasio Somoza Debayle became the third member of his family to hold power in Nicaragua. The passing of Luís Somoza a few months before, as well as the brutal crackdown on a large protest rally just before the election, marked the end of an era of superficial liberalization and marked a return to a more brutal and authoritarian form of dictatorship.

Anastasio had notable differences from his elder brother. While Luís aimed to create a strong Liberal party and gain civilian support, Anastasio relied mainly on military power. As the chief of the Guardia Nacional, he encouraged corruption and protected officers from punishment for crimes against civilians. Anastasio replaced experienced developmentalist technicians with unqualified political allies, some of whom were officers of the National Guard that he wished to co-opt or pay off. Moreover, Anastasio did not follow his brother's lead of consolidating the family's vast wealth; instead, he used his position for personal gain.

[113] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 29.
[114] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 29-30.

These actions led to a decrease in Somoza's credibility and civilian support, and the government became more corrupt and ineffective by 1970.

As per the constitution, Anastasio was supposed to leave the presidency after his term ended in 1971. However, he decided to ignore this provision and quickly changed the constitution to allow him an extra year in power.[115] In order to smooth his path towards the securement of his ruling within the political scenario in Nicaragua, Somoza struck a deal with the Conservative party leader, Fernando Agüero, in which he would temporarily step down and allow a triumvirate made up of two Liberals and one Conservative (Agüero) to rule while a new constitution was written and a presidential election was held. Although the power transfer took place in 1972, Somoza continued to control the guard, making the transfer of power merely symbolic. As a result, in 1974, Somoza was "elected" for another term that was supposed to last until 1981.[116]

After the triumvirate was established in 1972, the Somoza regime faced mounting problems for the next five years. The dictator himself was largely to blame for the growing systemic crisis due to his excesses and poor judgment. In the aftermath of the devastating Christmas earthquake in 1972 that killed over 10,000 people and destroyed a 600-square-block area in Managua[117], Somoza chose to exploit the national disaster for his own gain. He allowed the National Guard to loot and sell international relief materials and take part in the looting of the devastated commercial sector. Meanwhile, Somoza and his associates took advantage of their control over the government to divert international relief funds into their own pockets.[118]

At this point, the public began to openly express their discontent with the Somoza regime. Even though the triumvirate was technically in charge when the earthquake hit, Somoza wasted no time in using the emergency to sideline the body and declare himself the leader of the National Emergency Committee. While there were plenty of lofty statements about the challenge of rebuilding and patriotic duty, it soon became evident that his corrupt and inept government was a significant obstacle to the recovery effort. The promised reconstruction of the city center never materialized, and the people's demands for a new marketplace to replace the destroyed one were ignored.

After a successful guerrilla operation in December 1974, Somoza's encountered new oppositions, this time coming from the Church. During the operation, an FSLN unit took a group of high-profile partygoers hostage in Managua and demanded a large ransom, the publication of a lengthy communique, and transportation to Cuba for themselves and fourteen FSLN members in prison. Somoza, feeling his personal dignity had been attacked, responded by imposing martial law and sending the National Guard into the

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[115] Adams Ian, *THE DECLINE AND FALL OF NICARAGUA'S SOMOZA DYNASTY* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: The Colorado College, 2016), 5-6.

[116] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 30-31.

[117] Agency for International Development, *CASE REPORT: Nicaragua-Earthquake December 1972* (Washington, D.C., 1972).

[118] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 31.

countryside to eliminate the rebels. The guard committed numerous human rights violations, including pillaging, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, rape, and summary execution of hundreds of peasants. Unfortunately for Somoza, many of the abuses occurred in areas where Catholic missionaries were stationed, and they were able to report these violations to their superiors. The church hierarchy, already displeased with Somoza's extension of his term of office beyond its legal limit, demanded an explanation from him and publicly denounced the guard's actions before the world.[119]

To increase the tensions and the displeasing towards Somoza's regime also contributed the murder of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, a newspaper editor, who was killed in a violent manner on January 10th, 1978, while driving to his workplace, after attending church, through the destroyed area of old Managua. This event proved to be the crucial spark that ignited a war leading to the ultimate downfall of the Somoza regime in the following eighteen months.[120]

These acts against the regime continued to escalate, with the FSLN carrying out more and more successful attacks against National Guard installations and personnel. The urban uprisings were particularly significant, as they demonstrated that the opposition to Somoza was not limited to rural guerrilla fighters but also included large segments of the urban population. The government responded with brutal repression, using torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial executions to try to quell the growing opposition. Despite this, the resistance movement continued to gain momentum, with more and more Nicaraguans joining the cause. The assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro only served to further galvanize the opposition and increase international support for their cause. In the end, it was a combination of popular resistance, international pressure, and the defection of key military figures that led to Somoza's downfall in July 1979.

Meanwhile, Somoza was persistently reaffirming his intention to remain in power until the conclusion of his term in 1981. However, the people of Nicaragua were unwilling to tolerate another two years of Somoza's rule, let alone wait until 1981 for another election that would likely be rigged. To their surprise, the Nicaraguan people learned that Jimmy Carter had sent Somoza a private letter in July, which was later leaked, congratulating him on his pledges to improve human rights in Nicaragua. This news left the people frustrated and determined to take action and the FSLN decided to plan their most impressive guerrilla operation yet, which involved seizing the National Legislative Palace in the heart of old Managua. According to Edén Pastora, who led the operation, the FSLN was incensed by Carter's letter since they could not fathom how he could praise Somoza while the Nicaraguan people were being massacred under his dictatorship. The letter was

[119] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 31-32.
[120] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 83.

interpreted as support for Somoza, and the FSLN was committed to showing Carter that the people of Nicaragua were ready to fight against Somoza, whom they regarded as a blight on their country.[121]

By the end of November, the FSLN guerrilla force had grown to approximately 2,500 soldiers, and their numbers were steadily increasing. The opposition was widespread among various groups, including students, impoverished individuals in cities, and rural peasants. Many of these people organized themselves within their communities, donning red and black bandanas to symbolize their allegiance to the Sandinistas. They viewed the Sandinistas as the only viable option for ending the Somoza dynasty and putting an end to the oppressive regime.[122]

The growing membership and sense of an impending victory led to the reunification of the factions within the FSLN. This renewed cohesion among the revolutionary brought greater trust in their mission, especially raising greater support from the population, which until then was struggling because of the Somoza regime and wanted to join the rebellion to end it. In this context, in April 1979, the FSLN launched a final offensive with five different fronts converging on Managua. The Sandinistas and their increasing number of supporters conquered city after city, also with the help of impoverished people in working-class neighborhoods, which played a crucial role.

With Sandinista forces controlling almost all of Nicaragua except for Managua, and the National Guard suffering from high desertion rates, the televised murder of ABC newsman Bill Stewart by the Guard and the announcement of the new Governing Junta of National Reconstruction, the United States finally convinced Tachito Somoza to resign. He stepped down in favor of Francisco Urcuyo and fled to Miami on July 17th, 1979. The next day, Urcuyo also left the country while members of the National Guard removed their uniforms and fled into the countryside to escape to Honduras and Costa Rica. On July 19th, 1979, the Sandinistas triumphantly entered Managua, celebrating their hard-fought victory.[123]

The Sandinista-led popular revolution that overthrew Anastasio Somoza Debayle's dictatorship in July 1979 brought about a swift and comprehensive transformation of various political forces in the Nicaraguan society. The old political leaders fled or were ousted, the National Assembly was dissolved, a new junta was appointed to govern the country, the repressive forces were disbanded, and many members of the despised National Guard were imprisoned or expelled from Nicaragua. In addition, various sectors of the economy were restructured in response to the circumstances and events of post-1979 revolutionary Nicaragua, with the establishment of the formal structures of a new revolutionary society. For many Nicaraguans, this period marked the beginning of a new phase in the long struggle against foreign domination and political and

[121] Walker Thomas W., *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino* (London, United Kingdom: Westview Press; 3rd edition, September 10th 1991), 31-32.
[122] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 85.
[123] States Clifford L., *The History of Nicaragua* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 86.

economic dependence. The Sandinista Revolution was, among other things, a response to the history of relations between the United States and Nicaragua.[124]

The Sandinistas' program of national reconstruction aimed to address the social and economic problems that had long plagued Nicaragua. They recognized that a broad-based, multiclass coalition was necessary to achieve this goal, and so committed to political pluralism and a mixed economy. This approach did not mean that the large property owners would retain their political power in proportion to their economic power. Instead, the Sandinistas emphasized the importance of popular hegemony and the orientation of the government towards the needs of the majority of the population. They implemented policies to encourage popular participation in politics through mass organizations, and established revolutionary control over key institutions like the public educational system and the army. These measures were intended to ensure that the new government would prioritize the interests of the majority, rather than those of a small, wealthy elite.[125]

The Sandinistas recognized that in order to rebuild a country that had been torn apart by civil war, and overcome the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment, they needed to create a sense of national unity among the various groups that had fought against Somoza. To achieve this goal, they committed to political pluralism and a mixed economy, but also recognized the importance of limiting the political power of the large capitalists through popular hegemony and orientation towards the needs of the majority of the population. This was expressed through the emphasis on popular participation in politics through mass organizations and revolutionary control of key sectors such as the educational system and the army. However, in practice, the revolutionary government had to balance conflicting class interests and maintain its cross-class alliances, leading to contradictory politics in the early years of the revolution. The government included non-Sandinistas in ministerial positions and sought to maintain its alliance with democratic elements of the bourgeoisie, rather than relying solely on the support of workers and peasants.

The creation of a pluralistic model, with the establishment of an opposition and the possibility for its members to participate actively in the political life of and the reconstruction of the country, represents an example of how these political initiatives were meant to pave the way for the establishment of democracy in Nicaragua.

However, critics to the newly established regime were present, in particular from the Western societies on the how the Sandinistas' concept of democracy differs from the North American and European understanding of the term. The Sandinistas' version of democracy put an emphasis on serving the majority's interests, distributing resources fairly, encouraging popular involvement and involving the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard. Despite these differences, evidence suggests that the Nicaraguan Revolution has been

[124] Van Tessel G. Lane, *The case for Political Pluralism in Sandinista Nicaragua* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, Spring 1987), 95.
[125] Jonas Susanne & Stein Nancy, *The Construction of Democracy in Nicaragua* (Sage Publications, Inc., Summer 1990), 14.

successful in meeting classical Western standards of democracy, even amidst an externally provoked war. Furthermore, as the contra war draws to a close, the country was moving towards greater pluralism, earning the deserved recognition on its legitimacy.[126]

4.3 United States domestic reaction to the rise of the Sandinistas

The Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 marked a significant shift in the relationship between the United States and Central America. It directly challenged the traditional policy of forming alliances with oligarchies and military leaders, and the belief that Central America was destined to remain under the control of the United States. The Nicaraguan revolution had the potential to inspire other social movements in the region that were also seeking to challenge oppressive political and economic systems.

The victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1979 sparked a debate among senior policymakers in the Carter administration about its likely strategic consequences. The Department of Defense, in particular, was deeply concerned about the outcome, which was considered as something to avoid and prevent at all costs. The collapse of the National Guard and the FSLN capture of political power were seen as potential catalysts for increased external support for local guerrilla movements and greater Cuban-Soviet involvement in the region, which officials found alarming and unexpected.

Different branches of the U.S. government had different views on how to address the perceived threat posed by the Sandinistas. The hardliners in the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence agencies were particularly concerned about the potential spread of leftist movements in the region, and advocated for an immediate increase in U.S. military aid to authoritarian regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala. They saw the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua as a direct challenge to American dominance in the region, and believed that military action was necessary to counter this threat. Indeed, during the early days of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua, the State Department oversaw American policy which focused on diplomacy and communication to support the "moderates" within the new regime and society. While the shift from a dictatorship to a revolutionary power was a significant setback, Washington was optimistic about its ability to influence the country's political, social, and economic structures in the post-Somoza era.[127]

On the other hand, with the beginning of the Reagan Administration, there were numerous contrasts on the responses and the main objective of the U.S. relations with Nicaragua: whether to coexist with the Sandinista government or to overthrow it. Those who supported coexistence prioritized security issues and aimed to contain the Nicaraguan revolution by making concessions on security issues important to the U.S. in

[126] Jonas Susanne & Stein Nancy, *The Construction of Democracy in Nicaragua* (New York City, New York: Sage Publications, Inc., Summer 1990), 14.
[127] Morley Morris H., *Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas: Stage and Regime in US Policy toward Nicaragua 1969–1981* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 221.

exchange for recognition of the Sandinistas' legitimacy. Those in the Administration who rejected containment believed that the only way to preserve U.S. interests was to eliminate the Sandinista regime altogether. This division repeatedly derailed attempts to find a regional diplomatic solution to the Central American crisis, as hard-liners blocked efforts to move towards a diplomatic resolution. As time has gone on, U.S. policy towards Nicaragua became increasingly aggressive, to the point where U.S. officials were no longer inhibited about admitting their goal of removing the Nicaraguan government.[128]

On January 9th, 1983, the foreign ministers of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama met on Contadora Island in Panama to form a group known as the Contadora Group, whose main objective was to find solutions to Latin American problems using Latin American methods. The group aimed to provide a diplomatic alternative to the escalating armed conflicts in the region, with a particular focus on preventing unilateral U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador. However, it is important to note that the Contadora countries also sought to moderate and contain the revolutionary movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador and limit the increasing involvement of Cuba and the Soviet Union in the area. This aspect of their objective is often overlooked, especially in the United States.[129]

Despite their shared desire to find solutions to the crisis in Central America, the Contadora governments had significant disagreements with the Reagan Administration regarding the best strategies and tactics to achieve this goal. These disagreements were rooted in different interpretations of the underlying causes of the turmoil in the region, as well as a rejection of the traditional U.S. presumption of dominance in Central America. According to the Contadora countries, poverty, injustice, and repression were the main reasons for the crisis, rather than external Soviet or Cuban subversion, as the Reagan Administration claimed. They also blamed the United States for supporting or turning a blind eye to oppressive right-wing dictatorships in the area, which contributed to the long-term instability that the Soviets and Cubans sought to exploit. The Contadora countries viewed a return to the pattern of U.S. intervention as a dangerous and destabilizing response that could fuel nationalist and anti-American sentiments throughout the region, rather than a solution to the crisis.[130]

The Contadora Group proposed a series of initiatives that challenged the United States' rush towards military interventions in Nicaragua and potentially in other neighboring countries. This strategy implicitly challenged the traditional U.S. dominance in Central America. Firstly, it called for the removal of both Cuban and Soviet military advisors from Nicaragua, as well as the elimination of the U.S. military presence throughout the region. Secondly, it suggested ensuring the survival of the Sandinista regime in exchange for

[128] LeoGrande William M., *Rollback or Containment? The United States, Nicaragua, and the Search for Peace in Central America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), 118.
[129] Bagley Bruce M., *Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Autumn, 1986), 2.
[130] Bagley Bruce M., *Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Autumn, 1986), 3.

the Sandinistas' agreement to refrain from forming military alliances with Cuba and the Soviet Union, and to end their support for revolutionary movements in El Salvador and other parts of Central America. Thirdly, the mere existence of the Contadora Group implied a shift away from the longstanding U.S. hegemony in hemispheric affairs and towards a more collective form of leadership, in which regional powers in Latin America would play a more significant role than they had in the past.[131]

If the proposed draft accords of the Contadora Group were successfully implemented, they could pose significant challenges to Reagan foreign policy in Central America. For instance, an agreement that prohibited foreign military presence in the region would require major changes in the U.S. military's posture, particularly in El Salvador and Honduras, where there were numerous U.S. military advisers and installations used by U.S. military and intelligence forces. The Contadora Group demand to close all foreign military schools and bases and withdraw all foreign military advisers would effectively put an end to U.S. efforts to retrain the Salvadoran and Honduran armed forces in counterinsurgency warfare. Additionally, the ban on importing heavy weapons into the region would limit U.S. efforts to modernize the air forces of these two nations.

Although many Americans had limited awareness and knowledge of Central America in the 1980s, they perceived possible communist advances in the region as a threat to the security of both El Salvador and Nicaragua's neighbors. In March 1982, 64% of the public believed that establishing a "communist government" in El Salvador would lead to similar governments in other countries in the region. Additionally, a large majority of Americans saw the situations in El Salvador and Nicaragua as threats to the security of the United States itself. For example, in May 1983, 69% of Americans believed that a "pro-communist government" in El Salvador would pose a threat to the security of the United States. As a response to these perceived threats, about half of all Americans supported the use of force to stop communism in Central America. In the mid-1980s, roughly half of Americans agreed that "the United States should take all steps," including the use of force, "to prevent the spread of communism in Central America."[132]

These data suggest that while Americans were concerned about the spread of communism in Central America, they were also wary of the potential consequences of direct U.S. intervention in the region. The perceived risks of entanglement and escalation may have tempered their support for military action, even as they feared the potential consequences of communist regimes in the region. Moreover, Americans have also expressed concern about U.S. intervention in Central America, fearing entanglement in internal problems, mainly connected to the possibility of the support of paramilitary groups.[133]

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[131] Bagley Bruce M., *Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Autumn, 1986), 4.

[132] Sobel Richard, *A Report: Public Opinion About United States Intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Association for Public Opinion Research), 116-117.

[133] Sobel Richard, *A Report: Public Opinion About United States Intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Association for Public Opinion Research), 116-117.

4.4 Methodology of intervention

The combination of the factors described until this point have led to the rise of serious concerns in the United States regarding the best practices aimed at managing the situation in Nicaragua. Indeed, possible coercive means of intervention were influenced and halted by the "*Vietnam syndrome*" and the fear that a new war for influence might resume what was concluded just four years before.

This section will be aimed at describing the methodology of intervention of the United States against the Sandinistas. In particular, this analysis will focus on the gradual process concerning the degree of intervention, from a peaceful and diplomatic approach to the establishment of diplomatic sanctions, concluding with the most controversial approach represented by the funding of the contras militia.

4.4.1 The carrot

Given the political situation after the Watergate, the first U.S. approach to the Sandinista regime had to be a peaceful approach. Indeed, the Carter administration had sought to adopt a foreign policy of containment and disregard the aggressive approach that had characterized the previous administrations, often preferring the use of international law and levers to reach his foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, the rise of a socialist government that had diplomatic and commercial ties with the Soviet Union represented a big issue for the United States. In this context, President Carter decided to invite the Sandinistas' leader Daniel Ortega to the White House in order to attempt the establishment of a peaceful alliance, and perhaps the neutrality of Nicaragua in exchange of economic aid, which were essential to the newly established regime to face the high costs of the reconstruction.

Moreover, a diplomatic approach was also sought by Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, even though his approach was stricter and biased. Indeed, Reagan, since the beginning of his administration announced his strong opposition and denouncement of the Soviet Union and its proxies. This process will be further analyzed in the following paragraphs, describing the diplomatic approach under the Reagan administration and how the latter progressively distanced itself from the possibility of a peaceful resolution deciding the shift to a stronger resolution.

4.4.1.1 Diplomacy

Nicaragua had requested negotiations as they believed it was crucial for them. In this context, U.S. diplomat Thomas Enders aimed to prevent the covert option through diplomatic means and struck a deal with

Congressman Jesse Helms to negotiate with the Sandinistas for six months, after which he would comply with Helms' wishes of a year. Moreover, Enders insisted on a halt to the alleged arms flow from Nicaragua to El Salvador and requested the U.S. to monitor it.[134]

In this context, Enders sent his first letter to Ortega on August 31st, 1981, in which he mentioned the possibility of bringing peace to Central America through a demonstration of goodwill. He also shared a series of drafts aimed at normalizing relations with Nicaragua, which he hoped would leave the country strong and secure while reinforcing its national independence. However, the first draft arrived a week later on September 8th, and it proposed a move against the exile camps. Nicaragua did not view this as a concession, as U.S. law required such action regardless of Sandinista behavior. To make matters worse, a formal note was attached to the draft cancelling the remaining $7 million aid, thereby eroding any sense of confidence.[135]

Following the first draft's failure to impress Nicaragua, a second draft was sent on September 16th, which proposed a commitment to settling disputes peacefully in accordance with various international organizations. This draft also condemned the use of force and the assistance of armed activities from either country. However, two days after receiving the second draft, the United States announced military maneuvers scheduled for early October and despite Enders' efforts, Nicaragua remained concerned and alerted its defenses in response to the military exercises. Enders' deputy, Craig Johnstone, drafted a proposal regarding Nicaraguan arms buildup, which demanded that Soviet tanks be re-crated and returned. However, the lack of coordination and conflicting actions within the U.S. government had severely damaged the diplomatic process, leading to a breakdown in official communication. Indeed, Enders had previously replied that the military exercises announced by the U.S. were routine and did not pose a threat to Nicaragua, but these reassurances were not believed by the Nicaraguan government.[136]

Moreover, the numerous disagreements between different departments within the administration increased the degree of uncertainty about the military intentions of the United States. To address this confusion, President Reagan released a statement affirming that there were no plans to send American troops into combat. However, he also claimed that the U.S. opposed the spread of communism from the Soviets and Cubans, despite evidence to the contrary. While the use of combat troops was ruled out, Haig refused to promise the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the U.S. would not attempt to destabilize Nicaragua.[137]

Following the Grenada invasion, the Sandinistas made several unilateral moves to address the security issues that had been raised by the United States. They requested many Salvadoran revolutionary leaders who

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[134] Blasier Cole, *The Hovering Giant: US Responses to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 233.
[135] Ryan David, *US-Sandinista Diplomatic Relations* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 27 July 2016), 19-20.
[136] Ryan David, *US-Sandinista Diplomatic Relations* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 27 July 2016), 20.
[137] Serafino Nina M., *Contra Aid, FY82-FY88: Summary And Chronology Of Major Congressional Action On Key Legislation Concerning US Aid To The Anti-Sandinista Guerillas, Congressional Research Service (CRS), Report for Congress 88-563 F* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress, 18 August 1981), 3.

had been residing in Nicaragua to leave the country and sent around a thousand Cubans, mostly civilians, back home. The Sandinistas also relaxed press censorship, started a new dialogue with the Church hierarchy, released around 300 Miskito Indians who had been imprisoned for political reasons, and offered amnesty to the contras, excluding their leadership. The Sandinistas privately communicated to the U.S. that they had slowed down the movement of materials through Nicaragua to Salvadoran guerrillas and were looking for a reciprocal action from the United States.[138]

The Sandinistas took several steps to address the security issues raised by the United States, such as asking Salvadoran revolutionaries and Cuban civilians to leave Nicaragua, easing press censorship, and offering amnesty to the contras. They also communicated to the U.S. privately that they had slowed the flow of materials to Salvadoran guerrillas and sought a reciprocal gesture. However, instead of viewing these moves as an opportunity for diplomacy, the Reagan administration saw them as a sign of weakness and increased their pressure on Nicaragua. The administration rejected Nicaraguan actions as insincere and relayed a proposal from the contras for a ceasefire if Nicaragua would negotiate with them, which the Nicaraguan Foreign Minister strongly opposed.[139]

In the beginning of 1984, the relationship between Nicaragua and the United States deteriorated as the CIA started mining Nicaraguan major ports. In this context, Nicaragua accused the United States of being responsible for the mining and appealed to the United Nations Security Council, which passed a resolution condemning the mining with 13 out of 15 members voting in favor and Britain abstaining. However, the United States vetoed the resolution. Nicaragua then attempted to take the issue to the World Court, but the United States refused to acknowledge the Court's jurisdiction.[140]

On 16th November 1981, the National Security Council gathered to endorse a confidential plan of action against Nicaragua. Subsequently, on November 23rd, the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 17 was issued, granting authorization for the CIA to cooperate with foreign governments as needed, conduct operations against the Cuban presence, and establish a team of 500 individuals to join the 1,000 Argentines already in the region.[141]

[138] LeoGrande William M., *Rollback or Containment? The United States, Nicaragua, and the Search for Peace in Central America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), 102.
[139] LeoGrande William M., *Rollback or Containment? The United States, Nicaragua, and the Search for Peace in Central America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), 103.
[140] United Nation, Security Council Official Records, 2529th meeting (New York, 4th April 1984).
[141] Ryan David, *US-Sandinista Diplomatic Relations* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 27 July 2016), 21.

4.4.2 The stick

Following the downfall of the relations between Nicaragua and the United States, the latter adopted a series of initiatives aimed at the damaging in every possible way the Sandinistas. Indeed, the United States differed in their warfare against Nicaragua, ranging from economic sanctions to the creation and the funding and the training of paramilitary forces. It is safe to say that the first wave of diplomatic approach was only a way to resort to all possible measures to make the Sandinistas pursue the path already set by their predecessors and become a gentle ally of the United States, or at least a neutral country.

Indeed, the exhaustion of peaceful measures gave the United States the green light to resort to stronger initiatives against the regime and eventually restore a new conservative government, perhaps with the same exact characteristics of the Somoza dictatorship, but with fresh assurances to the Nicaraguan population concerning how different would it be to its predecessor.

4.4.2.1 Embargo

The Reagan administration imposed several trade restrictions on Nicaragua, in addition to blocking international loans. In 1981, the administration denied Nicaragua credit through the U.S. Import-Export Bank, which made it difficult for Nicaragua to secure short-term loans from commercial banks. As a result, Nicaragua was forced to pay cash for everything it imported from the United States. The administration also cancelled Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) insurance for Nicaragua, which raised the risk for investors and discouraged U.S. investment.[142]

In 1983, the Reagan administration significantly reduced the Nicaraguan share of the U.S. sugar quota by 90%. Indeed, Nicaragua had been exporting approximately $15.6 million worth of sugar to the United States annually, receiving a premium price of 17 cents per pound, which was nearly three times the world market price. The official reason given by the White House for cutting the quota was to reduce Nicaragua's resources available for "*subversion and extremist violence*". However, one of the main reasons was to reassure U.S. allies in Central America of Washington's continued hostility towards Nicaragua, despite rising opposition from Congress to the CIA covert paramilitary operations.[143]

On May 1st, 1985, during a summit on free trade in Bonn, Germany, the White House announced a complete trade embargo on Nicaragua. To impose this embargo, Reagan had to use the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which allowed him to declare a national emergency to deal with an unusual and extraordinary threat to national security and foreign policy. Critics argued that Nicaragua, a small war-

[142] Taubman Philip, *21 Nicaraguans in 6 Consulates Expelled by US* (New York Times, 1983).
[143] Cannon Lou & Hormblower Margo, *US to cut Nicaragua's sugar sales* (Washington Post, 1983).

torn country, could not be considered a threat to the United States. Despite negative reactions from U.S. allies at the Bonn summit, Reagan continued with the embargo.[144]

The trade embargo imposed on Nicaragua in 1985 had a significant impact on the country. The Sandinistas had expected economic sanctions and had taken measures to diversify their foreign trade to minimize the effects of an embargo. By 1984, Nicaragua's trade with the United States had decreased from 30.4% in 1980 to 14.9%. Despite this, the United States remained the country's largest trading partner. On the other hand, Nicaraguan trade with Western Europe and Japan had increased from 20.6% to 35.1%, and trade with the Soviet bloc had risen from just 1% in 1980 to 15.4% in 1984.[145] Indeed, although the U.S. was still Nicaragua's largest trading partner, exports to the U.S. such as bananas, beef, shellfish, tobacco, and sugar could easily be sold elsewhere. The trade embargo was criticized by U.S. allies, considering it counterproductive and leading to the increase regional tensions.

The trade embargo imposed by the U.S. on Nicaragua had a significant impact on the country's economy. At first, although the Sandinistas tried to diversify Nicaraguan foreign trade to reduce the impact of an embargo, nonetheless, despite the policies adopted, the loss of imports and spare parts for United States-manufactured goods had a big impact on non-agricultural productivity, resulting in a considerable loss of production. Nicaragua estimated that the embargo cost the country about $50 million annually. Some of the Atlantic allies, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, and Portugal, openly opposed the restrictive measures and affirmed their intentions to continue trading with Nicaragua. Other countries, including Canada, France, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands went as far as extending new trade credits to Nicaragua to offset the effects of the embargo. The embargo was offset somewhat by additional trade credits extended to Nicaragua by other countries, with Ortega securing pledges of $190 million in loans from Western countries and $202 million from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[146]

The combination of the U.S. trade embargo, a loss of external capital, and the costs of the contra war had a devastating impact on Nicaragua's already struggling economy. The civil war had already caused significant damage to the manufacturing sector, but with external financing, the economy had begun to recover in 1980 and 1981. However, by 1983, the economy had begun to slow down and subsequently declined rapidly. While the Sandinista government's policies did discourage investment, Nicaragua's heavy dependence on the international market for goods and capital left it unable to survive the U.S. trade embargo. Despite economic aid from the USSR, the losses were too great to cover. The government's attempts to subsidize the poor and small producers and cover the rising costs of war resulted in a fiscal deficit that was closed by printing money,

[144] LeoGrande William M., *Making the Economy Scream: US Economic Sanctions against Sandinista Nicaragua* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.), 338-339.
[145] Jenkins Tony, *The US Embargo Against Nicaragua-One Year Later* (Washington, DC: Center for International Policy and Overseas Development Council, 1986), 3.
[146] Woodward Bob, *Veil: the secret wars of the CIA, 1981-1987* (New York City, New York: Simon and Schuster,1987), 281.

leading to inflation. The annual inflation rate in 1984 was 50%, and a growing trade deficit caused shortages of hard currency, decreased production, and increased unemployment.[147]

During the period when the standard of living in Nicaragua was declining, the Reagan administration attempted to distance itself from any responsibility for the resulting hardship. In May of 1985, the State Department issued a report on the economic sanctions imposed by the United States, stating that the poor economic conditions in Nicaragua were the result of the Sandinista government's disastrous economic policies and not the actions of the United States.[148]

The Reagan administration's primary objective of overthrowing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua through military force was unsuccessful. However, the economic sanctions that the U.S. imposed on Nicaragua were more effective than anticipated for several reasons. The Nicaraguan economy, which was underdeveloped, was highly dependent on external financial assistance, especially after the damage caused by the insurrection against Somoza. Additionally, Nicaragua's trade was mainly with the United States, making it easy for Washington to punish the country economically by halting external financing and cutting off trade, despite a lack of support from other countries.

Moreover, even though the USSR and its allies were willing to supply Nicaragua with a large amount of military equipment to fight against the contras, they were not willing to bear the ongoing financial responsibility of supporting the Nicaraguan economy. Furthermore, the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. were carried out together with extensive paramilitary attacks as part of a comprehensive program to destabilize Nicaragua and the contra war made the economic sanctions even more effective by causing direct damage to production and diverting limited resources towards national defense, disrupting the agriculture and diminishing foreign investment.

In the end, the economic collapse that Nicaragua experienced between 1988 and 1989 had a devastating impact on the Sandinistas' popular support base, which had been strong in 1979 and still considerable when they won the 1984 elections. The presence of an electoral system that required the Sandinistas to compete for power with opposition groups provided an outlet for the population to express their dissatisfaction with the declining standard of living. Therefore, while the economic sanctions imposed by the United States did not force the Sandinistas to abandon their fundamental policies or ideology, they did shift the balance of power within Nicaragua's political landscape enough to drive the Sandinistas out of power.[149]

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[147] LeoGrande William M., *Making the Economy Scream: US Economic Sanctions against Sandinista Nicaragua* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.), 342.

[148] Omang Joanne, *Sandinistas mismanaged economy, US says*, (Washington Post, 4th May 1985).

[149] International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Report and Recommendation of the President of the International Development Association to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Economic Recovery Credit ... to the Republic of Nicaragua,* Report No P-5598-NI, (Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1991), 3.

The economic disaster that struck Nicaragua ultimately led to the downfall of the Sandinistas in the 1990 election. In an attempt to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis, they appealed to nationalism and associated their opponents in the election with the contras and the United States. However, opinion polls showed that the war issue worked in favor of the Sandinistas, while dissatisfaction with the economy favored the opposition. This case illustrates that economic sanctions can be very effective against a fragile economy, even when they are predominantly unilateral and the demands being made on the targeted regime are quite severe.

4.4.2.2 Funding the Contras

At the beginning of the war, the United States provided limited financial support to the Contras, which was taken from the CIA annual contingency fund of $50 million. Only a small portion of this already modest budget was allocated to the armed factions, with rebel leaders primarily using the funds to support their families. This relatively low level of initial support provided by the U.S. challenged the notion that state support for rebel groups can be best understood as the "*delegation*" of war. In the early days of the Contra War, the U.S. did not necessarily aim to wage a full-scale proxy war against the Nicaraguan government. Instead, it sought to establish some connections with the Contra opposition while simultaneously working with the new FSLN government. The minor financial assistance can be better characterized as a U.S. attempt to establish and maintain a network in Nicaragua that went beyond official government representatives.[150]

At the beginning of the new war, the Contras were highly fragmented, with at least twenty independently operating rebel groups, including the largest three: the Legion of 15 September, the Nicaraguan Democratic Union (UDN), and the Popular Militia Against Somoza/Sandinista (MILPAS), which was a peasant group. Once aid started to flow in, the United States instructed these and other groups to unite into a single major rebel force that would receive U.S. support. This demand was met in August 1981, when the Legion and the UDN merged to create the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), which later integrated MILPAS units as well.

Initially, the FDN was overseen by a group of three directors, which was later expanded to seven. However, the actual power was mainly centralized around the Chief of Staff Enrique Bermúdez, who had previously held the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the ousted National Guard, had served as a military attaché at the Nicaraguan embassy in Washington D.C during the 1979 revolution and was considered dependable by the U.S. to lead the insurgency. However, the United States did not want him to be the overall leader of the Contras, as this would have strengthened FSLN accusations that the Contras were remnants of the old Somoza

[150] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 524-525.

government. For this reason, the U.S. directed the FDN to establish a separate political leadership, headed by Nicaraguan businessperson Adolfo Calero. This decision brought to not few tensions and infighting between the leadership, seriously jeopardizing the effectiveness of the movement, undermining its capacity to capture public attention in both Nicaragua and the United States.[151]

In the early part of 1982, the Reagan administration increased its involvement in the war in Nicaragua in a significant way. Simultaneously, the United States was using its support for the Contras as a bargaining chip to convince Nicaragua to stop assisting the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), a Marxist rebel group that was fighting the United States-backed government of El Salvador. However, despite this increased involvement, U.S. aid for the Contras still fell far short of a full delegation of war. To implement the new policy, a larger budget was required than what the CIA contingency funds could provide. CIA Director William Casey requested and obtained approval from the Congressional intelligence committees for an initial $19 million budget to establish a 500-member rebel group, which was later increased by an additional $24 million.[152]

Once the funding was approved, U.S. support for the Contras quickly evolved into a comprehensive covert operation that included supplies such as food, clothing, medicine, aircraft, vehicles, weapons, training, and intelligence. The CIA also conducted reconnaissance flights over Nicaragua to gather information on Sandinista army positions and provided communications equipment that was also beneficial to the Contras. However, despite the United States' significant influence over the Contras, they never had complete control over the rebels. Some Contras fought with little regard for the lives of noncombatants, often performing violent acts among the Nicaraguan population that was not willing to take the side of the FDN.

Despite this issue, the increase in U.S. aid was highly effective in helping the rebels take on the Sandinistas. One clear indication of this was the increase in recruitment. Despite the primitive conditions of the Honduran rebel camps, the sudden abundance of high-quality weaponry quickly attracted large numbers of peasant recruits. From 1982 to 1984, there was a marked increase in rebel attacks, signifying a noteworthy difference from the early years of the conflict. The rebels were now conducting large and sustained attacks on government forces, rather than small pinprick attacks. As a result of the war, the Nicaraguan economy collapsed, leading to high unemployment, even higher inflation, and severe food shortages.

However, in October 1984, the United States ceased its support for the Contras. It is important to note that this decision was not a result of dissatisfaction with the Contras themselves. Rather, the cutoff was due to members of the U.S. Congress, particularly those in the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives, who

[151] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 526.
[152] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 526-527.

were upset that the aid program had gone beyond its original purpose of intercepting Nicaraguan support to the FMLN rebels in El Salvador. To address this, the Boland I Amendment was passed in December 1982, explicitly stating that U.S. assistance should not be provided for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government.[153] [154]

In this context, the White House sought funding from foreign governments and private donors to support the Contras. Saudi Arabia was an important source of funding, providing $32 million in aid in 1984 and 1985. The United States also received significant contributions from wealthy individuals, including the Sultan of Brunei, who donated $10 million, and the Taiwan government, which contributed $15 million. While these funds were technically not provided by the U.S. government, they were solicited and coordinated by U.S. officials, and as such, were in violation of the Boland II Amendment.[155]

The controversy surrounding these efforts eventually led to the Iran-Contra Affair, which revealed clandestine arms sales to Iran and the diversion of profits from those sales to the Nicaraguan Contras. The responsibility for this operation primarily rested with the Reagan administration, particularly Reagan's National Security Advisors and the National Security Council staff. In April 1984, Reagan delivered a nationally televised speech advocating for covert aid amounting to $600 million, driven by his dedication to the Contras and the fight against communism in Central America. He emphasized that it was not the United States' intention nor obligation to shield the Nicaraguan government from its own people's dissatisfaction. However, when the CIA's involvement in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors became public knowledge in the following months, the administration failed to persuade Congress to authorize the $600 million. Consequently, a few months later, Congress passed another Boland Amendment, this time incorporated into the omnibus appropriations bill for 1985, which prohibited all funding from the U.S. government to the Contras.[156]

The central figure involved in these covert transactions was Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver P. North, a relatively unknown security official at the time. He operated under the explicit endorsement of his immediate superior, Vice-Admiral John M. Poindexter, who served as the National Security Adviser. Additionally, the director of the CIA, William Casey, also approved of North's actions. These individuals played pivotal roles in authorizing and overseeing the clandestine activities.[157]

Within this context, William Casey provided advice and McFarlane secured a commitment of $8 million from the Saudi government to support the Contra initiative. Following a similar pattern over the next

[153] *IRAN-CONTRA HEARINGS, Boland Amendments: What They Provided* (New York Times, 10th July 1987).
[154] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 529-530.
[155] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 531.
[156] Strategic Studies Institute, *US Army War College*, THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR (2012).
[157] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 607-608.

two years, tens of millions of dollars were raised for the Contras from third-party countries and private donors. Initially, the funds were channeled directly to the Contras, but by July 1985, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, who served as McFarlane's staff assistant at the National Security Council (NSC), took charge of overseeing the Contra funds and coordinating covert support. While McFarlane authorized the establishment of "The Nicaraguan Freedom Fund," North not only facilitated the receipt of foreign funds but also assumed operational authority at times.

Moreover, these arms sales violated the U.S. embargo on Iran, which was imposed due to concerns over its state sponsorship of terrorism. The Reagan administration hoped that by providing weapons, it could secure the release of American hostages and potentially improve relations with Iran.

The proceeds from the arms sales were covertly diverted to support the Contras, who were facing restrictions imposed by Congress. The Boland Amendment, passed in 1984 and renewed in subsequent years, specifically prohibited direct or indirect U.S. support to the Contras. As the operation came to light, a series of revelations unfolded, triggering intense public and congressional scrutiny. In addition, in 1986, an aircraft carrying arms for Iran was shot down over Nicaragua, exposing the existence of the operation. As a result, media reports began to shed light on the secret arms deals and the subsequent illegal diversion of funds. The public and lawmakers were shocked by the revelations, leading to a series of congressional investigations.

As a consequence of the recent revelations, the Reagan administration faced allegations of violating multiple laws, including the Arms Export Control Act, the Boland Amendment, and the Anti-Bolton Act. The hearings, including those held by the joint congressional committee led by Senator Daniel Inouye and Congressman Lee Hamilton, unveiled a series of startling revelations. Testimony from Oliver North, among others, revealed the extent of the secret operations and the involvement of high-ranking officials within the Reagan administration.

Furthermore, the investigative committee discovered that President Reagan had either created or allowed an atmosphere where secrecy, dishonesty, and a lack of regard for the law were deemed acceptable. The officials who executed the Iran-Contra policy disregarded the objections of senior Cabinet members, provided false information to Congress, and attempted to conceal their actions by destroying, shredding, and altering documents. Consequently, based on the recommendation of a special prosecutor, criminal charges were filed against Poindexter and North. In 1990, Poindexter was convicted of obstructing Congress or providing false statements and served a six-month prison sentence. North, on the other hand, was found guilty of similar charges but had his conviction later overturned.[158]

[158] Jones Maldwyn A., *The limits of liberty: American history, 1607 – 1980* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 608.

Following the Iran-Contra affair scandal, the U.S. Congress did not appropriate any more military aid to the Contras. The last batch of aid expired on 28th February 1988, effectively ending U.S. support for the Contras. Without significant outside aid, the Contras' war effort dwindled and, in 1990, a general election was held in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas lost to the National Opposition Union, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro became the new president of Nicaragua. With the end of the war and the election of a new government, the Contras disbanded, and many of their members either returned to civilian life or joined the Sandinista army.[159]

Despite the significant material and logistical support provided by the United States, the Contras were never able to achieve a military victory and overthrow the Sandinista government. The rebels were primarily active in Nicaragua's Northern Mountains and were unable to penetrate the country's major cities, including the capital Managua. While the U.S. assistance program did lead to a considerable increase in rebel attacks during the periods of strong support, it was ultimately not enough to achieve the rebels' goals.

4.5 Attempt of recognition and the elections of 1990

The 1990 elections in Nicaragua marked a crucial turning point in the country's history, as well as in the broader context of Latin American politics. The elections were the first free and fair presidential elections held in Nicaragua since the Sandinista Revolution of 1979. Indeed, these elections were significant not only for Nicaragua but also for the United States and the international community, as they represented a test of the democratic processes in post-revolutionary Nicaragua and the region.

The importance of the 1990 elections in Nicaragua lies in the fact that they were held in a context of political and economic turmoil, in which the Sandinista faced significant challenges, including the Contra War, an economic embargo imposed by the United States which crippled the economy and a growing public discontent with the Sandinista government policies and their inability to manage properly the reconstruction, draw in sufficient foreign investments and control the inflation rate.

For this reason, the elections were seen as a chance for the Sandinistas, and for Nicaragua, to move towards greater political stability and economic development. The possibility of a successful outcome would have granted the Sandinistas the political recognition that they needed at a global level in order to demonstrate the world, and especially the Western countries, that the continuation of the socialist government represented the will of the people and not the tyranny of the few as with the United States-supported Somoza dynasty.

In this context, the Bush administration had a more coherent electoral policy that wanted to avoid adding to the already serious divisions within the opposition. Despite some public skepticism about the

[159] Hoekstra Quint, *Helping the Contras: The Effectiveness of U.S. Support for Foreign Rebels During the Nicaraguan Contra War* (1979–1990) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 2021), 532.

Sandinista commitment to free elections, the Bush administration favored an electoral strategy in Nicaragua. The administration had shifted its policy towards the internal opposition, reflecting changing circumstances that included growing opposition to the Contras in Honduras, the Nicaraguan government's willingness to compromise on democratic reforms, and a decrease in support for the Contra war in the U.S. Congress, particularly after the Iran-Contra scandal.

In March of 1989, the Congress agreed on a bipartisan resolution for Central America. It allowed $49 million in humanitarian aid for the Contras, but any further military assistance was prohibited for the time being. The administration agreed to the compromise, realizing that it could no longer rely on Congress for support on the military option. The agreement followed an accord signed by the Central American presidents to disband the Contras in exchange for Nicaraguan commitment to political reforms and early elections. The Congress then shifted its focus to the elections in Nicaragua, approving $9 million for democracy promotion, including $2.5 million for the opposition alliance, Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO), in addition to a previous $5 million grant for the opposition.[160]

The greater consensus within the opposition during the 1990 elections could also be attributed to the fact that the conditions for holding free and fair elections were perceived to be much more favorable than in 1984. Starting in February 1989, the government began holding discussions with opposition parties to discuss potential reforms to electoral and media laws. As a result, the Electoral Law was revised in April, which provided the opposition with a larger share of public campaign funds, increased access to state-run media, and allowed them to receive foreign financing. In the same month, the Assembly approved a reformed General Law on Media and Public Communications, which addressed several key concerns of the opposition.[161]

In August 1989, the government and opposition reached a significant agreement. The opposition agreed to endorse the demobilization plan for the contras in exchange for the government's agreement to modify the electoral and media laws further. The modifications included increasing the opposition's access to television, abolishing the Law for Maintenance of Order and Public Security, suspending the military draft from September 1st through the elections, and granting amnesty to remaining political prisoners upon the completion of the contra demobilization.[162]

The Sandinista government's series of concessions made it highly likely that the opposition would participate in the upcoming elections. Additionally, the government agreed to allow the UN and OAS to send teams of observers to monitor the electoral process, indicating the government's commitment to ensuring a

[160] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 21.
[161] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 21.
[162] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 21.

legitimate and transparent election outcome. The government wanted to avoid any ambiguity or disputes regarding the legitimacy of the results, as had happened after the 1984 elections.

The opposition leaders believed that they had a better chance of doing well, or even winning, in the upcoming elections compared to the 1984 elections, during which the Sandinista government had a significant level of support due to their popular social policies and extensive agrarian reform, which made it difficult for the opposition to pose a real electoral challenge.

The elections had the potential to play an important role in democratizing Nicaragua since all major political parties participated. The various agreements between the Sandinista government and opposition parties helped establish the rules for the election, ensuring that the major contenders would participate and acknowledge the legitimacy of the electoral results. Despite some violence and abuse by both the FSLN and UNO, and attacks by the contras, most Nicaraguans were able to participate in the campaigns without fear of intimidation and express their political views.

The level of citizen engagement during the 80-day campaign was likely greater than during the 1984 campaign, although it is challenging to quantify. This was due, in part, to the passionate fervor of activists on both sides, who placed great importance on the elections. The Sandinistas saw the elections as a means to prove their unwavering dedication to democratic values and to put an end to U.S. aggression, while UNO supporters viewed the elections as a momentous chance to substantially alter, if not overturn, the revolution's trajectory.

During the election, voters were faced with two primary inquiries. The first pertained to the responsibility for the war and economic crisis that had placed a significant burden on the populace. The FSLN contended that the United States had destroyed the nation's economy through military and economic aggression, while UNO put the blame solely on Sandinista incompetence in the management of the post-civil war reconstruction and accused the FSLN of attracting U.S. hostility toward Nicaragua. Although the responsibility topic was a critical matter during the campaign, voters were primarily concerned with the pledges and solutions presented by the two primary contenders. In this regard, the FSLN assured voters that their unchallenged triumph in the election would bring a definitive end to the war and increase international aid. UNO emphasized their association with the United States, pledging that a victory for them would result in a significant amount of U.S. assistance to the country, hence alleviating the misery of the people.[163]

The deep societal divisions brought by the contra war made it essential for a consensus among the primary political actors to emerge in Nicaragua, in order to solidify liberal democracy. The 1990 elections helped establish a foundation for this consensus by making several positive contributions. The series of

[163] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 23.

agreements on the "*ground rules*" of the political process, and particularly the Sandinistas' willingness to compromise, helped alleviate the opposition's concerns about the government's intentions and ensured their participation in the elections. More significantly, the FSLN recognition of the election results' legitimacy and Daniel Ortega's conciliatory actions immediately following the elections opened the path to transition negotiations between the FSLN and the government-elect.[164]

The transition negotiations, which extended for most of March, resulted in an agreement on several critical issues. The protection of the interests of FSLN militants and supporters, especially with the contras still armed, was the most pressing concern for the FSLN. There was a genuine fear of contra retaliation against Sandinista supporters following the election. The agreement addressed this concern by protecting the "*rank and privileges*" of Sandinistas currently serving in the armed forces and left open the possibility of Defense Minister Humberto Ortega continuing as head of the armed forces. Additionally, it confirmed the government-elect's commitment to bringing an ultimate end to the contra war. On the other hand, the agreement acknowledged Violeta Chamorro's constitutional role as the "*Supreme Chief*" of the armed forces, ensuring her authority over the size and organization of the military. Ensuring military accountability to the UNO government, rather than the FSLN leadership, was crucial for liberal democracy. Finally, the agreement confirmed the Sandinistas' willingness to assist the new government in finding international economic aid.[165]

In conclusion, while it is clear that the creation of a socialist government in Central America represented a serious issue in terms of regional security for the United States, the reaction of the latter was far from being proportional to the actual threat posed by the Sandinistas. The actions taken by the U.S. exacerbated the difficulties that the Nicaraguan government was already experiencing after the civil war. The country was grappling with a fragile economy, a weak infrastructure, and social and political instability. The U.S. embargo and funding of the Contras made it even harder for the government to address these issues and provide for its people. The violence and human rights abuses committed by the Contras also contributed to the country's instability, creating a sense of fear and insecurity among the population.

Indeed, by resorting to such disruptive economic sanctions, the U.S. sunk the Nicaraguan economy and preclude the Sandinista government to the possibility of implement significant economic measures that could benefit the country. By removing all chances of foreign investments, the United States took away a vital source of capital that could be used to finance new businesses and infrastructure projects, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth, leaving Nicaragua without the necessary resources to build its infrastructure, develop new industries, and create jobs.

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[164] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 24.

[165] Williams Philip J., *Elections and Democratization in Nicaragua: The 1990 Elections in Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Winter 1990), 25.

To worsen the situation, the violence and instability caused by the Contras also had significant economic impacts. Not only the conflict disrupted agriculture and commerce, contributing to food shortages and further economic hardship for the people of Nicaragua, but it also scared away foreign investment, hindering the country's economic development.

Chapter 5

Outcomes of the Intervention in Nicaragua

Summary: **5.1.** *Introduction*; **5.2.** *Domestic Outcomes in Nicaragua*; **5.3.** *From military intervention to democracy promotion: a shift in the United States' foreign policy in Nicaragua and Latin America;* **5.4.** *International Response* **5.5.** *Legitimacy of the Intervention.*

5.1 Introduction

The United States' intervention in Nicaragua against the Sandinista government during the 1980s had significant and far-reaching effects, for both Nicaragua and the wider region of Central America. The intervention, which began in earnest in 1981, was part of a broader Cold War-era policy of containment aimed at preventing the spread of Soviet-backed communism in the Western Hemisphere. The United States' support for the Contra rebels, who were fighting against the Sandinista government, was driven by a range of foreign policy rationales, including collective security, concerns over communist subversion, and the promotion of democratic values.

However, the consequences of this intervention were profound. The United States' support for the Contra rebels contributed to a brutal and protracted civil war in Nicaragua that lasted over a decade and resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people. The Contra rebels were accused of committing numerous human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, rape, and the forced relocation of civilians. The United States' actions also had a destabilizing effect on the wider region of Central America, exacerbating existing conflicts and contributing to the displacement of millions of people.

Moreover, the United States' intervention in Nicaragua had long-lasting political and economic effects. The conflict deepened existing divisions within Nicaraguan society and contributed to a culture of political violence that persisted for years after the war's end. The intervention also had a significant impact on Nicaragua's economy, with the country's infrastructure and agricultural sector suffering major damage as a result of the conflict. Furthermore, the United States' imposition of economic sanctions on Nicaragua in the 1980s further damaged the country's economy and contributed to a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment that has persisted to this day.

Nevertheless, the Contra war also had a lasting impact on U.S foreign policy. The conflict was highly controversial in the United States, with many Americans opposed to the Reagan administration's support for the Contras. The war led to a number of investigations and scandals, including the Iran-Contra affair, in which senior U.S. officials were found to have illegally sold arms to Iran in order to fund the Contras.

This chapter will focus on the outcomes of the U.S. intervention, considering both domestic and international outcomes. Initially, it will pinpoint the outcomes in Nicaragua, analyzing the post-1990 administrations and their impact on the Nicaraguan welfare, society, economy and international relevance. In this context, a key figure will be represented by Daniel Ortega, a former member of the FLSN, who won the elections in 2007 and still rules today, with not little controversy on the legality of his administration's policies and actions.

Secondly, the focus will shift on the United States, in particular the change of its foreign policy after the end of the Cold War. Following, the section will then analyze the Clinton administration's foreign policies and the change in the approach of the United States towards Latin American countries, especially concerning the economic sphere.

Thirdly, the chapter will aim at portraying the image of United States approach towards Nicaragua in the eyes of the international community. In this context, the section will focus on the analysis of the case *Nicaragua v. United States* of 1984 and 1986, brought to the ICJ by Nicaragua, claiming a violation of international law by the United States. This section will consider the claims of both countries in order to give a complete assessment of the case and a background for the description of the Court's decision.

In conclusion, besides the formal analysis of the legal aspect, it is of the utmost importance to assess the legitimacy of the intervention. Indeed, the last section of the chapter will be aimed at considering the claims of legitimacy of the United States and assess their compliance with essential principles such as proportionality and self-determination.

5.2 Domestic Outcomes in Nicaragua

The Sandinista social policies and programs were significantly reversed during the conservative administrations that followed them. This was partly due to the impact of the Contra War on social services and an emergency austerity program implemented by the Sandinistas themselves to fight inflation, which had already partially undone these programs. However, the reversal was also a result of the Chamorro, Alemán and Bolaños administrations' strong adherence to neoliberal economic principles, as advocated by the United States and enforced by international organizations like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank.[166]

In 2006, over 70% of the rural population in Nicaragua did not have access to safe drinking water, and seven out of ten employed Nicaraguans could not afford to purchase a standard market basket of household

[166] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 170.

consumer goods. Despite this, the impoverished population of Nicaragua increasingly turned to other means to support themselves. According to the United Nations Development Program, over 800,000 Nicaraguans left the country between 1990 and 2005, with projections from some non-governmental organizations estimating even higher numbers. Structural adjustment policies in the 1990s led to a significant increase in Nicaraguan migration to countries such as Costa Rica and the United States.[167]

The post-Sandinista governments also represented a significant setback for women's rights. During the Chamorro administration, official opposition to abortion and the termination of sex education on television, as well as its reduction in public schools, made family planning more challenging. The women's hospital in Managua halted therapeutic abortions that had been legal since 1890. In 2006, a complete ban on abortion was passed with the support of the FSLN, which backed the measure in exchange for the support of the Church in the 2006 presidential elections. Although contraceptives remained widely available, most impoverished women lacked access to health centers and sex education. As a result, Nicaragua's population continued to increase in the post-Sandinista period, reaching approximately 6.1 million by 2015, which is more than twice the 1979 total of 2.5 million.[168]

The declining economic conditions had a greater impact on women, who were often the "*last hired and first fired*" and disproportionately lost their jobs as unemployment increased. Consequently, women sought employment opportunities elsewhere, leading to a "*feminization*" of migration, especially among young, slightly more educated women who were often single mothers. While most of these women migrated to Costa Rica, those with more resources also went to the United States and Spain.[169]

Moreover, post-Sandinista governments did have numerous issues in dealing with the people of the Caribbean coast, retained as a challenging region since the Sandinista regime. Indeed, Chamorro, who was openly hostile to the concept of autonomy, ignored the Autonomy Statute and appointed a government overseer for the region, generating widespread animosity among "*costeños*", the majority of whom had voted for her. The subsequent Alemán and Bolaños administrations, who received significant support on the coast, were also paternalistic towards costeños. However, there was some progress made in land demarcation and titling, which was one of the most contentious issues between the communities and the central government.

Despite the results of the 1990 elections, Nicaragua witnessed a prominent figure of the Sandinistas' movement: Daniel Ortega, who decided to run for the elections of 2006. After winning the election, Daniel Ortega became the President of Nicaragua in 2007 and introduced a new style of governance and policies that differed significantly from the previous conservative period. The new government focused heavily on the

[167] CENIDH, Derechos Humanos en Nicaragua 2006, January 2007, 58 and 63.
[168] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 171.
[169] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 172.

opinions of the majority and was able to restore many social programs from the 1980s and even implement new ones due to increased funding and a lack of Cold War restrictions. Nicaraguans highly approved of Daniel Ortega, who was considered one of the most popular leaders in the region, and showed strong support for democracy in comparison to other Latin American countries.

Again, the 2006 election was marred by the involvement of the U.S. government, which attempted to manipulate the outcome by working behind the scenes to ensure the victory of Eduardo Montealegre, the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) candidate. However, their efforts ironically backfired and contributed to the split of the anti-Sandinista forces, ultimately leading to Daniel Ortega's victory, creating a challenge for the U.S. government, as they had to deal with an old foe in power.

Starting from 2007, there was a continued weakening of democratic structures as Ortega expanded his influence over the legal system, the electoral commission, and the non-governmental organizations. Municipal administrations, which were previously considered a symbol of independence by the FSLN, faced mounting challenges as certain FSLN and Liberal mayors were dismissed by city councils using unfounded reasons, enabling the FSLN central government to exercise greater authority over local governance.[170]

Although different from previous conservative administrations, the Ortega government deviated from the democratic principles upheld by the Sandinistas in the 1980s. While the administration implemented significant social policies and stimulated the economy, as will be detailed below, it also increased the level of corruption that had already been initiated during the pact-making of the previous decade. Ortega had a firm grip on what remained of the FSLN and held a clear advantage over Alemán within the pact, as Alemán's extensive corruption in the 1990s made it possible for Ortega-controlled judicial authorities to bring up additional charges whenever necessary.

Furthermore, the Ortega government displayed little tolerance for opposing views as well. Journalists, former members of the FSLN party, and non-governmental organizations reported incidents of intimidation and violence carried out by supporters of Ortega. Several high-profile figures, such as former FSLN members Carlos Fernando Chamorro and Ernesto Cardenal, were subjected to legal probes and public smear campaigns. A few women leaders who were actively advocating against the criminalization of therapeutic abortion were also targeted. Pro-Ortega youth gangs known as "*turbas*" were employed as a means of intimidating the opposition. Some government employees even admitted to practicing self-censorship due to concerns about losing their jobs.[171]

[170] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 179.
[171] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 180.

The Ortega government's authoritarian tendencies were also reflected in its approach to social policies and citizen engagement. For instance, the administration heavily promoted direct democracy, as demonstrated by the omnipresence of the slogan "*El Pueblo, Presidente*" (meaning "the People as President") on government signage after Ortega returned to power. Bright pink billboards bearing the slogan were erected throughout the country, reflecting Ortega's interest in promoting his version of direct democracy. In pursuit of this objective, Ortega issued a decree in 2007 establishing Citizen Power Councils (CPCs) as a means of enhancing communication between citizens and the government, as well as implementing popular social programs.[172]

As Ortega's popularity continued to increase, the opposition parties realized that they had to unite to have any chance of defeating him in the 2011 elections. The primary opposition alliance, Unity in Hope (UNE), was formed by the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) and the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS), along with dissidents from the Liberal and Conservative parties and civil society groups. The alliance chose 79-year-old radio journalist Fabio Gadea Mantilla as their presidential candidate, with Edmundo Jarquín as his running mate, meanwhile, the PLC again nominated former President Arnoldo Alemán as their candidate.

Before the election day, polls predicted a decisive victory for Ortega and the FSLN due to his popular social programs and successful management of the economy, which had won him many new supporters. Even opposition candidates found it difficult to criticize these programs, with some even pledging to continue them. In the end, Ortega won 63 percent of the vote, while Gadea received 31 percent and Alemán received less than 6 percent. However, the FSLN's most significant victory was in the National Assembly, where they gained a two-thirds majority with 62 seats. This enabled them to pass laws without the support of any other party, make appointments to the Supreme Court and CSE, and block any opposition legislation. Concerns were raised about the quality of the elections due to the controversy surrounding the legality of Ortega's reelection bid, and the government's decision not to accredit many domestic observer groups. Invitations to international observer missions were issued late, preventing many from properly organizing missions.[173]

In some ways, the Ortega administration's economic policy was not significantly different from those of previous post-1990 governments. The administration continued its membership in CAFTA and borrowed relatively small loans from the International Monetary Fund, which required adherence to the neoliberal, socially regressive policies of the U.S.-controlled organization. However, the Ortega administration's membership in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) represented a departure from past governments. ALBA was a regional integration initiative started by Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and Cuba's Fidel Castro as an alternative to neoliberal trade agreements such as the United States-promoted Central American Free Trade Area and Free Trade Area of the Americas. The Ortega administration leveraged the

[172] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 180-181.
[173] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 184.

benefits of a market economy along with the influx of dollars from ALBA, which led to economic stability, moderate growth, and record levels of trade and investment, contributing to Ortega's popularity.

The economic performance of the Ortega administration during its early years was a combination of positive and negative trends. The average annual growth rate was 3.2 percent in the first two years but declined to negative 1.5 percent in 2009 due to several factors, including high fuel costs, inflation, and increased unemployment. However, despite the growth, the cost of basic goods significantly increased in 2007, making it unaffordable for a large portion of the Nicaraguan population.[174]

Moreover, real wages declined to 1996 levels despite an 18 percent minimum wage increase in 2007 and a second minimum wage increase in January 2008 of 15 percent. The energy crisis also had a significant impact on productivity, as extensive rolling blackouts plagued the country during 2006. Yet by 2012, Nicaragua posted the highest growth rate in the region at 5 percent and continued to outpace its Central American neighbors, with the exception of Panama.[175] Under Ortega, GDP increased 74 percent from $6.78 billion in 2006 to $11.8 billion in 2014.[176] Nicaragua also experienced record investment during that period. In 2011, combined foreign investment from a range of countries, including Canada, Brazil, Korea, Spain, and Mexico, nearly doubled from 2010 to more than $960 million.[177]

Furthermore, in the 1980s, the government aimed to establish relationships with a diverse range of states, promoted nonalignment, and utilized its membership in international institutions to garner support for the revolution and lift the U.S. embargo. This approach was continued by the Ortega administration, as demonstrated by Nicaragua's varied trade and investment partnerships.

Despite the apparent disagreement between the two nations in public, the Ortega government implemented certain crucial economic policies that aligned with the desires of the United States. This was not only influenced by changing domestic interests but also by global restrictions. One of these policies was the decision to keep Nicaragua as a member of the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which was supported by the United States. Additionally, the Ortega administration chose to maintain a relationship with the International Monetary Fund, which was even more significant. In addition to the United States being unsupportive of Ortega's internal policies, including opposing him in the 2001 and 2006 elections and halting aid after the 2008 elections, the U.S. Embassy in Managua occasionally expressed strong criticism of domestic policies.[178]

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[174] ECLAC, *Statistical Yearbook*, 2009.
[175] Wade Christine J., *Revolutionary Drift: Power and Pragmatism in Ortega's Nicaragua* (World Politics Review, 2015).
[176] The World Bank, *World Development Indicators*. Available online at: GDP (current US$) | Data (worldbank.org)
[177] "Inflationary Spiral Rocks Population," Central America Report, January 18, 2008.
[178] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 199-200.

The Ortega administration made significant efforts to address one of the most challenging issues in the relationship between Nicaragua and the United States, which was the long-standing property dispute. Starting from 1994, the Nicaraguan government was obligated to obtain a property waiver to receive U.S. aid and loans from international organizations funded by the United States. This requirement was imposed to ensure that the government was making efforts to settle the claims of U.S. citizens related to property that was seized during the 1980s. In 2015, the U.S. lifted the property waiver condition, as it was satisfied that the claims under Section 527 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for 1994 and 1995 had been resolved. This section addresses the confiscation of U.S. property outside of the United States. The Nicaraguan government paid about $1.3 billion in total indemnities to settle these claims.[179]

Although the Ortega government made advancements in certain aspects, it continued to express strong objections to what it viewed as meddling in the affairs of other nations, especially by the United States. As a result, the government declined to accredit some local and international election monitors during the 2011 elections.

While Ortega's leadership regarding Honduras received widespread acclaim, his support for both traditional and emerging opponents of the United States created some tension. In addition to joining the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and developing closer relationships with Cuba, Ortega sought to enhance ties globally. Shortly after returning to office, Ortega undertook a sponsored tour of Algeria, Libya, Senegal, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, sponsored by the Libyan government. These visits, particularly to Iran and Libya, drew the ire of both U.S. and domestic critics. One of the most significant controversies arose when Nicaragua offered to serve as Libya's representative at the United Nations, as its delegate was refused a visa during the civil war that led to the overthrow of Moammar Gadhafi.

The government of President Daniel Ortega, who assumed office in 2007, has dismantled nearly all mechanisms designed to limit presidential power. This has included the removal of opposition lawmakers in 2016 by the Electoral Council, which is heavily biased towards the president. Additionally, opposition political parties have been barred from participating in the 2021 presidential elections. In 2014, a constitutional amendment was approved by Ortega's party, which controls the National Assembly, allowing for the removal of term limits. Despite government repression of critics and political opposition, Ortega was elected to a fourth consecutive term in November 2021. However, many governments from both the region and Europe have deemed the elections to be lacking in basic guarantees necessary for them to be considered free and fair. The authorities, seeking to clear the path for Ortega's re-election, have arrested and prosecuted government critics, political opponents, journalists, lawyers, and leaders of community, business, and student groups in an arbitrary manner.

[179] Walker Thomas W. & Wade Christine J., *Nicaragua, Emerging from the Shadow of the Eagle* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019), 200.

Changes and laws related to elections that were implemented between October 2020 and February 2021 have been utilized as a means to discourage critical expression, obstruct opposition involvement in elections, and detain critics without formal charges in order to restrict or curtail their political participation. In December 2020, the National Assembly ratified the Law for the Defense of People's Rights to Independence, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination for Peace, which prohibits individuals labeled as "*traitors*" from running for or holding public office. The definition of "*traitors*" in this law is broadly detailed to include individuals who "*undermine independence, sovereignty, and self-determination*" or those who "*harm the supreme interests of the nation*."

The National Assembly passed a legal reform in May 2021, which consolidates the government's control over the electoral process. This reform includes new provisions for disqualifying candidates and does not mandate independent domestic or international observation of the elections, a practice that the Organization of American States and the United Nations Human Rights Council have identified as critical for ensuring credible scrutiny of the elections. Additionally, the reform grants the National Police the authority to authorize public demonstrations, including those at campaign events held in public spaces. Following the appointment of new members to the Supreme Electoral Council by the National Assembly, which is aligned with Ortega, legal registration was revoked from the primary opposition parties by the Council.

Human rights defenders and other critics are facing numerous forms of harassment, including death threats, physical assaults, intimidation, surveillance, online defamation campaigns, and arbitrary detention and prosecution. The police often station themselves outside the residences of government critics, effectively preventing them from leaving, resulting in a situation of arbitrary arrest. As a result of such harassment, these individuals are unable to carry out ordinary daily activities, including visiting friends and family, attending meetings, going to work, participating in protests, or engaging in political activities. Some have been repeatedly detained, sometimes enduring abuse during their detention, for periods ranging from several days to several months.

Indeed, from January to October 2021, authorities have carried out arbitrary arrests and prosecutions against three journalists, and have initiated charges or investigations against several journalists who were overseas. At least 16 journalists have been summoned as witnesses in a money laundering investigation related to Cristiana Chamorro, a detained presidential candidate who formerly led a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to promoting press freedom, until its closure.[180]

Overall, the effects of the civil war have been detrimental to the country, which, given its dependency on foreign investments and the enormous costs of reconstruction, has found difficulties in making big steps.

[180] Human Rights Watch, *Nicaragua: Events of 2021*. Available online at: World Report 2022: Nicaragua | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

Indeed, in 2021, the HDI ranked Nicaragua 126th even though has grown almost steadily since 1990.[181] Moreover, a great role has been played by the difficulties in implementing policies to reduce inequalities and poverty, as advocated by the Sandinistas. Indeed, in 2021 Nicaragua counted an inequality of 25.8% in the field of education and 30.7% concerning the income, representing a challenging factor for the society.[182]

5.3 From military intervention to democracy promotion: a shift in the United States' foreign policy in Nicaragua and Latin America

In the 1990s, following the end of the Salvadoran civil war, the focus of U.S. assistance shifted from military aid to promoting democratic institutions and implementing the peace accords. International donors, including the United States, placed conditions on their assistance, which contributed to the success of the accords. The priorities for U.S. support during this time were the training and deployment of the National Civilian Police, demobilization of former security forces, land transfers to demobilized combatants, and reforms to the judiciary and electoral system.[183]

The change in the relationship with Latin American countries can be considered one of the main outcomes of the end of the Cold War since after the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was no longer driven by a fear of communist influence in Latin America. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. policies in the region were shaped by the broader goal of containing communism, thus resorting to the use of covert force (*e.g. in the overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala in 1954, the encouragement of the Chilean military to oust democratically elected President Salvador Allende in 1973, and the support of the Contras against the Sandinista regime, all considered too close to communism for the United States*).

However, with the end of the Cold War, the U.S. became less focused on this goal, and its strategic interests in Latin America began to change[184] and its interests in the region shifted to promoting growth, stability, and democracy.

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[181] The data has been taken from the UN Human Rights Development Reports (UNDP) on Nicaragua. In particular, the data shows the HDI of Nicaragua, which is a composite index based on indicators of social (such as life expectancy and adult literacy) and economic (such as gross domestic product per capita) development. The HDI measurement is a number between 0 a 1. In the case of Nicaragua, the HDI amounts to 0.667 in 2021.

[182] The data has been taken from the UN Human Rights Development Reports (UNDP) on Nicaragua. However, the results considered do not refer to the HDI but to the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), which takes into consideration disparities in HDI dimensions by adjusting the average value of each dimension based on its level of inequality. When there is no inequality among people, the IHDI value is equal to the HDI value. However, as inequality increases, the IHDI value decreases compared to the HDI value. Essentially, the IHDI provides a measurement of human development that factors in the presence of inequality. In 2021, the IHDI of Nicaragua amounted to a loss of 22.6%, which lowers the HDI from 0.667 to 0.516.

[183] Burgerman Susan, *Making Peace Perform in War-Transition Countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua* (Center for Global Development, 2006), 257.

[184] Frechette Myles, *Rethinking Latin America: A New Approach in US Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard International Review, Summer 2006), 28.

More specifically, the period after the end of the Cold War saw a rising focus on democratization as a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy stemming from the 1990s' revival of democracy on a global scale, with communism failure, the decline of caudillo rule in Latin America, and a range of challenges in Africa and Asia leading many to reconsider their system of governance and adopt democracy as an alternative, including economic, environmental, and sociocultural factors.[185]

Initially, the Clinton administration did not give much attention to foreign policy, but eventually, it elevated democracy promotion to the forefront of its policy efforts. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and the NSC staff led the development of a "*strategy of enlargement*" to replace the containment strategy that had guided the United States through the Cold War. This strategy consisted of four main points: strengthening existing market democracies, consolidating new market democracies, containing aggressive states and encouraging their shift towards market democracy, and promoting this concept in areas facing humanitarian crises.[186]

In this context, President Clinton and his foreign policy advisers launched a public relations campaign to promote their vision of engaging and enlarging the global democratic community, which they believed would also enhance U.S. security and economic prosperity. In this campaign, the Clinton administration sought to use the informal powers of the presidency to shape the foreign policy agenda for both Congress and the American public. They also took additional steps to advance their program, such as appointing ardent supporters of democratization to key positions in the foreign policy bureaucracy. This included the creation of deputy assistant secretary of state positions for democracy promotion in each regional bureau, renaming the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs as the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and establishing the Center for Democracy and Governance within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).[187]

Moreover, this general change in the U.S. approach towards Latina America can be also observed through the development of the United States-Nicaraguan relations after the end of the Sandinista regime. Indeed, after the 1990 transition, the United States restored normal diplomatic ties with Nicaragua and extended substantial financial aid to support the Chamorro government. Nevertheless, in fiscal year 1992, economic aid was reduced significantly to pressure the government on two main issues: the outstanding private claims to property that had been seized by the Sandinista government, and the continuing dominance of the military and police by Sandinista forces. As a result, $104 million of the allocated economic assistance budget was withheld. The funds were released in 1994, contingent on four conditions: the imposition of a human

[185] Scott James M., *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 252.
[186] Scott James M., *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 252-256.
[187] Scott James M., *After the End: Making U.S. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 256-257.

rights code of conduct on the military and police, efforts to reform the judicial system, resolution of outstanding land claims, and the monitoring of all aid by USAID to prevent corruption. During this period, some members of Congress complicated relations by indirectly linking the May 1993 explosion in Managua, which involved a weapons cache containing false identity documents, to the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing. They cited the explosion as evidence of Sandinista involvement in international terrorism and made economic aid conditional on investigations into Sandinista connections with international terrorist groups in the 1994 budget.[188]

The current priorities for United States-Nicaraguan relations include the promotion of human rights, intellectual rights, and property rights, as well as civilian control of military and police. There is a focus on interdiction of transborder criminal activities, such as narcotics traffic, illegal alien smuggling, and international terrorist and criminal organizations. Reforms to the judiciary and governance issues, including electoral transparency and anticorruption, are also priorities. Claims to expropriated lands remain an issue, but the U.S. State Department waives the 1994 legislation annually, conditioning assistance on resolution of those claims. In the past, the United States provided Nicaragua with financial aid for debt relief, balance of payments support, and hurricane reconstruction. Since 2000, U.S. assistance programs have focused on government transparency, sustainable growth, primary education, and food assistance for families. One important aspect of the governance program is increased citizen participation in decision-making, and USAID has granted funds for election monitoring and analysis.[189]

On September 21st 2016, the Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act (NICA) was unanimously approved by the U.S. House of Representatives. The legislation aimed to impose sanctions on Ortega for his infringement on civil liberties and political rights, by opposing loans from international financial institutions until he conducted genuinely democratic elections. During this period, Ortega was preparing for his fourth presidential campaign, with Rosario Murillo as his running mate. The bill urged the United States to reject providing non-humanitarian loans to Nicaragua unless Ortega's government, which has been in power since 2007, took significant measures to ensure the holding of free, fair, and transparent elections, as well as strengthening the rule of law, including guaranteeing the independence of Nicaragua's judiciary and electoral council. Moreover, the NICA legislation posed a risk of severing Nicaragua's access to substantial funds from international organizations like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and InterAmerican Development Bank.[190]

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[188] Burgerman Susan, *Making Peace Perform in War-Transition Countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua* (Center for Global Development, 2006), 273-274.

[189] Burgerman Susan, *Making Peace Perform in War-Transition Countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua* (Center for Global Development, 2006), 274.

[190] Witte-Lebhar Benjamin, *Grumblings from Washington as Nicaraguan Elections Near* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico, Latin America Digital Beat, October 20th 2016), 1.

The concerns expressed by U.S. authorities regarding Ortega's authoritarian leadership style and his handling of the 2016 elections were also shared by opposition leaders within Nicaragua. These leaders rose concerns for months as Ortega, along with his allies in the judiciary and the Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE), which represents the top electoral authority in the country, systematically stripped away their remaining power and representation. The center-right Partido Liberal Independiente (Liberal Independent Party, PLI), which is the main opposition party, and other political opponents of Ortega first sensed trouble when the CSE delayed the official announcement of the November elections until May, while usually elections are announced a year in advance, allowing sufficient time for candidates and parties to prepare. Even more concerning was Ortega's declaration in early June that the elections would not be open to international monitors, explicitly criticizing the role of international observers, prompting them to leave Nicaragua.

However, the NICA Act seemed out of touch given the backdrop of Obama's thawing of relations with Cuba. Indeed, the policy of Obama's administration towards Nicaragua involved a combination of cautious acceptance regarding human rights and collaboration on countering drug trafficking. To further hinder the implementation of the bill was the fact that the two countries had shared economic interests. Ortega was accommodating towards U.S. foreign direct investment and maintained an alliance with the Nicaraguan business elite. Despite Ortega's adoption of leftist revolutionary rhetoric and his government's implementation of social programs aimed at poverty alleviation, the economic policies of the Sandinista regime have actually supported capitalist expansion since Ortega assumed office in 2007. As a result, the bill was initially passed by the United States House of Representatives in 2016, but it did not receive approval from the Senate.

Nevertheless, the NICA Act regained momentum during the Trump administration in 2017 when an amended version of the bill was introduced in the House of Representatives. Similar to the original bill, this revised version aimed to impede international financial institutions' loans until Ortega conducted democratic elections. Additionally, it included a provision that mandated the government to investigate and prosecute corrupt officials. After being passed by the House in October 2017, the NICA Act moved on to the Senate, where it faced a prolonged period of inaction for over a year. As a consequence of this proposal, the Nicaraguan government and private sector actively lobbied against the bill, and it remained widely unpopular within the country.

Despite the numerous internal debates on the implementation of the bill, on December 20th 2018, President Trump signed the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act, as a continuation of the previous Nica Act, into law. This legislation mandated that the United States opposed the provision of new loans to Nicaragua from international financial institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. These loans played a significant role in financing public investments in areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure in Nicaragua. The Nica Act also imposed sanctions on individuals associated with President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo who

were involved in corruption or human rights abuses, particularly in the wake of the April 2018 protests that sparked a civic uprising against the government.[191]

Indeed, as a response to the 2018 protests and the subsequent suppression, Congress passed the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018, which directed U.S. representatives at both the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to oppose any new multilateral lending to Nicaragua, except in cases related to basic human needs and democracy promotion. Both the Trump and Biden Administrations have implemented various financial sanctions and visa restrictions against members of the Nicaraguan government, legislature, judiciary, and President Ortega's family, including his wife and Vice President, Rosario Murillo, as well as several of their children.[192]

In response to the imprisonment of over 40 opposition members, individuals from civil society, media, and the private sector, which includes seven potential presidential candidates, the United States has taken decisive action against the Ortega-Murillo regime's ongoing human rights violations and fraudulent election. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has imposed sanctions on 47 Nicaraguan individuals and 11 entities, including the Vice President, the children of the ruling couple, key advisors to the President, and leaders in the Nicaraguan National Police, National Assembly, judiciary, and the ruling Sandinista party. The United States has also implemented visa restrictions on more than 270 individuals who have supported the regime's assault on democracy, including members of the National Assembly, judges, prosecutors, election officials, political party officers, and their family members. Furthermore, the United States has called on the Nicaraguan government to restore respect for human rights. Working alongside partners and international organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations, the United States has strongly condemned Nicaragua's violations of its international obligations and urged the regime to change its course.[193]

In this context, in fiscal year 2022, the Biden Administration requested a total of $15 million in assistance specifically allocated for Nicaragua, which was intended for programs focused on democracy, rights, and governance. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, Congress approved an appropriation that met or exceeded the requested amount. For fiscal year 2023, the Administration once again requested $15 million to provide support for civic participation, democratic alliances, independent media, and the protection of human rights in Nicaragua.

The Biden Administration has actively collaborated with international partners to exert increased pressure on the Nicaraguan government. One significant example is the joint efforts to pass resolutions at the

[191] Goett Jennifer, *Nicaragua: Sanctions in Three Acts* (NACLA Report on the Americas, 2019), 4.
[192] Congressional Research Service, *Nicaragua in Brief: Political Developments and U.S. Policy* (June 3rd 2022), 8.
[193] U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Relations with Nicaragua* (September 15th 2022). Available online at: U.S. Relations With Nicaragua - United States Department of State

Organization of American States (OAS) and a collective statement at the United Nations Human Rights Council, both of which condemn Nicaragua's human rights violations and antidemocratic actions.

In addition, several other countries have joined the United States in imposing sanctions against the Ortega regime. These collective measures have started to show their impact, as a member of the Ortega family reportedly made contact with the Biden Administration recently to initiate a dialogue. In this context, Laureano Ortega, the son of Ortega and Murillo, who has been involved in negotiating diplomatic and energy agreements with Russia and China, is said to be seeking a relaxation of sanctions imposed on his family and close associates. Overall, the economic struggles faced by Nicaragua's allies, Russia and Venezuela, due to their own sanctions, are also impacting Nicaragua, as they are limited in their ability to provide economic support to the country.[194]

In conclusion, in the 21st century, at a global level, the United States foreign policy has undergone significant changes in response to a rapidly evolving global landscape. From its interventionist approach in the post-9/11 era to its more recent focus on diplomatic engagement and multilateralism, U.S. foreign policy has adapted to address new threats and challenges facing the country and the world. One of the defining features of U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century has been its focus on counterterrorism, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The United States launched wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were heavily criticized for their human and financial costs. However, in recent years, the U.S. has shifted its approach to counterterrorism, focusing more on intelligence-gathering, partnerships with other countries, and targeted military action.

On the other hand, considering the approach towards Latin America, the 21st century witnessed significant changes in the United States approach to the region, shifting from a history of interventionism and paternalism to a more cooperative and mutually beneficial attitude One of the defining features of this change has been a focus on promoting economic growth and development, in which the U.S. has sought to expand trade and investment in the region, while also supporting regional integration and infrastructure development. This has included initiatives such as the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Alliance for Prosperity, which aim to boost economic growth and create jobs in the region.

5.4 International Response

On April 9th, 1984, the Republic of Nicaragua brought a case before the International Court of Justice against the United States, claiming that the U.S. was responsible for military and paramilitary activities against Nicaragua. Nicaragua argued that the U.S. was violating its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence by using military force and intervening in its internal affairs. According to Nicaragua, the U.S. had formed an army of over 10,000 mercenaries, stationed them in more than ten base camps in Honduras

[194] Congressional Research Service, *Nicaragua in Brief: Political Developments and U.S. Policy* (June 3rd 2022), 9.

along the border with Nicaragua, provided them with training, weapons, ammunition, food, and medical supplies, and directed their attacks against human and economic targets within Nicaragua. The purpose of these actions, as claimed by Nicaragua, was to destabilize the government of Nicaragua and ultimately overthrow it, or at least force it to change its domestic and foreign policies to align with those of the United States. As a result, Nicaragua argued that these actions were a clear violation of fundamental and universally accepted principles of international law.[195]

In response to Nicaragua's application, the United States challenged the admissibility of the case on five different grounds. First, it argued that Nicaragua failed to involve all parties necessary to protect their rights and resolve the issues in question. Second, it claimed that Nicaragua's allegations concerning the United States' unlawful use of force or acts of aggression were within the jurisdiction of other UN organs, particularly the Security Council. Third, it argued that the Court did not have jurisdiction over the subject matter of the case given its position within the UN system. Fourth, the United States argued that the Court could not adequately deal with ongoing conflicts without exceeding its judicial boundaries. Finally, it asserted that Nicaragua had not exhausted established conflict resolution processes as required by Article 52 of the Charter.[196]

The contentions presented to the Court were unanimously rejected, with Judge Schwebel joining the rest of the judges in ruling that the application was acceptable. This decision is significant, as it established the Court's position within the UN system and as a principal judicial body. While the rejection of one argument was based on the lack of evidence for an "*indispensable parties*" rule, the Court's observations on the second, third and fourth grounds were particularly noteworthy. The Court disagreed with the U.S. claim that Nicaragua had not exhausted regional processes, stating that the Contadora process did not qualify as a regional arrangement and that there was no requirement for prior exhaustion of regional processes before approaching the Court.[197]

The United States argued that the International Court could not exercise jurisdiction over the subject matter of the application due to its position within the UN system. In this context, the U.S. presented inter-related arguments to support their claim. Firstly, they argued that the application required the Court to determine whether the activities in question constituted a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression, which is the responsibility of the UN political organs according to its Charter. Secondly, the

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[195] Chimni B. S., *The International Court and the Maintenance of Peace and Security: The Nicaragua Decision and the United States Response* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Oct., 1986), 961.

[196] Chimni B. S., *The International Court and the Maintenance of Peace and Security: The Nicaragua Decision and the United States Response* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Oct., 1986), 961.

[197] Chimni B. S., *The International Court and the Maintenance of Peace and Security: The Nicaragua Decision and the United States Response* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Oct., 1986), 961-962.

U.S. argued that the Security Council holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security under Article 24 of the Charter, and the Council was already considering nearly identical claims. Thirdly, the U.S. claimed that the application was essentially an appeal from an adverse consideration in the Security Council, as a draft resolution presented by Nicaragua had failed to secure the required majority. Fourthly, the U.S. argued that the Court would have to decide on the claims of the United States and other countries regarding the right of self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter, which is the role of the Security Council. Finally, the subject matter concerned ongoing hostilities, and the Charter did not recognize the possibility of settlement by judicial means instead of political means.[198]

However, the Court clarified the relationship between the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Court in the exercise of this primary responsibility, ruling that a matter that was before the Security Council did not prevent it from being dealt with by the Court, and that both proceedings could be pursued at the same time. The Court further developed its analysis of the distinct but complementary functions of the Security Council and the Court in rejecting the United States' argument that the proceedings were effectively an appeal to the Court from an adverse decision of the Council.[199]

The decision emphasized the distinct role of the Court, but also made it clear that the Court had never refused to hear a case simply because it had political implications or involved serious elements of the use of force. The Court cited the Corfu Channel case as an example, where it dealt with questions of force and intervention, similar to the issues at stake in the above-mentioned case. The Court also recognized that the plea of the inherent right of self-defense under Article 51 had a legal dimension that fell within its jurisdiction.[200]

The Court also disagreed with the U.S. argument that the dispute was part of an ongoing armed conflict and instead held that it was a dispute that required and demanded a peaceful settlement between the two states. Therefore, it was appropriate to bring it before the principal judicial organ of the organization for peaceful settlement (para.94). The Court also clarified that the burden of proof rested with the party making the claim and that even if evidence was lacking, a submission could be rejected as unproven, but it could not be ruled out as inadmissible simply because of an anticipated lack of proof.[201]

The Court pointed out that the United States had brought seven cases before it in the 1950s concerning attacks on U.S. military aircraft by other countries, despite now arguing that the ongoing armed conflict

[198] ICJ Reports (26th November, 1984), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 86.
[199] ICJ Reports (26th November, 1984), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 89.
[200] ICJ Reports (26th November, 1984), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 98.
[201] ICJ Reports (26th November, 1984), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 101.

between the two states meant that the current matter could not be brought before the International Court of Justice and should instead be referred to the Security Council. The Court also dismissed attempts to differentiate the present case from the Corfu Channel case by claiming that the incident in question was not part of an ongoing use of armed force, deeming such distinctions irrelevant.[202]

On November 26, 1984, the Court issued its judgment, and on January 18, 1985, the U.S. State Department announced that President Reagan had decided that the United States would not participate in any further proceedings in the case. The U.S. later withdrew its consent to the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in October 1985, largely due to the Court's decision to accept jurisdiction in the Nicaragua case. Therefore, the United States' reasons for withdrawing from the case merit careful consideration.

Initially, the United States strongly criticized the Court's decision and reiterated most of the arguments it had made during the case. It contended that the Court had disregarded the original intent of the framers of the UN Charter, who did not intend for the Court to be the appropriate forum for resolving such disputes. Additionally, the U.S. argued that the Court had disregarded Nicaragua's own arguments that the complaint related to an ongoing armed conflict. The U.S. also believed that neither the Corfu Channel case, nor the Aerial Incident cases, nor the Hostages case involved an alleged use of force that was actually in progress. The U.S. further asserted that the Court had ignored Article 51, which expressly prohibits action to limit the right of self-defense by United Nations organizations other than the Security Council. The U.S. also argued that the issues in the Hostages case were entirely distinct from those before the Security Council, allowing the Court to rule on the narrow legal claims of the United States without interfering in any way with the matter before the Council. Furthermore, the U.S. claimed that the Court had underestimated the exceptional evidentiary difficulties posed by the case and that the Court was exceeding normal judicial boundaries in assuming jurisdiction over the case.[203]

The United States has claimed that the Nicaragua dispute is not appropriate for judicial resolution and that the Court was never intended to resolve such conflicts. However, the Court disagreed with both of these assertions and pointed out that the U.S. had previously brought the Aerial Incident cases before the Court. Although the intentions of the UN Charter's drafters may be subject to ongoing debate and scrutiny, the Court was presented at the San Francisco Conference as a replacement "*for the vicissitudes of war and reign of brutal force*" and it was anticipated that "*the judicial process will have a central place in the plans of the United Nations for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.*"[204] Another legal principle suggests

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[202] ICJ Reports (26th November, 1984), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 97.

[203] Chimni B. S., *The International Court and the Maintenance of Peace and Security: The Nicaragua Decision and the United States Response* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Oct., 1986), 964.

[204] Statement of the Rapporteur of the First Committee while presenting the Statute of the Court to the Fourth Commission at the UN Conference on International Organisation, cited by Leo Gross, "The International Court of Justice: Considerations of Requirements for Enhancing its Role in the International Legal Order" (1971) 65 A.J.I.L. 253-256.

that external countries are only allowed to provide aid to the government, but not to local insurgent forces, until a state of belligerency is recognized in an internal conflict. Therefore, covert assistance by the United States to contra rebels during the early stages of civil unrest in Nicaragua may have violated international law. Some may argue that the situation in Nicaragua had reached the legal threshold of belligerency, thus justifying U.S. aid to the insurgents. However, considering the restricted size and influence of the contra movement in Nicaragua, this claim seems to be more of a legal ideal than a practical reality.[205]

To summarize, in the case of Nicaragua v. United States, Nicaragua claimed that the U.S. had violated customary international law by laying mines in Nicaraguan territorial waters, causing damage to ships, and supporting guerrillas trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. The court had to determine whether the U.S. had broken international law, and it determined that the principle of non-intervention means that every sovereign state has the right to govern without interference from outside forces. The court emphasized that respecting territorial sovereignty is a crucial foundation of international relations between independent states, and violating the territory of a sovereign state is always illegal. However, the question that arises is whether a specific intervention falls within excusable limits. No state seems willing to accept a rule that legalizes territorial violation, but there is a willingness to legalize the motive for the breach as an exception to the general rule.

Indeed, these latter concerns have been analyzed in a second ruling of ICJ, namely the "*Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*" of June 27th, 1986. This ruling marked a significant event in international law: a small nation in a politically disadvantaged position successfully pursued a legal resolution against the world's most powerful state, which was found responsible for serious violations of international law.

The concept of an armed attack played a significant role in the ICJ ruling in the Nicaragua case. The United States argued that its use of force against Nicaragua was justified as collective self-defense on behalf of Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador, in response to armed attacks by Nicaragua on those countries. However, the Court rejected this argument, finding that there was no armed attack by Nicaragua. In examining the notion of an armed attack, the Court considered whether it had to be carried out by a regular army.

One of the justifications put forward by the United States for its actions was the alleged violations of commitments made by the Nicaraguan Sandinista Government to the Organization of American States (OAS), the United States itself, and the people of Nicaragua. These breaches were said to involve matters such as the government's composition, political ideology, alignment, totalitarianism, human rights, militarization, and aggression. The Court noted that a state was within its rights to make international commitments regarding domestic policies. In fact, Nicaragua had already accepted limitations on its sovereignty by being a member

[205] Joyner Christopher C. & Grimaldi Michael A., *The United States and Nicaragua: Reflections on the Lawfulness of Contemporary Intervention* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Virginia Journal of International Law, 1985), 681.

of the OAS, which called for the observance of principles of representative democracy. Regarding the political pledges, the Court declined to assign any legal significance to them.[206]

In the Nicaragua v. United States case, the Court firmly rejected the justification put forward by the United States and emphasized the fundamental prohibition of the use of force in such circumstances, reaffirming the principles of international law. This stance is considered legally and politically sound, as it serves to protect all nations, regardless of their size, and promotes international peace and security. The International Court of Justice's ruling in the case was a commendable effort to restore some of the ground lost to unilateralism in recent times. It upheld crucial principles of international law necessary for peaceful coexistence in a world that is deeply divided yet interconnected. The Court effectively countered attempts to reinterpret fundamental rules to accommodate the interests of more powerful actors.

Regarding international human rights, the Court affirmed the primary role of states in promoting and protecting these rights. While recognizing that the international community can legitimately engage in internal human rights matters, it stressed that any outside intervention must be lawful, well-structured, and not arbitrary. The Court's disapproval of state-sponsored violence under the pretext of protecting human rights in another state was a significant endorsement of common sense.[207]

The issue of a government's right to invite outside intervention, as examined by the ICJ in the Nicaragua case, remains a subject of controversy. The Court considered the argument that the United States was justified in using force against Nicaragua to support the contras in their armed opposition to the government. The ICJ acknowledged that a government can invite external assistance but clarified that a third state cannot forcibly aid the opposition in overthrowing the government. The Court stated that there is no general right of intervention, in support of an internal opposition within another state, recognized in contemporary international law. This statement from the Court has established the authoritative position on the so-called right of intervention upon invitation, which, according to the Court, is limited to intervention by the official government of a state.[208]

Overall, international law operates under the principle that every state, regardless of its size or strength, has equal and sovereign authority within its own borders. Each state is responsible for safeguarding its territorial integrity against external attacks and preventing its territory from being used to violate the sovereignty of other states. This responsibility aligns with the fundamental obligation of all states to avoid any indirect or direct acts of aggression against the territory of a sovereign state.

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[206] Kiwanuka Richard N., The International Human Rights Implications of the ICJ Decision in Nicaragua v United States (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers; Nordic Journal of International Law, 1988), 471-472.

[207] Kiwanuka Richard N., The International Human Rights Implications of the ICJ Decision in Nicaragua v United States (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers; Nordic Journal of International Law, 1988), 477.

[208] ICJ Reports (27th June, 1986), *Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America)*, para. 201.

In the *Nicaragua* case, the United States attempted to withdraw its declaration, which it had made in 1946, after being informed that Nicaragua would file an application against it. In fact, it succeeded in depositing the withdrawal of the declaration with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 6 April 1984, three days before Nicaragua's application reached the Court on 9 April 1984. However, this maneuver did not attain its objective. The text of the US declaration specified that it would 'remain in force for a period of five years and thereafter until the expiration of six months after notice may be given to terminate this declaration'. The Court held that the United States was bound by this act of self-commitment:

Although the United States retained the right to modify the contents of the 1946 Declaration or to terminate it, a power which is inherent in any unilateral act of a State, it has, nevertheless assumed an inescapable obligation towards other States accepting the Optional Clause, by stating formally and solemnly that any such change should take effect only after six months have elapsed as from the date of notice.

This holding would seem to be absolutely unobjectionable. Otherwise, the text of a declaration which the declarant State has formulated itself would be devoid of any real meaning. In other words, the conditions of a notice of termination as specified in the relevant declaration are binding and cannot be departed from.

Second, the question arose whether, by virtue of the principle of reciprocity, the United States could rely on the termination modalities of the Nicaraguan declaration. This declaration was silent on how it could possibly be denounced. The Court denied a right for the United States to invoke in its favour the particular modalities for the exercise of Nicaragua's right of denunciation. Continuing its reasoning on a hypothetical basis, it stated: "*the right of immediate termination of declarations with indefinite duration is far from established. It appears from the requirement of good faith that they should be treated, by analogy, according to the law of treaties, which requires a reasonable time for withdrawal from or termination of treaties that contain no provision regarding the duration of their validity*"[209].

Intense debate has followed this pronouncement. In any event, however, the users of the Court cannot but take note of the position the Court has embraced. This position should be well understood. It concerns solely declarations which either contain no rules on their termination or declarations by which a State has simply manifested its will to terminate the applicability of its declaration by a unilateral decision, without specifying the relevant modalities. In the legal literature, it has been suggested that a period of between three months and one year would in any event constitute sufficient notice. As a consequence, quite a number of States revised their declarations under Article 36, para. 2, making it unambiguously clear that, if need be, they wished to be able to shed their obligations under the optional clause with immediate effect.[210]

[209] *Nicaragua*, Jurisdiction and Admissibility, ICJ Reports (1984), pp. 392, 419–20, para. 63

[210] Part Three Statute of the International Court of Justice, Ch. II Competence of the Court, Article 36 - Christian Tomuschat From: The Statute of the International Court of Justice: A Commentary (3rd Edition)

5.5 Legitimacy of the Intervention

For the United States, the intervention in Nicaragua during the 1980s was justified by a variety of factors, including ideological opposition to the Sandinista government, concern for national security interests, and a desire to protect American citizens living in Nicaragua. The Reagan administration, in particular, saw the Sandinista regime as a threat to regional stability and democracy, and viewed the United States-backed Contra rebels as a necessary counterforce to the Sandinistas. Furthermore, the U.S. also found legitimacy in the intervention in Nicaragua in the Cold War context in which it took place. The U.S. government saw the Sandinistas as aligned with the Soviet Union and Cuba, and viewed the conflict in Nicaragua as part of a larger struggle against communism. This ideological opposition to communism gave the U.S. government a rationale for supporting the Contras and intervening in Nicaragua.

Moreover, one of the main arguments put forth by the United States to justify its interventionist role is that Central America is being threatened by international communism and that responding to the situation in Nicaragua is a way of countering Cuban, Soviet and Eastern European subversion. According to supporters of this theory, there are two major forces at play in Nicaragua: anti-capitalism and social/cultural factors. The first force is characterized by the spread of international communism, which is believed to be expanding beyond national boundaries under the umbrella of the Brezhnev doctrine, and is supported by the presence of thousands of Cuban advisors in Nicaragua. The second force is driven by social and cultural factors, including the country's history of poverty and oppressive government, which creates conditions that are ripe for political and civil unrest that the international Marxist network is ready to exploit.[211]

Another justification put forth by the United States for its involvement in Central America is based on the principle of collective security. The United States asserted that it must take decisive action to safeguard El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica from rebel forces and to uphold democratic structures in the region. This position stems from a belief in the domino theory, which suggests that communist rule in Nicaragua would lead to rebel gains in El Salvador, thereby fueling rebel movements elsewhere in Central America. Furthermore, it is a response to requests for aid from the Central American governments. In this context, collective defense was deemed essential, as the U.S. government recognized that the security of its allies was closely tied to its own security. By providing support to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, the U.S. government aimed to strengthen the defenses of its regional partners and prevent the proliferation of leftist ideology and insurgencies. In summary, the U.S. government believed that by intervening in Nicaragua, it could avert the spread of leftist ideology and insurgencies in the region, which could pose a threat to the stability of the region and the interests of the United States.

[211] Mabie John, *The Legitimacy of United States Intervention in Nicaragua* (New York City, New York: NYLS Journal of International and Comparative Law, 1984), 138-139.

The United States has also accused the Nicaraguan Sandinista Government of being an illegitimate government because it was not elected democratically. The failure of Nicaragua to hold prompt elections was seen as an abuse of power by an authoritarian regime and a denial of the inherent responsibility to establish a democratic government. Despite the holding of elections in November 1984, which confirmed the current Sandinista leadership, the United States deemed these elections as fraudulent. The U.S. government considered the Sandinistas' socialist policies as a threat to democracy in the region, and believed that their support for leftist insurgent groups in neighboring countries was evidence of an aggressive and expansionist agenda. Additionally, the Sandinistas' human rights record came under scrutiny as they were accused of suppressing dissent and limiting freedom of the press.

Given the reasons analyzed so far, the United States contended that due to political necessity, it was imperative to take direct action to safeguard the present Inter-American system. The U.S. position was that any communist government in the Western Hemisphere was to be considered hostile to the Pan-American system. This claim was based on a broad ideological foundation, harking back to the Monroe Doctrine, which asserted that no Soviet or European intervention was to be permitted in the Western Hemisphere. The underlying belief behind this stance was that mainly external rather than internal forces inspired and supported Nicaragua's revolution. The United States considered the Sandinista regime's socialist policies, support for leftist insurgencies, and human rights record as additional evidence of its unsuitability to be part of the Inter-American system.[212]

A final claim made by the United States was that Nicaragua served as a conduit for the transportation of weapons to rebels in El Salvador and other regions. President Reagan stated that the United States aims to halt this flow of weapons, exert pressure on the Sandinistas to adopt democratic and capitalist policies, and change their Marxist orientation. To achieve these objectives, the U.S. resorted to several military actions, including training soldiers and constructing bases in Honduras, mining Nicaraguan harbors, supplying military equipment to Guatemala and El Salvador, positioning U.S. warships near the Nicaraguan coast, and providing covert assistance to Nicaraguan guerrilla groups.

In order to determine whether the United States' response is legitimate, it is necessary to use the criteria of necessity and proportionality. Assessing the necessity and proportionality of the United States' involvement in Nicaragua and Central America is challenging without accurate data on the amount of weapons, military advisors, and general support that Nicaragua provides to rebel insurgencies. Military aid and intervention can be considered justified and appropriate if they are carried out for defensive purposes and at the request of legitimate governments. However, they are not justified if they are carried out for aggressive purposes. Based on the numerous reports of the United States' covert aid and support of the Contras, whose primary goal was

[212] Mabie John, *The Legitimacy of United States Intervention in Nicaragua* (New York City, New York: NYLS Journal of International and Comparative Law, 1984), 140-141.

to overthrow the Sandinista regime and who frequently engage in aggressive and destabilizing military actions, it is difficult to argue that such aid was for defensive or non-aggressive purposes.[213]

The principle of self-determination is closely related to the issues of the necessity and proportionality of the United States' actions and the legitimacy of covert aid in Nicaragua. The sovereignty of the Sandinista regime, regardless of whether it met the criteria of a democracy, cannot be contested nor ignored. As a recognized government that governs with the apparent support of the people, it is within Nicaragua's rights to develop an internal system without interference from external forces. This right is violated when foreign governments attempt to undermine a regime that has popular support. While international law does not condone Nicaragua's right to supply arms and promote subversion, it also does not condone the United States' right to intervene, even with the support of proxy groups like the Contras, with the intention of adversely affecting the sovereignty of an independent state.[214]

It is peculiarly contradictory that the legal system, which should provide a basis for justifying defensive actions, could potentially provide a legal basis for the Soviet Union and Cuba to increase their military support for Nicaragua's government. If the United States' intervention was not purely defensive and was instead aimed at overthrowing the Sandinista government, it could be argued that the United States was intervening illegally in Nicaragua on two grounds. Firstly, it could be accused of unlawfully supplying aid to a pre-belligerent status insurgent force, namely the Contras. Additionally, the United States' offensive policies could also be characterized as unlawful aggression, as they go beyond the bounds of self-defense, either for aiding El Salvador or for protecting the United States. The U.S. actions may therefore unintentionally justify the Soviets and Cubans in increasing their military aid and government involvement in the Nicaraguan situation. This unfortunate scenario illustrates the reasoning behind the principle of non-intervention: violations of these international norms by external parties may lead to unforeseen escalations in civil conflict.[215]

Furthermore, the United States may argue that its intervention in Nicaraguan affairs was necessary to preserve the democratic right of Nicaraguans to choose their own form of government. However, it is important to note that an affirmation of validity on this context would provide the basis for a crucial change in the sphere of customary international law that permits governments to intervene, without invitation, in order to ensure popular rule. This justification for intervention assumes that the principle of self-determination, which refers to the right of individuals in a country to choose their own government, holds more weight than the principle of non-intervention.

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[213] Mabie John, *The Legitimacy of United States Intervention in Nicaragua* (New York City, New York: NYLS Journal of International and Comparative Law, 1984), 156-157.

[214] Gerth Jeff, *Ex-U.S. Intelligence and Military Personnel Supply Anti-Nicaragua Rebels* (New York Times, November 8, 1983).

[215] Joyner Christopher C. & Grimaldi Michael A., *The United States and Nicaragua: Reflections on the Lawfulness of Contemporary Intervention* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Virginia Journal of International Law, 1985), 682.

As a result of the factors analyzed until now it appears evident that the Reagan administration's main foreign policy objective in Central America was to limit the Soviet Union's hegemonic and ideological influence while promoting American political values. However, the administration lacked a crucial point of understanding, namely the fact that the opposition to the Sandinistas was not based on the protection of democracy per se, but it was meant to protect the American, and more broadly Western, conception of democratic values. The result is that different interests and ideologies in terms of political values might affect the ability of international law to maintain world order in general and regional order in Central America in particular.[216]

Moreover, a further point of friction is represented by the methods used to achieve this goal. Despite the fact that international law is based on the equality of states, since World War II, there has been a noticeable lack of equality among states in terms of military capability, political influence, economic growth, cultural development, technological advancement, and diplomatic persuasion. The two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and now China and the Russian Federation, have gained significant influence and often encroach upon the rights of smaller, less powerful states or minorities.

In conclusion, the United States' actions towards Nicaragua may have been driven by a desire to do what was right to defend national security interests and to prevent Soviet influence in Central America. However, this does not guarantee that the means used to achieve these objectives always comply with international law. The United States may have been so focused on countering Soviet influence that it downplayed the importance of diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution. This tendency to prioritize armed force over diplomacy highlights the preoccupation of the superpower rivals with their own ideological competition, and their disregard for the equal sovereignty of other nations, especially because of the continuous repetition of coercive actions, reminding past U.S. interventions in Guatemala, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Grenada.

[216] Joyner Christopher C. & Grimaldi Michael A., *The United States and Nicaragua: Reflections on the Lawfulness of Contemporary Intervention* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Virginia Journal of International Law, 1985), 683.

Conclusion

In a funeral oration in 430 BC for those who had fallen in the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian leader Pericles described democratic Athens as "*the school of Hellas*". Centuries elapsed and the U.S. calls itself "*city upon a hill*" and a "*beacon of democracy*"; and it claims that its political system was designed to defend democracy and freedom at the time of its founding.

The interventionist attitude characterizing the United States' history throughout the centuries has often raised disputes among the scholars. Indeed, historically the approach adopted by the United States towards those nations or governments that did not align with its ideologies has often been in the direction of proceeding through strong interventions instead of fostering merely political solutions. Moreover, even though the main rationale of these interventions was deemed the need to export democratic values and institutions to those countries "*in need*", this apparently altruistic mission has been actually tainted by a narrow and often reductive interpretation of the word democracy that emphasizes only one form of it: the Western model. Indeed, the United States has often used its own political system as a sort of magnifying glass through which others are judged, with disregard of the diverse historical, cultural, and social roots and contexts of the different nations, hence failing to acknowledge the legitimacy of alternative democratic models that may be more appropriate and effective within specific cultural and social frameworks.

Due to this underlying idea, the United States has often acted as a champion of democracy, thus often justifying its interventions as efforts to promote democratic governance and protect human rights. However, the implementation of this ideal has been selective and has been accompanied by occasional lack of coherence in comparison with the initial objective of helping "endangered" countries to establish democratic governments and institutions that might leave their societies better-off. In fact, the U.S. has sometimes supported authoritarian regimes that aligned more with its strategic interests than with the democratic principles, so weakening its claims of promoting democracy and raising doubts and questions about the legitimacy of its interventions. Was that the case of the U.S. supporting oppressive regimes that suppressed dissent, violated human rights, and curtailed democratic processes, all in the name of combating communism or protecting American influence. This skewed perspective has been particularly evident in U.S. interventions during the Cold War and beyond. Moreover, the support for authoritarian regimes in Latin America, such as in Chile, Nicaragua, and Argentina, clearly highlights the prioritization of Western interests over democratic principles.

On this path, even when the United States has supported democratic movements, its interventions have often focused on shaping the outcomes according to its own interests and preferences. This was particularly evident in post-colonial contexts, where the U.S. sought to ensure that newly independent nations aligned with its political and economic interests. In doing so, it often undermined genuine democratic processes by propping

up leaders or parties favorable to the U.S. agenda, rather than allowing for a truly participatory and inclusive democratic transition.

In particular, this approach intensified during the Cold War, when the United States found itself engaged in a global struggle against the spread of communism. This ideological battle shaped American foreign policy and provided a compelling rationale for the intervention in the internal affairs of foreign countries. Indeed, the perceived threat of Soviet expansionism, combined with the promotion of American values and interests in order to assure the influence on specific strategic countries and regions, led the U.S. to justify its interventions as necessary and legitimate.

In countries such as Nicaragua, Chile, Iran, and Guatemala, the U.S. supported or orchestrated regime changes to prevent the rise of communist or socialist governments that were perceived as threats to American influence. The rationale behind these interventions was rooted in the belief that any government leaning towards communism would become a Soviet ally, granting the Soviet Union a strategic advantage and potentially expanding its sphere of influence, endangering *de facto* the U.S. national security.

However, from the U.S. policymakers' perspective, the interventions were seen as legitimate responses to the unique challenges posed by the Cold War. The perceived existential threat of communism provided a compelling argument for the U.S. to engage in actions that otherwise might have be seen as interferences in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. The context of the Cold War created an environment where U.S. interventions were considered as necessary to safeguard American interests, protect global stability, and promote the values of democracy and capitalism. As a result, the United States intervention in the internal affairs of foreign countries during the Cold War was believed legitimate due to the perceived threat of communism and the need to contain its spreading. In fact, even if the interventions themselves could be controversial and would raise concerns about sovereignty and human rights, the Cold War context provided a framework for justifying these actions as necessary for national security and the defense of American values.

The case of Nicaragua provides a clear example of U.S. intervention during the Cold War and the detrimental consequences that stemmed from it. For decades, the U.S. supported the authoritarian regime led by the Somoza family, which ruled Nicaragua with an iron fist. The Somoza dynasty's oppressive rule, characterized by widespread corruption, political repression, and economic exploitation, resulted in immense suffering for the Nicaraguan people. The U.S. support for the Somoza regime until the late 1970s was justified as a defense against communism, demonstrated a disregard for the democratic aspirations of the Nicaraguan population.

The situation worsened with the emergence of the Sandinistas and their aim to establish a socialist government. To make things worse, the spark of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union increased the already numerous concerns within the United States political élite. Indeed, fearing the spread of communism,

the U.S. responded by providing significant financial and military support to the Contras, which launched a violent insurgency against the Sandinista government, leading to a decade-long civil war that inflicted immense suffering on the Nicaraguan population, including human rights abuses, indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets, and widespread destruction. The U.S. support for the Contras, including funding, training, and supplying weapons, exacerbated the conflict and prolonged the suffering of the Nicaraguan people. This intervention, far from promoting stability or democracy, further destabilized the country and hindered its development.

Overall, the civil war and U.S. support for the Contras had devastating effects on the country, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths, massive displacement, and extensive destruction of infrastructure. The economic and social development of Nicaragua was severely hindered, exacerbating poverty and inequality. The consequences of this intervention continue to be felt today, as the country struggles to recover from the legacies of violence and is characterized by political instability and economic challenges.

Critics argue that the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua highlights the inherent contradictions and moral ambiguities of Cold War foreign policy. While the U.S. justified its actions as necessary to combat communism and protect its national interests, the means employed raised significant ethical concerns. The devastating effects on the Nicaraguan people underscore the illegitimacy of these interventions and the human cost of prioritizing geopolitical considerations over human rights and democratic values. In fact, in recent years, the issue of foreign intervention has acquired heightened prominence, prompting widespread debate and analysis. The case of Nicaragua serves as a reminder that the international community must proactively recognize and uphold the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law. These principles unequivocally emphasize the indispensable value of respecting a country’s sovereignty and right to self-determination. By adhering to these principles, the global community can strive towards fostering a more inclusive and democratic international order, wherein the voices and aspirations of all nations are not only respected but also safeguarded.

As a result, considering the documents analyzed in this thesis, it is possible to assess that the U.S. involvement in Nicaragua's internal affairs during the Cold War clearly violated principles of national sovereignty and self-determination, resulting in a lack of legitimacy. By propping up the repressive Somoza regime and supporting the Contras, the U.S. undermined the Nicaraguan people's right to determine their own political future and undermined the legitimacy of their government. The intervention was driven by geopolitical considerations and ideological fears rather than a genuine concern for the well-being and aspirations of the Nicaraguan population to adopt initiatives that could, perhaps, ease the socio-economic disparities in the country.

Moreover, the United States' incapability to accept foreign governments rooted in socialist ideologies or prioritizing social interests over elective ones is a complex issue related to historical, ideological,

geopolitical and cultural factors, which eventually established significant barriers to acceptance of foreign governments not in compliance with U.S. objectives, leading to strained relationships, interventions, and conflicts. But deepening the causes the U.S. politics toward Central America was grounded in, it emerges that U.S. relations with Latin America in the last decades has exhibited continuities with past U.S. politics and that the anti – communism sentiment overwhelmed other U.S. foreign policy goals every time the U.S. deployed their forces or tried to topple Latin America governments by resorting to other means. A specter haunted the United States: the specter of communism in the Americas. And this seems to be proven by the fact that when the fear of communism was absent, the U.S. did not put in place any attempt, covert or overt, to overthrow governments in the area, even when the economic interests of American firms were endangered by politics aimed at expropriating many of them (as it happened with the revolutionary Bolivia and with the Peru under General Velasco).

One might ask why George C. Marshall was able to understand that the problems of keeping the peace, feeding, clothing, and sheltering the population were the way to bring people into America's orbit, but in Central America that idea simply did not apply.

The primary reason is rooted in ideological causes, in which capitalism and socialism represent contrasting economic and political systems, with capitalism emphasizing private ownership and free markets, while socialism advocates for collective ownership and government intervention. The American belief in individualism, limited government and the free market clashes with the socialist principles of shared resources, social welfare, and economic equality, making it challenging for the U.S. to fully embrace governments that prioritize socialist ideologies. The United States, as a global economic powerhouse, has a vested interest in preserving and promoting capitalism. Socialist governments that nationalize industries, implement wealth redistribution, or prioritize social programs can be seen as challenging the dominance of American capitalism and potentially disrupting economic interests, representing a direct threat to the American economy.

Negative narratives about socialism have been propagated through various channels, including the media, popular culture, and the educational system. These narratives often associate socialism with authoritarianism, lack of freedom, and economic inefficiency, painting a distorted picture that undermines public acceptance and support for socialist governments. In this way, the Cold War era further solidified anti-communist sentiment and reinforced negative perceptions of socialism. The fear of the spread of communism led to the demonization of socialist principles, perpetuated through propaganda efforts. Movies, books, and other forms of media portrayed socialism as a threat to American values and way of life, creating a lasting impact on public opinion. As a result, anti-communist rhetoric had a chilling effect on progressive movements within the United States. The association of communism with radicalism and subversion made it difficult for left-leaning individuals and organizations to advocate for social justice, civil rights, and labor reforms. The fear of being labeled as communist sympathizers deterred many from challenging the status quo, impeding the

progress of movements striving for a more equitable society. Anti-communist rhetoric often perpetuated fear and paranoia among the American population. The constant portrayal of communism as an imminent threat led to a climate of suspicion and anxiety, fostering a divide within society. This climate of fear had lasting effects on public discourse, as individuals were hesitant to express dissenting views or engage in open dialogue for fear of being labeled as communist sympathizers.

On the other hand, the anti-communist policies pursued by the United States had detrimental effects, particularly on Central American countries, and eventually caused problems for the U.S. itself, producing counterproductive outcomes. Instead of deterring communism, the U.S. policies contributed to the conditions that drove people in the region toward bigger sentiments of "*antiyanquismo*", making even more difficult for the United States to effectively operate in the region and create a peaceful cooperation with locals. Furthermore, these policies prevented moderate liberal reforms and pushed nations in the region towards more extreme ideologies. Both in the short term and long term, these U.S. policies weakened the governments involved, impeding their ability to establish effective governing institutions.

Finally, if the United States had refrained from employing anti-communist rhetoric to advance its interests in Central America, it could have instead extended support to moderate liberal reforms and governments. These moderate liberal reforms would have not only curbed the rise of authoritarian regimes but also contributed to alleviating poverty among the population. Furthermore, by supporting governments capable of long-term stability, it is plausible that their institutions would have been strengthened, enabling them to combat issues such as inflation and social and gender disparity.

Moreover and widening the main topic of the thesis, I believe that at this stage a brief analysis of the outcomes, especially in a mid – term perspective, of the actions taken by the U.S. following the decisions of the ICJ in the so called *Nicaragua case* could be of help to draw a more comprehensive conclusion on consequences that some political decisions could give rise to in terms of endangering the effectiveness of the International Courts. In fact, the refusal of the United States to consider itself bound by the decision in the Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua, coupled with the earlier termination of its adherence to Article 36(2) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, has sparked a small storm of controversy and concern. Part of this concern involves how the United States, presumably a law-abiding and law-respecting nation, could possibly bring itself to snub the International Court of Justice and, by extension, the ideal of international law. Another part of this concern involves the likely consequences of the United States move on the vitality of the Court as the focal institution of a slowly evolving system of international law.[217] What is to be the impact on the International Court of Justice of the conduct of the United

[217] The ICJ and Compulsory Jurisdiction: The Case for Closing the Clause Published online by Cambridge University Press: 27 February 2017 Gary L. Scott and Craig L. Carr American Journal of International Law , Volume 81 , Issue 1 , January 1987 , pp. 57 – 76

States with regard to the Nicaragua case? By defying the Court in Nicaragua, the United States has made it clear that it may well defy the Court again. In doing so, it tends to undermine the entire organization of which the Court is the principal judicial organ[218]. Although this may not create immediate adverse effects on the United States, the long-range policy effects are obviously grave. By seeming to attack the Court as an institution, however, the United States' action could precipitate and reinforce a more positive attitude toward the Court on the part of the vast preponderance of other member States.

In my opinion, similarities could be also found – although from a different perspective – analyzing the announcement made in 2018 by the then-National Security Advisor John Bolton declared in a speech that the Trump administration would use "*any means necessary*" to protect U.S. citizens and allies from ICC investigations and prosecutions. Among other measures, Bolton indicated that the United States would consider negotiating further bilateral immunity agreements with other countries and that the Trump administration would institute travel bans, financial sanctions, and even criminal prosecutions against ICC judges and prosecutors, as well as against "*any company or state that assists an ICC investigation of Americans*" if the ICC proceeded to open an investigation into the situation in Afghanistan. The policy was later affirmed by President Trump [219] by signing an executive order imposing sanctions on several individuals associated with the International Criminal Court (ICC). The move is also part of a broader disengagement with the multilateral system.

The executive order threatens to stall the global fight against impunity for the most serious international crimes: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression: this attack on the ICC may embolden other countries seeking to shirk responsibility for the commission of atrocities. (*Myanmar, for example, already constitutionally enshrines impunity for its armed forces and has similarly contested the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes committed against the Rohingya minority*). The order may also damage the credibility of U.S.-supported efforts to create mechanisms and bodies for international justice, such as the ongoing investigation into crimes committed by the Islamic State.

The pursuit of accountability for these serious crimes is without any doubt difficult and time-consuming, but, with the global rise in authoritarianism, impunity is fundamentally a threat to the rule of law, both in the United States and abroad[220].

Moving back to the Nicaragua case, the main issue remains concerning the effectiveness of the Court as an institution. It is self-evident that the Court is not a "court" at all if it is only respected by a party when it renders a favorable judgment; otherwise it is but a panel of convenience: to have a fully-fledged institution faith and credit must be accorded to unfavorable and unpopular judgments as well as to victories. President

[218] U.N. CHARTER, art. 92
[219] International Criminal Court Project, *The US – ICC Relationship*. Available online at: The US-ICC Relationship | International Criminal Court Project (aba-icc.org)
[220]Radhakrishnan Akila, *Trump's Chilling Blow to the ICC* (Foreign Policy, June 17, 2020). Available online at: Trump's Sanctions on the International Criminal Court Set a Dangerous Precedent (foreignpolicy.com)

Eisenhower put it simply and well: "*It is better to lose a point now and then in an international tribunal, and gain a world in which everyone lives at peace under the rule of law*." [221] This is precisely the example that the United States is not setting, whether consciously or unconsciously.[222]

[221] Larson Arthur, Peace through Law: the Role and Limits of Adjudication—some contemporary applications (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 15.
[222] Highet Keith, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place - The United States, the International Court, and the Nicaragua Case* (Chicago, Illinois: American Bar Association, 1987) 1100.

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Abstract

The United States has always shown particular attention towards Latin America, which is believed to be an essential part of both regional and national security. The aim of thesis is essentially deepening the effects of the United States' policy of regional security and assessing the legitimacy of intervention in Latin America, this latter through a detailed analysis of the political events in Nicaragua from 1978 to 1990 as case study. Furthermore, the research focuses on different topics shifting from the evolution of the United States' foreign policy towards Latin America, to the intervention in Nicaragua at the end of the 1970s, to the rationale behind the intervention and its outcomes both at domestic and international level.

With the aim of analyzing the evolution of U.S. foreign policy, it is paramount to clearly define the conceptual roots of it and the context that made it develop during the centuries. Undeniably, the most important driving factor is represented by the idea of United States democracy as a perfect model of democratic regime and institutions, which many European scholars like *Alexis de Tocqueville* considered as the perfect combination of rule of law, representation and separation of powers. This belief was further implemented by the doctrine of the *Manifest Destiny*, which embodied the conviction that expanding the American territory was the best means of promoting the spread of democratic ideals and institutions. The Manifest Destiny represented both a cornerstone and a crucial factor in the United States foreign policy in the mid-19th century, leading to the annexation of Texas, the settlement of the Oregon dispute and the acquisition of California, New Mexico and Utah.

The need to protect democratic values and institutions covered a central role in the elites' agenda throughout U.S. history. Indeed, the idea of preserving the liberal nature of Latin America dates back to 1823, when U.S. President James Monroe, in a message to the Congress, enunciated what would then be known as the *Monroe Doctrine*, whose main goal was to prevent European nations to further colonize countries and territories in the Western Hemisphere. Despite the intentions of the Monroe Doctrine were to ensure the protection of neighbor autonomous governments, nonetheless it gave rise to a great deal of critiques mainly focusing on the continuous economic and military intervention of the United States in the region. Consequently, in 1933, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt implemented the *Good Neighbor Policy*, with the purpose of establishing friendly relations and mutual defense agreements with the nations of Latin America.

However, since the beginning of the Cold War, the intention of promoting democratic values in order to establish a peaceful and cooperative international system has been gradually paired the need to protect the United States, its hemisphere and its overseas allies by the communist threat posed by the USSR. The shift from a non-interventionist to an interventionist approach based on indirect and direct influence in Latin American countries marked the decline in the relationship with the region and the resume of U.S. intervention

in Latin America (e.g., Guatemala from 1952 to 1954 to topple Arbenz socialist government) turned the United States from Good to Bad Neighbors.

The U.S. policy towards Nicaragua represents one of the most complex chapters in the history of American foreign policy. Interaction between the two countries dates back to the early 20th century with the deployment of the U.S. Marines to Managua to help President Adolfo Díaz put Mena's revolt down as it was causing great instability within the country. After defeating the rebel forces, the United States succeeded in signing of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty in 1914, obtaining the exclusive rights to build a canal in Nicaragua. Before leaving the country, the United States helped Anastasio Somoza take over the political power in Nicaragua, thus consolidating its alliances in Latin America. Nicaragua and the United States maintained peaceful diplomatic and economic relations until 1979, when the revolution sparked by the leftists Sandinistas led to the fall of Somoza. This event greatly affected the security perception in the region and became a major issue for the United States since it emerged the concern that the establishment of a socialist government would have easily caused communism to spread also to other countries in Latin America.

The civil war against the Contras provoked devastating consequences in Nicaragua both in terms of human lives and economic drawbacks. The country, which was already grappling with a struggling economy due to the past conflict between Somoza and the Sandinistas, was further hindered by the imposition of U.S. economic sanctions. The war drained valuable resources that could have been allocated towards development projects, further plunging the nation into poverty. The destruction of agricultural lands and the disruption of trade severely affected the livelihoods of farmers and small businesses.

The combination of these factors produced long-lasting effects also during the liberal administrations that succeeded the Sandinistas after the 1990 elections. Furthermore, the challenges that marked the post-civil war era resulted in the rise of a populist movements, of which the greatest exponent was former FLSN member Daniel Ortega. With the victory of the 2006 elections, Ortega brought systematic changes to the principle of checks and balances, concentrating power in the presidency and adopting an authoritarian behavior. Opposition lawmakers were removed and opposition parties were barred from participating in the elections. Ortega's party managed to exert full control over the National Assembly and approve a constitutional amendment to remove term limits. Despite widespread repression and criticism, Ortega was re-elected for a fourth term. Many governments, both regional and European, consider the elections lacking in basic guarantees of fairness. The government has arrested and prosecuted critics, opposition leaders, journalists, lawyers, and activists in an arbitrary manner. Harassment tactics include death threats, physical assaults, surveillance, online defamation campaigns, and arbitrary detention. Police presence outside the residences of government critics effectively restricts their movements, leading to arbitrary arrests. This has prevented individuals from carrying out their daily activities, including meeting others, working, participating in protests, and engaging in political activities. Some have endured repeated detentions and abuse for extended periods.

Having analyzed the historical background of the U.S. foreign policy and clarified the causes of its intervention in Nicaragua, it is of the utmost importance highlighting how this operation was perceived at both national and international level. Concerning the latter, the international community severely condemned the U.S. violations of Nicaragua's sovereignty. Indeed, in June 1986, the International Court of Justice ruled that the United States' support to the contras activities in Nicaragua could be considered as an act against the Republic of Nicaragua, thus violating the international customary law, and consequently ordered the U.S. to pay reparations.

At national level, although it is undoubted that the fall of Somoza was perceived as a source of political apprehension, nevertheless President Carter and President Reagan tackled the problem by showing two different political approaches. The former hoped he could prevent the Sandinistas from coming to power in Nicaragua. Since this strategy was not successful and the Sandinistas managed to overthrow Somoza, Carter then decided to go for a more diplomatic and peaceful strategy inviting Daniel Ortega at the White House in September 1979 and reassuring him that the United States would not try to organize anti-Sandinistas groups in the United States or Honduras. However, different was the reaction of the political environment, which feared that Nicaragua might be a "*second Cuba*". This belief was more in line with the approach taken by Ronald Reagan, who, in 1985, ordered a total embargo on the United States' trade with Nicaragua accusing the Sandinista regime of threatening United States security in the region.

The issue of the legitimacy of United States intervention in Nicaragua represents one of the main topics of discussion over the United States' approach towards Nicaragua. On its behalf, the United States asserted that it was not intervening in Nicaragua, but merely supporting regional self-protection efforts and seeking to promote the establishment of democratic institutions in Nicaragua. According to U.S. policymakers, interventions during the Cold War were considered legitimate due to the unique challenges posed by communism. The perceived threat of communism was seen as an existential danger, justifying actions that could be viewed as interference in the internal affairs of other nations. The Cold War context created an environment where U.S. interventions were deemed necessary to protect American interests, global stability, and promote democratic and capitalist values. While these interventions raised concerns about sovereignty and human rights, the framework of the Cold War provided justification for these actions in the name of national security and the defense of American values and its allies. Indeed, all three administrations involved in dealing with the Nicaraguan political turmoil believed that a prompt intervention was required to protect El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica from rebel forces and to help preserve the structures of democracy in Central America. Hence, the mere existence of a 'Nicaraguan threat' was itself an enough sufficient motivation to become the focus of the United States' foreign policy for almost 20 years.

However, through the analysis of the documents concerning this topic, it can be deduced that despite United States' national security motivations of intervention, the support provided to the repressive Somoza

regime and the backing of the Contras undermined the Nicaraguan people's right to determine their own political future and weakened the legitimacy of their government. Therefore, this approach was primarily driven by geopolitical considerations and ideological fears rather than a genuine concern for the well-being and aspirations of the Nicaraguan population, creating ambiguities and debates over the legitimacy of the intervention and its compliance with the international law.