

Nicaraguan Strategic Culture

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FINDINGS REPORT

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The FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership Strategic Cultures Assessments

Florida International University's Applied Research Center (FIU ARC), in collaboration with the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC), has recently formed the FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership. The partnership entails FIU providing the highest quality research-based knowledge to further explicative understanding of the political, strategic, and cultural dimensions of state behavior and foreign policy. This goal will be accomplished by employing a strategic culture approach. The initial phase of strategic culture assessments consists of a year-long research program that focuses on developing a standard analytical framework to identify and assess the strategic culture of ten Latin American countries. FIU will facilitate professional presentations of the following ten countries over the course of one year: Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. In addition, a findings report on the impact of Islam and Muslims within Latin America will be produced.

The overarching purpose of the project is two-fold: to generate a rich and dynamic base of knowledge pertaining to the political, social, and strategic factors that influence state behavior; and to contribute to SOUTHCOM's Socio-Cultural Dynamics (SCD) Program. Utilizing the notion of strategic culture, SOUTHCOM has commissioned FIU ARC to conduct country studies in order to explain how states comprehend, interpret, and implement national security policy *vis-à-vis* the international system.

SOUTHCOM defines strategic culture as follows: "the combination of internal and external influences and experiences – geographic, historical, cultural, economic, political and military – that shape and influence the way a country understands its relationship to the rest of the world, and how a state will behave in the international community." FIU will identify and expound upon the strategic and cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select states in the present political and security climate by analyzing demography, history, regional customs, traditions, belief systems, and other cultural and historical influences that have contributed to the development of a particular country's current security rationale and interpretation of national security.

To meet the stated goals, FIU ARC will host a series of professional workshops in Miami. These workshops bring subject matter experts from all over the US and Latin America together to explore and discuss a country's specific history, geography, culture, economic, political, and military climates *vis-à-vis* strategic culture. At the conclusion of each workshop, FIU publishes a findings report, which is presented at SOUTHCOM.

The following Nicaraguan Findings Report, authored by Dr. Marvin Astrada and Dr. Cristina Eguizabal, is the product of a working group held in Miami on December 10, 2009, which included 8 prominent academic and private sector experts in Nicaraguan history, culture, economics, politics, and military affairs.

The views expressed in this findings report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, US Department of Defense, US Southern Command, FIU-ARC, or Florida International University.

On behalf of FIU-ARC, we wish to acknowledge and thank all of the participants for their contributions, which made the Nicaraguan Strategic Culture workshop a tremendous success.

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Executive Summary

Origins of Nicaraguan Strategic Culture

- Nicaragua's rich and diverse history has given rise to a distinct political, social, and cultural experience. Nicaraguan Strategic Culture (hereinafter NSC), is an outgrowth of this history.
- NSC is a product of Nicaragua's experience with violence, social instability, political polarization, institutional mistrust, historically weak central government, and political and economic underdevelopment.
- Control of the State apparatus became the primary objective of various internal and external actors throughout Nicaraguan history, inciting recurrent struggles to achieve and sustain control over the State and its institutions. The State has been the center of gravity for both civil war and the solicitation of external intervention in domestic affairs by various elites throughout Nicaragua's history.
- If history has been a major determinant in Nicaragua's perception of threats and NSC, geography has been the other key factor. Nicaragua remains profoundly culturally, socially, economically divided between its Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. The Atlantic Coast continues to be Nicaragua's poorest and most economically disadvantaged region.
- Since the founding of the Nicaraguan State, viable and sustainable economic development and progress has been difficult to achieve. Nicaragua is presently the second poorest country and one of the most vulnerable nations in the Western Hemisphere.

Nicaraguan Strategic Culture: Keepers and Challenges

- Throughout the twentieth century the institutionalization of violence as a practical and acceptable means for political change has continually undermined the possibility of viable economic and political modernization. The established pattern of violence in Nicaragua has continually sustained the manifestation of the caudillo, or strongman, in domestic politics.
- The caudillo has continually emerged as a familiar pattern of political leadership and organization in Nicaragua. Caudillo-centered rule produces negative effects, i.e., personalistic rule distorts the articulation of nationalism, national interest, and equates the caudillo's interests with that of State. The persistence of a pattern of caudillo political organization and violence as an acceptable mode of political change has resulted in the continued privatization of the Nicaraguan State.
- Regime preservation has been a primary motive for political action. The present government's security and political interests are premised on regime preservation. The present government is part of the enduring Somoza-Sandinista binary that has characterized the historical focus NSC. Continued political struggles/efforts to obtain or exert power trump competing interests.
- Personalistic politics, idealistic sociopolitical and economic programs based on hyper-nationalism, and the struggle for control over the State still remain important factors within the Nicaraguan state. In sum, sociopolitical and economic instability, civil strife, poverty, and fear of foreign intervention remain salient components/dimensions of NSC.
- Nicaragua's present government has resumed the personalization of politics and governs from a caudillo-centered form of political organization/administration. As a result, the Nicaraguan electoral system is viewed with great skepticism, lacking significant degrees of credibility and trust within Nicaraguan society.

- Nicaraguan elites have historically sought external assistance/aid when obtaining self-interested socioeconomic and political agendas. Solicited and unsolicited external intervention has produced a “victimization syndrome,” which involves blaming the assortment of Nicaragua’s problems of underdevelopment and sociopolitical volatility on external factors, while neglecting and severely diminishing the responsibilities of internal political actors. External interference in domestic politics continues to be the case and remains a key factor in shaping NSC.
- Another major consequence of sustained intervention in Nicaragua involves the reinforcement and acceptance of violence as a primary means of procuring political change. Violence has been the modus operandi of politics and transitions of power since the inception of the Nicaraguan State. Violence in conjunction with other formative and pervasive factors such as rampant corruption, lack of a sustained public interest, and a nationalist identity premised on fear and distrust of foreigners, has directly and adversely impacted Nicaragua’s prospects for development.
- The introduction of democratic values of accountable and representative government (1990) is viewed as a positive and important development by many of Nicaragua’s citizenry. The continued patrimonial concepts/actualities of the current Nicaraguan State of the caudillo leader, public corruption, the resistance to following rules, and acceptance of public accountability continue to be important facets of the broader political and contemporary Strategic Culture of Nicaragua.
- Nicaragua’s strategic state vision is not defined as a function of a shared national interest, but instead is dependent on the particular interests and objectives of the elite in power.

Introduction: Historiography of Nicaraguan Strategic Culture

Although historical experience is a *sine qua non* of a country's Strategic Culture, some countries have been more affected than others when identifying and assessing the instauration and evolution of Strategic Culture. Nicaragua is a case in point. The Strategic Culture of Nicaragua is deeply embedded in and affected by formative historical experiences. General and specific historical themes and events provide the fundament for cultural notions and strategic perceptions of security. Nicaraguan Strategic Culture (hereinafter, NSC) has thus evidenced high degrees of consistency over the centuries. Although every political unit is steeped in its historical experience, Nicaragua is a country that has been "*overwhelmed*" by its history:

Since colonial times, Nicaragua has suffered from [inveterate] political instability, civil war, poverty, foreign intervention, and natural disasters. Successive governments have been unable to [procure] political stability or significant economic growth ... Personal and foreign special interests have generally prevailed over national interests, and repeated foreign intervention in Nicaraguan political and economic affairs has resulted in [acrimonious and hyper] nationalistic reactions and a legacy of suspicion of foreign governments and their motives.¹

This section of the Findings Report will thus identify and expound upon some key, salient historical themes and events that must be taken into account when attempting to identify and assess essential formative and foundational notions that inform NSC. Select observations of present NSC will also be proffered in light of the historical analysis presented.

Nicaragua's historical experience has laid the foundations for how the State perceives, articulates, and implements security policy, and how cultural and strategic considerations have retained high degrees of continuity vis-à-vis national security. Three specific themes can be extracted from Nicaragua's complex and dynamic history that directly inform and impact the establishment, continuity, and evolution of NSC; that is, *Colonialism*, *Foreign Intervention*, and *Perpetual Conflict* (socio-political and

¹ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010, <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>.

economic). Each of the themes has been present, to a significant degree, within various periods of Nicaraguan history, viz., the *Colonial* (1502-1838), *Independence* (1838-1909), *Foreign Intervention* (1909-1933), *Somoza Dictatorships* (1933-1979), *Sandinista Revolution* (1979-1990), and *Democratic* (1990-present) periods. Generally speaking, NSC has manifested itself within the penumbras of violence, social instability, political polarization, suspicion, a relatively weak State, and economic underdevelopment and uncertainty.

Although the Spanish colonial period ended approximately one hundred and seventy-two years ago, colonialism continues to exert a profound and sustained influence on Nicaraguan political and Strategic Culture. Spanish colonialism, (particularly penetration and domination of what would become Nicaraguan society, and how the territory was utilized), is a key factor in the establishment and evolution of NSC for two general reasons. First, the territory of Nicaragua was a frontier area between different centers of Spanish control. The territory was utilized primarily as a source of foodstuffs for the mining areas located in New Spain, Mexico, and Colombia. The Pacific coast was an area divided between two agricultural zones, each of which was dominated by a landowning elite that competed for influence within the empire and maintained local labor and private armies that supported their particular economic and political interests. The second reason the Spanish colonial period is significant to understanding the present is that the Atlantic Coast was never under full Spanish control.

Geopolitically and historically speaking:

From pre-colonial times through the present, the broad central mountain range that splits the country in two has also divided it into two culturally distinct areas. Before the arrival of the Spanish, western Nicaragua was populated by indigenous peoples related to the Maya and Aztec in the north; eastern Nicaragua's earliest inhabitants were believed to have migrated to the region from South America. The fertile volcanic soils and more salubrious climate in the west attracted Spanish settlers throughout the colonial period. The eastern Caribbean coastal area with its sultry climate and non-fertile soils attracted only a handful of

English settlers and pirates and some blacks (many of whom were runaway slaves) from the West Indies.²

Virtually isolated from the Pacific, the Atlantic was a region of indigenous people and ports that were subject to frequent incursions by the British and pirates. After gaining independence from Spain, the new nation made little effort to establish control over the East Coast, and the region became dominated by the British, who introduced Afro-Caribbean slave labor from the islands of the Caribbean to work in the ports and on the extensive plantations of bananas or other crops exported from the Atlantic ports. In addition to not exercising sovereignty over the totality of its territory, Nicaragua was subjected to profound incursions and interference from English, French, and Dutch pirates. Such massive, pernicious, and sustained intervention, in tandem with the brutality of Spanish colonialism, laid the experiential basis for suspicion and discord. “In 1668 and 1670, these buccaneers captured and destroyed the city of Granada, center of the province’s agricultural wealth. Control of the eastern half of the country eluded the Spanish, and the English declared eastern Nicaragua to be a protectorate of the English crown.”³ The East Coast thus continued to be virtually separated from the rest of Spanish “Nicaragua” and subsequent “independent” Nicaragua. The region had its own ties to the Caribbean and its own mulatto racial identity. The separation of the East from the West coast remains an important factor in Nicaragua’s present-day Strategic Culture.

Within the historical evolution of NSC, perpetual struggles to obtain, consolidate, preserve, and project power over and via the State have been the basis for civil war and solicitation of external intervention in domestic affairs by various elites. Strategic interests in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained essentially grounded in a regional economy and an acrimonious struggle between distinct groups of elites, that is, northern ranchers and their urban allies versus the coffee traders and their urban allies in Granada and Managua. There was no national project, no serious effort to cultivate nationalism and to lay the basis for the consolidation of a single nation-State. Each faction, calling itself Liberal or Conservative, continued to monopolize a private-interest-

² Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>.

³ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>.

based use of force, and confined its political activity to achieving control over the weak State and maintaining itself in power once it had succeeded in ousting the other for personal self-interest. While Nicaragua experienced some degree of positive development in the form of “economic growth based on agriculture,” the rivalries between competing elites devolved into a

pernicious political rivalry that was to plague the country for two more centuries. By the 1750s, a powerful elite class was well established in the cities of León and Granada. The landowners in León concentrated on cattle-raising and the export of animal products, and Granada became the center of regional agricultural trade. Although these local elites agreed on promoting Nicaragua as the site for a transisthmian canal linking the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean, they differed violently on the trade policies of the province (free-trade or protectionist). During the colonial period, these two cities fought for political control over the province. After independence, the rivalry only intensified, often breaking into open warfare. The hatred between the two factions, the liberals, or free-traders, in León and the conservatives, or protectionists, in Granada, became so institutionalized that the factions often forgot the original philosophical difference that had spawned their rivalry. The violent conflict between liberals and conservatives was one of the most important and destructive aspects of Nicaraguan history, an aspect that would last until well into the twentieth century. Politicians frequently chose party loyalty over national interest, and the nation was often the loser in inter-party strife.⁴

The Historical Role and Impact of Interventionism

The mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were marked by highly unstable governments and the rivalry between the U.S. and Britain to pacify and incorporate Nicaragua into their respective spheres of influence/control:

Continued domestic turmoil in the 1850s provided the opportunity for William Walker, a soldier of fortune from the United States, to take over Nicaragua. The

⁴ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>. Andrés Pérez Baltodano, *Entre el Estado Conquistador y el Estado Nación* (Managua: IHNCA/IUCA, 2003).

struggle to expel Walker was long and costly, ultimately involving intervention from all of Nicaragua's neighbors, the British Navy, and an invasion by the United States Marines. The Walker affair left a bitter legacy in Nicaragua and was the first example of what was to become a common occurrence in the country: a penchant for Nicaraguan politicians to call on the United States to settle domestic disputes and an eagerness by the U.S. to respond by military intervention.⁵

The nineteenth century episodes of intervening foreign filibusterers were evidence of the utter lack of a national project. The paucity of a unitary notion of a national identity was based on endogenous notions of nationalism, or a sense of nationhood which might identify a foreign "other" taking advantage of, or brutally exploiting, the national polity. In the twentieth century, deep penetration of the polity by foreigners became one of the central features of Nicaraguan politics, and an enduring feature of the country's Strategic Culture—especially the ties of intimacy that would develop between foreign intervention (solicited and unsolicited) and perceptions of "national" security.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the U.S. was a major player in Nicaraguan politics—to the point where Nicaragua had become a penetrated nation. National and domestic security interests revolved around foreign interests and interventions. The curious feature of this penetration, a feature which continues to directly inform Nicaragua's political processes, posture on the world stage, and perceptions of security (foreign and domestic), is that politics had become a triangle in which a foreign power (that is, the U.S.) was an active player between rival political factions (Liberal and Conservative). As the U.S. moved to intervene, first under the Taft-Root formula and then under the more expansive Wilson-Bryan formula, the content and purlieus of Nicaraguan politics were vetted and contested in the halls of the U.S. Congress and Executive branch.⁶ The paradigm of the penetrated polity, which was reflective of the utter absence of a national project—a fact that would play a profound role in the revolution of 1979—can be observed in the work of Washington attorney and lobbyist Chandler P. Anderson. Anderson was hired by Emiliano Chamorro, the leader of

⁵ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>.

⁶ Joseph S. Tulchin, *The Aftermath of War* (1971).

the Conservative faction in Nicaragua, to represent him and his faction in Washington. Anderson, who had many Latin American clients and several U.S. firms (such as United Fruit) doing business in Latin America, had direct access to Frank Polk, Undersecretary of State under Woodrow Wilson.⁷ The private papers of Anderson and Polk chronicle the frequent and candid exchanges between them in which Anderson worked to maintain the influence Chamorro enjoyed in the Wilson Administration. Anderson was also close to U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Curiously, he did not have access to Wilson's first Secretary of State, William J. Bryan, who had negotiated a treaty with Chamorro when he was Chief of State, which provided the U.S. with protectorate privileges over Nicaragua. During this entire period, politics in Nicaragua was conducted as much in Washington as in Managua. Until the early nineteenth century, under protectorate authority, it was not in the interest of the U.S. to improve communication between Managua and the settlements on the East Coast, nor was the U.S. interested in enhancing Managua's control over its Atlantic territory.

Beginning in the 1920s, the positivity and benefits of U.S. protectorate status began to decrease from the perspective of both principal factions of the political elite in Nicaragua. It was at this time that one could observe an emerging nationalist "text," a political and nationalist rhetoric hostile to the U.S. that contained elements of a voluble hyper-nationalism that would fully emerge in the form of the Sandinista political program and 1979 revolution. When analyzing the origins of NSC, it is thus important to note that the roots of anti-Americanism cut across socio-political and ideological lines—anti-Americanism became part of the agendas of the "left" and the "right" of the political spectrum, as well as the religious and economic elite—and that the higher the degree of anti-Americanism, the more virulent nationalism became among the different groups contending for power within the country.⁸

As the U.S. became more and more extensively involved in the region, after precipitating the independence of Panama from Colombia and beginning to construct the Panama Canal, there was the assumption of hegemonic privilege in the nineteenth century, set against British influence or pretensions. Then, in the early years of the

⁷ Joseph S. Tulchin, *Historical Origins of the Strategic Culture of Nicaragua*, paper prepared for FIU-ARC NSC Workshop, Miami, Florida, December 2009.

⁸ Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule* (2005).

twentieth century, there was the exercise of hegemony through diplomatic representatives who came to exercise proconsul-like influence over local politics.

The United States, flush with its new colonies in the Caribbean won after the Spanish-American War (1898), entered a new era of interventionism in the Caribbean and Central America. The United States Marines who helped topple [the liberal and nationalist dictator José Santos] Zelaya remained in Nicaragua to support subsequent conservative governments ... By the end of World War I, United States Military presence and supervision of the economy had turned Nicaragua into a near United States protectorate. As isolationist sentiment grew in the United States in the 1920s, [and] there were increased calls in the United States for removal of the marines from Nicaragua.⁹

Withdrawal of U.S. forces was accompanied by the establishment of the Nicaraguan National Guard (June 1925) by the U.S. This development had a profound and enduring effect on NSC and nationalistic perceptions of security.

The worst predictions regarding Nicaragua's future after the departure of United States Marines soon came to pass. The Nicaraguan government dissolved into chaos, and liberal-conservative fighting erupted anew. The United States, fearing a full-scale civil war would result in a leftist victory, as had been the case after the Mexican Revolution (1911-17), sent the Marines back to Managua in January 1927. This time, however, the rapid buildup of United States forces led only to increased mayhem. The fighting did not stop until massive United States power and the growing strength of the National Guard forced most combatants to sign a truce. Out of this latest struggle would emerge two of the most influential Nicaraguans of the twentieth century, Augusto César Sandino and Anastasio Somoza García.¹⁰

Each of these historical figures—as well as their progeny and standard-bearers, respectively—would become antithetical purveyors of NSC.

⁹ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>. See Thomas Walker, *Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Country Reports: Nicaragua*, May 7 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>>. See Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza, 1936-1956*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

The Investiture of Nationalism and Anti-Americanism in Nicaraguan Political Discourse

The culmination of anti-Americanism and the nationalist movement was embodied in Sandino's guerrilla war conducted against the U.S.; combating U.S. "occupation" was posited as the source of Nicaragua's ills. Sandino, depicted as a bandit operating independently for his own personal gain by elites in Managua and the U.S., proved to be extremely resilient. Sandino and his guerilla forces were able to elude capture and inflict significant damage. Some sources claim there were as many as four hundred armed clashes between forces led by Sandino and the U.S. Marines that sought to eliminate him.¹¹ Unsuccessful in neutralizing Sandino, and under pressure to withdraw from Nicaragua, the U.S. sought to deal with the situation decisively by creating a Nicaraguan counter-insurgency. This decision had a major impact on the Strategic Culture of Nicaragua. The U.S. unilaterally decided that it was important to establish domestic order by concentrating police powers within a specific State actor, in effect creating a fundamental element, basis, for the establishment of any nationalist project. The U.S. thus established the *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard) as a military/police force to impose order from within. The leadership and rank and file of the Guard were trained, equipped, and trained by the U.S. The head of the Guard was a minor political figure, that is, Anastasio Somoza, who would come to exercise a profound influence over NSC and perceptions of national interests and security. Somoza would orchestrate the murder of the other key figure that embodied the competing vision of Nicaragua, that is, Sandino. Indeed, Sandino's betrayal and murder (initiated and planned by Somoza under the pretense that Managua was negotiating with the opposition in a neutral forum) played a formative role in the imbrication of anti-Americanism with notions of genuine, unadulterated Nicaraguan nationalism. Sandino became a martyr, a national hero whose name and banner would become the iconic symbols of opposition to the Somoza regime and, by extension, to the U.S. The 1979 Sandinista revolution would be inspired and carried out in his name, memory, and honor.¹²

¹¹ For a broader look at anti-Americanism in Latin America, see Alan McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (2003).

¹² Orlando Núñez, *La Guerra y el Campesinado en Nicaragua* (Managua: Ediciones CIPRESS, 1995).

In the evolution of NSC, the Somoza regime represents two significant developments. First, Somoza created a national State where there was none. For the first time in the nation's history, the country had a viable State apparatus that could claim a right to rule based on the institution of the National Guard. Somoza's regime was able to exercise effective power over domestic political processes via the State's security force. He thus succeeded in exerting and consolidating indigenous control over the instruments of violence vis-à-vis the public sphere for the first time in Nicaragua's history. Second, Somoza succeeded in creating a State bureaucracy, a public administration that acted in the interests of the nation (at least in theory, where previously elites acted explicitly in their own self-interest).¹³ Thus, two fundamental conditions of State power posited by Max Weber were realized, that is, a monopoly over the instruments of violence and the establishment of a bureaucratic form of public administration. During the Somoza dynasty, organized interest groups that represented economic groups or social classes began to contest for power within the context of a national polity. Somoza was quite adept at playing these groups off against one another, just as he had played the old political factions against one another when he first came to power. Throughout the WWII period, Somoza succeeded in subduing economic and political elites, and in equating their well-being with the viability and perpetuation of his regime, which, in turn, embodied the State.

Although Somoza was able to effectuate a national polity-space, "positive" developments were accompanied by the establishment of a personalistic authoritarian regime that exercised absolute power and procured obedience through fear and State violence, with Somoza and his family as the autocratic basis of the State. Somoza was dictatorial, brutal to his opponents, and rapaciously corrupt. He and his entourage became immensely wealthy by utilizing the Nicaraguan State against the majority of the Nicaraguan people; the State's interests, that is, Somoza's interests, were antithetical to a genuine national or public interest. Although more of a genuine national polity, Somoza's Nicaragua remained a penetrated polity; personalistic politics and U.S. intervention exerted a profound influence on Nicaraguan affairs. According to lore, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said of Somoza: "He is a son of a bitch; but he is our son of a bitch." If

¹³ Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza* (1993).

factually accurate, Roosevelt's statement was only half true; Somoza was certainly ruthless and authoritarian, but he retained his own personal agenda and interests independent of the U.S. In fact, as had been the case with dictators elsewhere in the Caribbean Basin—Trujillo (Dominican Republic), Batista (Cuba), and Duvalier (Haiti), among others—the U.S. never succeeded in controlling Somoza so that he would do the bidding of his “handlers” in Washington. Somoza was careful to stay within bounds. However, it was a curious dance in which he maintained a considerable amount of autonomy to do as he wished—even, on occasion, to act against explicit requests made by the U.S.

Salient Historical Themes, Past and Present

The limitations of hegemonic control are a salient theme in NSC, as is the constant struggle for establishing a political space for autonomous action. As had been the case throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Somozas as well as the Sandinista successors demonstrated through their actions that the ultimate goal of political action was the preservation and perpetuation of power through control of the State. In other words, despite the fact that Somoza created a national State apparatus, he, his son, and his brother—as well as Daniel Ortega and the ruling Sandinista government—all wanted, above all other competing interests, to maintain, augment, and perpetuate power.¹⁴ Subsequent political struggles within the nationalist framework established by Somoza revolved around seizing, preserving, protecting, augmenting, and projecting power based on an anti-hegemonic, viz., anti-U.S., posture. Control of the political space within which struggles for power would take place, that is, the State, became the primary objective of political actors. One can observe this phenomenon within the present Ortega administration.¹⁵

One of the enduring achievements of the Somozas' regime was to clarify and embed anti-U.S. rhetoric into a “genuine,” indigenous nationalist text. The Sandinista revolution had a virulent anti-U.S. basis, taking anti-Americanism and Nicaraguan nationalism to an unprecedented level. Despite the fact that the U.S. was an obvious and

¹⁴ See Lawrence Pezullo and Ralph Pezullo, *At The Fall of Somoza* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

¹⁵ On the repeating pattern of intervention and partial control, see Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (1987).

positive source of support for their sociopolitical and economic agenda, even the moderate democratic opposition to Somoza, led by a member of the Chamorro clique, had to proclaim its bona fide nationalism—nationalism being synonymous with independence from U.S. influence. The fact that the U.S. openly created and backed the “Contra” opposition to the new Sandinista government (1979) did no good for the Democrats among Nicaraguan politicians. Again, as had been the case fifty years earlier, Nicaraguan politics, as well as the State’s domestic, security, and foreign policy, were heavily influenced by players in Washington as much as in Managua.

In the period since the Sandinista revolution, the Strategic Culture of Nicaragua has demonstrated high degrees of continuity. However, NSC has changed in one important respect. As far as change, the governments of Violetta Chamorro and subsequent regimes since 1990 have all made genuine attempts to effectively incorporate the East Coast and the ethnically-mixed population of that region into the political unit of “Nicaragua” proper. Indigenous groups, descendants of African slaves, and other traditionally non-represented groups are, for the first time, playing a formal role in the realm of national politics. Although it is still early in the process, it is clear that incorporation of the territory will have a significant impact on Nicaragua’s social and political fabric, and, by default, NSC.

As far as continuity vis-à-vis historical experience, NSC remains situated in a contentious political context that was given an explicitly nationalist orientation in the twentieth century under the rule of the Somoza dictatorship. Personalistic politics, idealistic sociopolitical and economic programs based on hyper-nationalism, and struggle for control over the State still remain. In sum, sociopolitical and economic instability, civil strife, poverty, and fear of foreign intervention remain salient components/dimensions of NSC. Historically, regime preservation has been a primary motive for political action; security and political interests have been premised on regime preservation. The present government is reflective of the enduring Somoza-Sandinista binary that has characterized NSC since its inception; that is, a struggle to either obtain or wrest power from an opposition takes precedence over competing motives such as pursuit of a genuine national or public interest.

Foreign intervention has always impacted NSC—the political and ideological orientations of elites and interveners aside. It is clear that the national project that Somoza began continues to evolve. Even as Ortega attempts to consolidate control over the State, the sense of nationalism that emerged from the dialectic of the Somoza-Sandinista opposition survives. As the State reflects the ideological and political predilections of the administration in power, a similar pattern of contention among different sectors of the population still exists, and the potential for violence, instability, and disorder remains a high probability given Nicaragua’s historical experience. Nicaragua has always been and continues to be a penetrated polity. Foreign security interests and policies have, historically, infiltrated and set the stage for variegated sociopolitical and economic developments in Nicaragua.

Another salient theme in NSC is that contention for power revolves around control of the State. Indeed, contentiousness defines the essence of political relations between those in power and those who seek to obtain power. Anti-Americanism has been woven into the nationalist narrative, and has become part of the legacy that informs a nationalist identity. Authentic identity is premised on an anti-U.S. posture, and this cuts across ideological lines. The notion of a nationalist-based State, and a nationalist-based security policy, is, historically speaking, a recent development. The present regime in power has reached out to and has engaged various States that are, to varying degrees, hostile to or seek to challenge U.S. power and influence, such as Venezuela, Cuba, Russia, Bolivia, and Iran. However, this practice does not differ from structural-historical patterns of political development vis-à-vis solicitation and accommodation of foreign interests. Present NSC maintains the theme and practice of intervention (solicited as well as unsolicited)—a phenomenon that has transpired since the inception of the State—when it comes to perceptions and the articulation of national security.

Interventionism: Externalities and Effects

Historically, the domestic politics of Nicaragua—and, by default, NSC—have been compromised by foreign intervention.¹⁶ As discussed above, colonial and imperial geopolitics have had a formative influence on NSC and Nicaraguan political processes. The siege of piracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the presence of the American filibuster William Walker in the middle of the nineteenth century, the British occupation of the Atlantic coast until the end of the nineteenth century, the imperial tensions between England and the U.S. during the last third of the nineteenth century, and profound U.S. interventions in the twentieth century, (including the Chamorro-Bryan Treaty which granted the U.S. perpetual rights over the canal route), are exemplars of the high degree of interventionism that has substantively impacted the origins and development of NSC.¹⁷ It is quite interesting to note, however, that interventionism has historically, to a significant degree, been solicited by domestic elites to support their political projects and overarching agendas rooted in self-interest as opposed to a public good or interest. The pattern of foreign interferences and interventions has thus been a key element in shaping Nicaragua's political and Strategic Culture—and this trend continues, as evidenced by Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez's current role in Nicaraguan domestic affairs vis-à-vis crucial financial support for the Ortega administration.

A consequence of massive and sustained intervention involves the perpetuation of a specific culture among political elites, (including revolutionary elites), that looks outward when confronted with internal problems of national development in the form of inaugurating sustained economic and sociopolitical stability and order. This dimension of Nicaraguan political culture has two closely related variants that form part of a recurring pattern that informs NSC. On the one hand, elites have historically sought external assistance/aid when obtaining their self-interested socioeconomic and political agendas. Instances of solicitation for foreign intervention include the mid-nineteenth century civil

¹⁶ See Joseph Tulchin and Knut Walter, "Nicaragua: The Limits of Intervention," *Exporting Democracy: the United States and Latin America. Case Studies*, Abraham F. Lowenthal, ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1985); Ovidio Diaz Espino, *How Wall Street Created a Nation: J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal* (Four Walls Eight Windows, New York).

war, the time period following the end of the Zelaya government during the first decade of the twentieth century, and massive intervention throughout the following decades, culminating in the U.S.-backed Contra insurgency that precipitated an utterly devastating civil war throughout the 1980s.

In terms of NSC, however, solicited and unsolicited intervention has produced what Edmundo Jarquin terms a “victimization syndrome,” which involves blaming the entirety of the sundry problems of Nicaragua’s underdevelopment and sociopolitical volatility on external factors alone, omitting or severely diminishing the responsibilities of internal political actors. Present NSC is built upon the notion that externalities of the past continue to actively inform the present, and that Nicaragua suffers from a continuity of negative consequences of sustained and massive foreign interventionism.¹⁸ President Ortega, for instance, makes explicit references to the Spanish colonial period, the slavery of Africans, and the interventions of the British and the U.S. as the singular causal variables of Nicaragua’s despondency. Curiously, Nicaragua came out of the Sandinista revolution and the civil war of the 1980s more dependent on external factors in terms of cooperation and reliance on foreign actors than in any other time in its history.¹⁹

Another major consequence of sustained intervention involves the reinforcement of violence as a primary means of political change. With the exception of two long periods of relative political stability, that is, the thirty years of oligarchic modernization of the late nineteenth century and the long period of authoritarian modernization under the Somoza dictatorship (1936-79), violence has historically been the norm for political change in Nicaragua.²⁰ Violence has been the modus operandi of politics and transitions of power since the inception of the State. Violence, in conjunction with other formative factors such as rampant corruption, lack of a sustained public interest, and a nationalist identity premised on fear and distrust of foreigners, has directly and adversely impacted

¹⁸ See Mario De Franco, *La economía política de la ayuda externa* (Informe. Managua, 1996).

¹⁹ Currently, a third of the national budget (and approximately 80% of the budget of public investment) is financed by the external cooperation which represents 8% of GDP. If we add the cooperation from Venezuela, the figure doubles to 16% of GDP.

²⁰ Humberto Belli, “Un ensayo de interpretación sobre las luchas políticas nicaragüenses (de la independencia hasta la revolución cubana,” *Revista del pensamiento centroamericano* No. 157, December 1977.

Carlos Cuadra Pasos, *Historia de medio siglo* (Managua, El Pez y la Serpiente, 1964).

Arturo J. Cruz Sequeira, “Overcoming Mistrust: The Quest for Order in Nicaragua’s Conservative Republic: 1858-1893.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Modern History, Oxford University, 1997.

Knut Walter, *The Regime of Anastasio Somoza: 1936-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

Alejandro Cole Chamorro, *Historia política de Nicaragua* (Managua, Editora Nicaraguense, 1967).

Nicaragua's prospects for development. As Arturo Cruz Sequeira points out, the inability of making the political transition at the end of the nineteenth century,²¹ as it happened at the end of the seventies of [the twentieth] century,²² caused the economic achievements of the "thirty years," as those of the Somoza's regime, to not be sustainable.²³

In terms of NSC, the persistence of violence throughout the twentieth century as a pattern of political change has reified violence as a viable and acceptable state of affairs that undermines possibilities of socioeconomic development and democratic political modernization. The accepted pattern of violence has sustained a specter from the past of many, if not all, nations of Latin America—that is, the caudillo, or strongman. For every violent political change that has transpired, the caudillo has emerged as a familiar pattern of political leadership, with the sundry negative effects that personalistic rule has on the articulation of nationalism, national interest, and the equation of the caudillo's interests with that of State interests. Because of the emotional and personal nature of caudillo political organization and rule, a skewed and corrupted distribution of economic power and property rights was used as leverage against other political elites—and this continues to be the case in polities where the caudillo is the basis for political organization.²⁴

The nascent democratic political culture emerging in Nicaragua (1991–present) can be sharply contrasted to the historical legacy of authoritarian political organization that has characterized the Nicaraguan State, viz., the caudillo.²⁵ Caudilloism has persisted throughout different historical periods, manifesting itself in sundry political ideologies of the so-called "right" and "left." This historically dominant culture is characterized by the exercise of power by the strongman, who is above or beyond the law, or who embodies the law and sociopolitical and economic institutions. King Louis XIV's dictum, "*L'état est moi*" ("I am the State") is an apt description of a caudillo-centered political system. The caudillo imposes upon the nation-State a political project that seeks to preserve, augment, and perpetuate his power via equivocation of himself with the State and the

²¹ From the oligarchic republic to a more representative republic, then devolving into dictatorships and civil wars.

²² The change from the Somocista dictatorship to democratic republic did not take place.

²³ Arturo Cruz, cited in Edmundo Jarquin, paper prepared for NSC workshop (Dec 2009).

²⁴ Sergio Zeledón, "Las crisis de gobernabilidad: las "piñatas" en el siglo XX y sus consecuencias y las elecciones de octubre de 1996". Unpublished essay, May 1996.

²⁵ See David Dye, *Democracy Adrift: Caudillo Politics in Nicaragua* (Brookline: Hemispheric Initiatives Report, 2004).

populace. Elite sectors of society are thus constrained and beholden to the strategic vision and personal interests of the caudillo, as opposed to a diversity of elite orientations and perspectives rooted in a nationalist-based consensus and notions of national interest. The patrimonial State flourishes under the caudillo, and personalistic rule becomes fused with notions of a public interest. The caudillo utilizes the resources of the State to pacify, please, and co-opt elite sectors of society to maintain a viable political base, as was the case during the Somoza dictatorships and is presently occurring under the Ortega administration.

Under the dynastic dictatorship of the Somoza family, the strategic vision of the country was formed from the subjection of the Armed Forces to the personal, political, and economic interests of the Somoza family, within the context of the Cold War and subordination of Nicaragua's interests to the interests of U.S. foreign policy. The caudillo established a power scheme in which he exercised a political monopoly, accumulating private capital under State protection but allowing entrepreneurs to operate in the world of business provided they did not interfere with politics. Somoza's formula combined cooptation and repression to maintain social control. As a result of the 45 years of dynastic dictatorship (1934-79), Nicaragua inherited a political culture with no genuine democratic component; the holding of elections, generally speaking, was synonymous with electoral fraud, and the rule of law represented a political formality to be manipulated by the regime when expedient.

As a counterpart to this authoritarian trend, political violence and armed struggle were legitimized as methods of struggle to oppose the dictatorship through a long tradition of resistance, and were practiced through various generations until culminating in the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Armed resistance has occupied a predominant place in the imagery of popular struggles since the national war against filibuster William Walker (1856), the resistance of Benjamin Zledon against the North American intervention (1912), and the anti-interventionist and anti-imperialist epic of General Augusto C. Sandino (1927-1934). The weight of the hero and heroic opposition, the youth's commitment to the point of sacrificing itself, and the reverence to the victims of repression who would become the heroes and martyrs of the revolution, predominate in the narrative of the anti-Somoza revolution.

The overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 represents a moment of greater national consensus than has ever been reached in the history of Nicaragua. The FSLN guerrilla organization, civic opposition, businessmen, churches, professionals, and especially the youth formed a great national alliance that in turn generated a huge wave of international solidarity. The consensus was quickly lost after the fall of Somoza, at the moment of definition of the new direction of the country. This was the case not only because the intrinsic contradictions inherent in any process of revolutionary change, but also because the perception and application of a concept and modality of power that was inherently divisive.

The revolution also entailed the irruption of the popular masses in politics as an autonomous subject independent from the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties. However, this participation was rapidly subordinated to a vanguard party (that is, the FSLN) that tolerated pluralism, elections, and opposition, but tolerated them under a scheme of hegemonic political control. Despite the democratic evolution of a sector of Sandinismo after its electoral defeat in 1990, this vision of totalizing power has continued to predominate in Ortega's FSLN since he came to power in 2006.

The Privatized State: Effects of the Sandinista Revolution

The persistence of a pattern of caudillo political organization and violence as a mode of political change has resulted in the privatization of the State. Privatization involves the will of the caudillo being expressed in law and public policy. The intensity of the phenomenon has varied throughout the history of the nineteenth century, but as a consequence, some basic foundations of modern liberal political and economic life have not been achieved in the twentieth century. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Nicaragua continues to experience the privatization of the State.

From the time when the Sandinista revolution toppled the Somoza dictatorship through the civil war of the 1980s, Nicaragua entered the last decade of the twentieth century with major historical achievements in terms of de-privatization of the State and the building of a modern liberal State. Beginning in 1979, perhaps for the first time in Nicaragua's history, coercive power, a monopoly of force, and the means for violence were de-privatized. The efforts to professionalize and institutionalize *nationalist-based*

security forces, that is, the Armed Forces and the National Police, are probably the most important and significant political achievements that the Sandinista government initiated. Until the democratic nation and State-building project began in the 1990s, a monopoly of force over the means of violence was privatized by a caudillo, a family, and/or a specific political party (Liberal or Conservative). Before the present democratic period, in which the State exercises a monopoly of force and arms, an explicitly political/ideological-based security force (the Sandinista Army and police), and privatized caudillo-based security forces (the Somoza family), directly impacted perceptions of security and the interests of the State.²⁶

Historically, the privatized State has also lacked a legitimate, reliable and credible electoral system.²⁷ Until the early 1990s, Nicaragua did not have a functional and legitimate electoral system, to the point where votes had to be collected and counted by the American Navy until the end of the 1920s. In addition to the absence of a genuine electoral system, a judicial system with high degrees of autonomy from the will of the ruling caudillo, family, or political party, has been lacking as well. In short, personalistic rule did not and has not generated sufficient social capital, (networks of trust and cooperation), to construct enduring institutions to perpetuate political and juridical security for economic development and peaceful democratic coexistence among competing interests in society. Only at the end of the twentieth century has Nicaragua experienced a genuine democratic period.

The Sandinista Revolution and the Transition to Democracy

While the first goal of the revolution was social change and not representative democracy, the FSLN's acceptance of electoral defeat at the polls in 1990 turned democracy into the main political legacy of the revolution. For more than a decade, this method of solving competition for power became a factor of consensus. However, since the PCLFSLN (2000) pact, which divided all State institutions along party lines, there has been a deterioration of trust in the electoral system which culminated in charges of

²⁶ The attempts by the North Americans at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s to establish professional and institutional Armed Forces rapidly failed (Tulchin and Walter, cited Works). Richard Millet, "Los guardianes de la dinastía," *Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana (Educa)*, San José, Costa Rica.

²⁷ See Antonio Lacayo Oyanguren, *La Difícil Transición Nicaraguense, en el gobierno de doña Violeta* (Managua: Fundación UNO, 2005).

municipal electoral fraud orchestrated by the FSLN in 2008. Nevertheless, institutionally, the revolution ushered in the avatars of State and nation-building, viz., political and social organizations and State security forces:

Immediately on coming to office, the provisional government was able to abolish the National Guard and develop new defense and security forces from the FSLN army and their supporters in armed combat. A police force, the Sandinista Police, PS, was set up (Nicaragua had never had a civilian police force before) as too was a state security apparatus, the National Directorate of State Security, DGSE. In September, a new professional, regular army, the Sandinista Popular Army, EPS, was formed. The EPS was responsible to the Ministry of Defense, the PS and DGSE to the Ministry of the Interior. Both ministries were under the direction of the National Directorate of the FSLN. From February 1980, Sandinista Popular Militias, MPS, were organized. These were essentially neighborhood-based reserve forces for the EPS and sometimes for the police, and they acted in alliance with the Sandinista Defense Committees, CDS, whose defense functions were taken over by the MPS. The CDSs developed from the neighborhood organizations that gave support to the FSLN in the civil war.²⁸

Also, the revolution sought the instauration of legal structures to manage conflict and forge a modern, genuine State. The end of the civil war, and the completion of the peace negotiation (1990) under the government of President Chamorro, brought to the fore the importance of dialogue, national reconciliation, and tolerance as national values and goals. However, the national accords did not reach consensus in all sectors. Nevertheless:

In Nicaragua the provisional government set out to avoid a reign of terror. That is to say, they took immediate steps to prohibit summary justice. On 21 August, a Statute on Rights and Guarantees for the Citizens of Nicaragua was issued which prohibited torture, confirmed the abolition of the death penalty announced in July, set prison sentences to a maximum of 30 years and gave strict guidelines for the administration of justice. Detention without a warrant was forbidden; those

²⁸ Rosemary H. T. O’Kane, “Post-Revolutionary State Building in Ethiopia, Iran and Nicaragua: Lessons from Terror,” *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, 970–988 (2000), 981-82.

arrested were to appear in court within 24 hours ... and court proceedings were to be generally open. Freedom of expression and information were also guaranteed, as was the right to strike and the right to hold private property. The Statute also carried the promise of democratic freedoms, including the right to form political organizations, to vote, and to stand for election.²⁹

Despite outbreaks of violence that began in the early nineties with the emergence of armed and violent opposition groups, the non-partisan alignment and professionalization of the Sandinista Popular Army becoming a national army represents the most successful case of the Nicaraguan transition. Nicaragua represents one case in which the interaction between civil authorities and the military occurred after negotiations, and a peaceful transfer of power ensured the stability of military institutions and established a basis for civil-military relations in harmony with democracy.³⁰ After a long cycle of political violence, the existence of a national army not subordinated to parties or political factions represents an indispensable step to demilitarize politics. The national army was able to develop a relatively autonomous relationship with the civilian authority while simultaneously offering institutional incentives to achieve and maintain a professional and non-political status. This enabled the military to formulate, in a professional way, its own vision of national security, new missions, and democratic preservation as part of the overall national interest. In the case of the army (the EPS—Ejército Popular Sandinista), an agreement ensured that the Armed Forces would be non-politicized. The Protocol of Transition (Transition Accords) was a formal document through which the newly-elected government pledged to respect the army's institutional integrity and its command structure in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Nicaragua. The accords also supported the army's professionalization. In exchange for these concessions, the EPS set aside its role as a partisan army and transformed itself into a professional organization that accepted the authority of the newly-elected government. The act of transforming itself became the principal guarantee of its stability.³¹

³⁰ Margarita Castillo Villarreal, "Nicaragua: Civilians and Military after the Sandinista Revolution," *Military Review* March–April, 6-11 (2005) 6.

³¹ Villarreal 6.

With the transition, Nicaragua evolved from a revolutionary model of total power to one of de-concentration and decentralization of power.³² The Constitutional reform of 1995 institutionalized the separation of State powers, and this helped to facilitate the emergence of new political and economic actors on the domestic stage. The strengthening of independent media that promotes transparency and criticism of power, the emergence of an embryonic civil society, and the resurgence of big business groups all helped to disaggregate power and diffuse it through different sectors/actors within society.

Economically, the most important heritage is that of the overpowering role of the market as a panacea for development, to the detriment of the regulating role of the State. The new economic elites promote the preservation of macroeconomic policies as an element of national consensus, with the blessing of the International Monetary Fund, although they do not necessarily maintain a commitment to democracy and national development. From the point of view of their interests, it does not matter if a government practices unlimited corruption, such as under Arnaldo Aleman, or authoritarianism, such as under Daniel Ortega; what counts for them is macroeconomic stability as an embodiment of national security. Meanwhile, massive poverty and social exclusion became a structural aspect of the country with migration functioning as an escape valve.

Strategic visions are not defined in function of a shared national interest, but vary depending on the particular interests of the elite in power. The government of Enrique Bolanos (2001-2006) marketed the CAFTA commercial agreement with the United States as a pillar of a strategy for national development. The government of Daniel Ortega (2002-present) made its own version of the National Human Development Plan and, although it did not break with CAFTA, it now privileges an alliance with Venezuela through ALBA via ideological affinity and revolutionary rhetoric. In both cases, the general trend is that development strategies become an instrumental requirement to negotiate and obtain funds with the donor community, but they are not based on a solid national consensus. The exception to the rule is defense of the territorial interests of Nicaragua in the international forum. The strategy to settle border disputes between Honduras and Colombia, and navigation disputes on the San Juan River with Costa Rica

³² See Roberto J. Cajina, *Transición política y reconversión militar en Nicaragua* (Managua: CRIES, 1997).

at the International Court of Justice, have enjoyed institutional continuity and national consensus.

The transition from revolutionary State to democracy has also promoted another dimension of the decentralization of power, that is, the holding of municipal and regional elections separate from the presidential ones in the Atlantic coast (2000, 2004, 2008), in which the municipalities become a training ground for implementation of local democracy, supported by the creation of culture, law, and institutions that promote citizen participation. However, the social impact is limited, despite institutional progress, the emergence of a new participatory democratic culture, a broad network of NGOs, and democratic social movements. The reason it is limited is that democracy has not provided satisfactory economic results to the great majority of the people in terms of poverty reduction and employment generation for the middle classes.

Although various polling data indicate that the establishment of democratic values is viewed as a positive development, at the same time caudilloism, the patrimonial concept of State, public corruption, and resistance to following rules and accountability remain part of the broader political and Strategic Culture of Nicaragua. Despite allegations of corruption and flagrant violations of law, ethical norms, and moral values, Arnoldo Aleman and Daniel Ortega symbolize the validity of political caudillos that use democratic institutions in a manner that dismantles them through a policy of distributing power and benefits via a personalistic basis.

The FSLN inherited a corporative relationship with labor unions, guilds and mass organizations from the transition of power that enabled powerful political pressure groups to have the capacity to provoke chaos and impose agreements through blackmail. The PLC-FSLN pact, which divided the Judiciary, the Supreme Electoral Council, and Treasury Inspector's Office, has and will continue to have permanent negative effects on the political system in that brazen politicization and corruption have infiltrated all dimensions of sociopolitical and economic organization.

Daniel Ortega's return to power in 2006 via the ballot box marked the beginning of a new cycle of polarization with authoritarian trends. The new model of politics maintains a market economy approach, but in fact President Ortega intends to augment and perpetuate his own power via Venezuelan aid and cooperation, while politically the

administration is pursuing an authoritarian re-concentration of power via restrictions on democratic freedoms, repression of opposition, and the intention to utilize the army and the police as political tools.

This institutional regression will test the strength of civil society, independent media, and the fragmented democratic opposition. However, the opposition does not have an alternative project to the one proposed by Ortega. Its short-term goal is to reestablish a reliable electoral system to solve the national crisis that manifested itself in the 2001 presidential elections, while the majority of the population living in poverty struggles with the dilemma of daily economic survival and the promises of a populist government that restricts democracy.

Economic Challenges and Issues

Since the inception of the State, sustainable economic development and progress—which encompasses the majority or a substantial sector of society—have proven to be elusive. Nicaragua is presently the second poorest and most vulnerable nation in the Western Hemisphere. Seventy percent of Nicaraguans live on less than two dollars a day. One out of six Nicaraguans lives outside the country—mainly in Costa Rica, the U.S., and Spain. Remittances constitute fifteen percent of the country’s GNP. For years, international cooperation (loans and donations) has supported approximately thirty percent of the country’s budget. The U.S.-Central American Free Trade Agreement, in effect since 2006, expanded export opportunities for many agricultural and manufactured goods. However, due to decreased export demand in the U.S. and Central America—Nicaragua’s most important markets—and a sizeable drop in remittances, Nicaragua’s GDP fell by almost three percent in 2009. The European Union suspended its donations in response to November 2008 electoral irregularities during the last municipal elections, and last June the U.S. government cancelled a \$62 million donation from the Millennium Challenge Corporation.³³

In his first official act upon assuming the presidency, Daniel Ortega joined the Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) and Petrocaribe.

³³ Nicaragua continues to receive military aid through its participation in the Merida Initiative, and the U.S. government has not opposed the IMF, the World Bank, and the IDB to continue working with Managua.

Nicaragua's newly sworn President signed 15 cooperation agreements with Venezuela the day after President Chavez's announcement that he would forgive, "without conditions," Nicaragua's debt to Venezuela of approximately \$31.3 million. Other bilateral agreements between Venezuela and Nicaragua include the supply of 10 million barrels of discounted oil per year, and the donation of \$10 million for social programs. Two feasibility studies were scheduled to be conducted jointly, one for the construction of an oil refinery with a 100,000 barrels-per-day capability, and a second for the construction for an aluminum smelter. Venezuela was to assist in the establishment of a food distribution network, and purchase Nicaraguan beans. According to international news agencies' reports, the Venezuelan aid package amounted to \$600 million.³⁴

Under the terms of Petrocaribe's oil delivery arrangement, Venezuela supplies all Nicaragua's needs at market prices. However, only half is to be paid within 90 days of delivery, the other half to be paid over 25 years at a two percent interest rate per year, with two years grace to be spent in Nicaragua in bilaterally-supervised social and development projects.

The deal is indeed extremely generous;³⁵ however, various civil society organizations have questioned its legality. The financing mechanism itself in Nicaragua is incredibly complex—which is not the case for other Petrocaribe members. Venezuela provides the oil directly to Nicaragua's oil distributor, PETRONIC, which then resells it to private companies such as Exxon Mobil (still called ESSO in Nicaragua). PETRONIC then transfers its sales revenue to ALBANISA,³⁶ which in turn transfers 50 percent of the money back to Venezuela as payment for the oil (within 90 days). It will pay the other 50 percent over 23 years at a two percent annual interest rate. It is important to add that half of the money paid up front goes to the ALBA social fund, and another half goes into ALBANISA's coffers, which means that ALBANISA keeps 25 percent of the profits. ALBANISA has become a powerful economic player with investments in agriculture, industry, the service sector, and energy.³⁷

³⁴ The equivalent of all Western cooperation for one year and one third of the country's export revenues.

³⁵ Nicaragua's annual oil bill is on average \$375 million and only disburses 25 percent of the cost.

³⁶ ALBANISA is a private company owned by the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, which controls 60% of the shares and unknown partners in Nicaragua. Tim Rogers, "News from Nicaragua: Government: Power Blackouts to End December 1." *NicaTimes.net*. November 9-November 15, 2007 <<http://www.nicatimes.net/nicaarchive/110907.htm>>.

³⁷ Sergio Ramírez, interviewed in Miami by the authors, February 18, 2010.

The government claims that since ALBANISA is a private company; the money it handles does not constitute a public debt and hence does not appear in the budget and is not subject to the scrutiny of the general accounting office. The fact that the same person is the President of PETRONIC, the Vice President of ALBANISA and the Treasurer of the Sandinista governing party is, to say the least, problematic.³⁸

Geographic Challenges and Issues

If history has been a major determinant in Nicaragua's perception of threats and NSC, geography has been the other factor. Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast is routinely ravaged by hurricanes and tropical storms. Like the rest of Central America, the country is located in an active volcanic zone known as the Central American Volcanic Chain. The country is also prone to constant seismic activity that arises from the relative movements of two plates which intersect near its southwestern border: the Cocos plate, which is moving northeastward, and the Caribbean plate, which is slowly overlapping the first one.

Furthermore, Managua, the capital city, is situated above a geological fault line that, historically, has made it susceptible to tremors and earthquakes. In the twentieth century, it was twice destroyed, most notably in 1972 when a 5.6 tremor destroyed eighty percent of the city's housing. Eleven major factories, eighteen churches, and four major hospitals were obliterated. The international community responded very generously to the Nicaraguan tragedy, but international aid was plundered by the Somoza regime. Somoza's appropriation of the aid money created a volatile geo-political situation, which led to the fall of the regime.

More important in fomenting opposition towards the Somoza dictatorship was the decision not to rebuild downtown Managua and to rebuild the city towards the South, on land owned by the Somozas, with most of the building materials produced in Somoza's factories, and loans and mortgages provided by Somoza's banks. Somoza's private motives for the use of public funds created conflict with the private sector. The middle and lower classes were outraged by the way the reconstruction was handled, as was the Catholic Church. "For the first time, everybody was allied against Somoza ... People

³⁸ <http://alejandrobendana.blogspot.com/2008/06/albapetrocaribevenezuelanicaraguadebt.html>.

began to believe there was no political option in Nicaragua, only an armed option.”³⁹ Money, guns, and troops began flowing in support of the Sandinista armed insurrection that, until then, had been quite isolated.

Opposition to the regime, which had begun to surface before the earthquake, increased quickly among all sectors of the society. It is widely accepted that it was the beginning of the end of the Somoza dynasty, which was overthrown in 1979.

The second geographic determinant of threat perception and NSC has historically been Nicaragua’s location and the possibility of building a passage that would link the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, thus taking advantage of the country’s navigable waterways.⁴⁰ This became an enduring yet unrealizable goal for Nicaraguan elites very early on; the aspiration to link the Atlantic and the Pacific remains part of elite perceptions vis-à-vis NSC. Despite Panama’s decision to expand its canal, interest in exploring alternate routes remains strong. In a recent visit to Nicaragua, Serguei Lavrov, Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed his country’s interest in exploring the feasibility of building another canal within Nicaraguan territory.

The Atlantic Coast

Despite the possibility of building a canal, Nicaragua remains profoundly divided between its Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. The division stems from the historical alliance established by the Miskito Indians and the British Crown in order to keep the Spanish colonizers at bay. The Mosquito Coast provided the British with an excellent outpost to patrol their Caribbean possessions. English settlers promoted agriculture on the banks of the Coco and Escondido Rivers. They brought slaves from the Caribbean to work on their sugar cane and indigo plantations, and to harvest precious woods that abounded in the region. Established at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Bluefields and Cabo Gracias a Dios became the most important urban centers of the region.

The arrangement established with the British gave the Miskitos a degree of autonomous self-rule that they would not have enjoyed under Spanish control, and allowed them to establish their dominance over less powerful indigenous groups in the

³⁹ Edmundo Jarquín, *The Miami Herald*, February 14, 2010.

⁴⁰ The Lake of Nicaragua and the San Juan River provide a water passage 20km short of the Pacific Ocean.

region (Sumus and Ramas). Thanks to the support of the British buccaneers, the Miskito dynasty was able to extend its influence over most of the Central American Atlantic Coast from present-day Honduras (department of Trujillo) to Lake Chiriquí in present-day Panama.

In 1860, Britain recognized Nicaraguan sovereignty over part of the Mosquitia, but the Treaty of Managua, which codified the transfer of power, imposed a considerable degree of self-government. Not until 1893, after the military occupation of Bluefields by Nicaraguan Liberal President José Santos Zelaya, did the former British Trusteeship become the Nicaraguan Department of Zelaya. However, the border with Honduras remained undetermined, and the Miskitos continued using the Coco River as their domestic waterway.

After WWII, mestizos from the Pacific coast began settling along the Atlantic Coast. They were attracted to the Atlantic Coast by the mining industry that was being developed by foreign investors (mainly U.S. companies), bringing to the Coast another ethnic and cultural component. Today, the Coast population is forty six percent indigenous, twelve percent Afro-Latino, and forty two percent mestizo and white.

In 1987, the former departments of Zelaya (North and South) became two autonomous regions: RAAN (Autonomous Region of the Atlantic North) and RAAS (Autonomous Region of the Atlantic South), with Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields as their respective capitals. The 1987 Constitution declares Nicaragua a multicultural State and accepts the coexistence of traditional authorities with governmental and elected officials. At least four property regimes are recognized: that is, private property, cooperatives, communal lands, and national reserves. These four property regimes overlap and often compete with one another, creating the potential for conflict over land rights.

RAAN and RAAS occupy forty six percent of Nicaraguan territory, a landmass twice as big as El Salvador and only 10,000 kilometers short of the combined territories of El Salvador and Costa Rica. However, the Atlantic Coast only has eleven percent of the total Nicaraguan population.

The Atlantic Coast is Nicaragua's poorest region. It has an illiteracy rate of 31.4% compared to 20.9% nationally. 19.7% of its population has access to clean water

(compared with 59% nationally). The region has only 8.26% of the country's roads and only 3% of its paved roads (all in RAAS).

The country's military often voices its concern that the region has become a haven for drug traffickers, and that the military lacks the capacity to effectively combat this problem. Six hundred armed men are responsible for the security of the entire region; the army has one helicopter, and the only method of patrolling rivers and lakes is to utilize boats confiscated from drug traffickers. Colombian and Mexican drug cartels are present in numerous "narco-villages" where the local population, abandoned by the State or suspicious of the military and police forces, support the narco-traffickers who provide lucrative monetary rewards for aiding and cooperating with narco-trafficking enterprises.⁴¹

Geo-Politics and Nicaraguan Strategic Culture

Nicaragua, the poorest country in Central America and the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has had difficult relations with its neighbors based on geo-political considerations and conditions. Having lost territory to Costa Rica (the Province of Guanacaste),⁴² Honduras (the territory between the Pass of Teotecacinte to the Atlantic Ocean⁴³), and Colombia (the islands of San Andrés and Providencia),⁴⁴ all Nicaraguan governments since 1979 have been very vocal in their territorial claims. It is interesting to note, however, that all Nicaraguan territorial and maritime disputes have been submitted to the International Court of Justice for resolution, as opposed to being handled directly by the State—an action that harkens back to the historical practice of having external actors settle domestic issues and challenges.

⁴¹ *El Pais* (Spain) December 23, 2009.

⁴² Shortly after the nations in the region gained their independence from Spain in 1821, the residents of the communities of Nicoya, Santa Cruz, and Cañas decided that they preferred to become part of Costa Rica, and announced their annexation on July 25, 1825. It was not until 1858 that the change in boundary lines was officially recognized and agreed upon by the two countries involved.

⁴³ King Alfonso XIII of Spain settled the dispute in 1906 favoring Honduras.

⁴⁴ The 1928 Bárcenas Meneses Esguerra Treaty, signed under U.S. occupation, recognized Nicaragua's sovereignty over the Mosquito Coast and Colombia's over Providencia and the San Andrés Archipelago. Roncador, Quitasueño and Serrana were excluded from the settlement and remain in dispute.

Nicaragua and Honduras: International Limits Dispute

In the case of Nicaragua's border dispute with Honduras, the Bonilla Gamez Treaty of 1894 settled the first demarcation negotiations between the two States. The remaining disagreements were to be settled through arbitration. Alfonso XIII of Spain was sought as the arbiter, but Nicaragua refused to accept a verdict that established the Coco River as the border, because this had the effect of favoring Honduras. Nicaragua continued occupying the north bank of the river until Honduras created the department of Gracias a Dios in 1957 and militarily occupied the disputed area. After military clashes between the two countries, Tegucigalpa invoked the Inter-American Pact of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Pact), claiming that Nicaragua had invaded its territory. The OAS persuaded the two parties to cease hostilities and submit their dispute to the International Court of Justice. The ICJ upheld the 1906 decision, and in 1962, Nicaragua finally accepted the Rio Coco as its border with Honduras.

During the 1980s, the Honduran-Nicaraguan border became the main battleground issue between the Sandinista government and the armed counter-revolutionary opposition that came to be known as the "Contra" rebel movement. Unlike the rest of the country, the Atlantic Coast populations had not opposed the Somoza dictatorship and did not actively support the insurrection. On the contrary, the flight of U.S. companies, particularly from Puerto Cabezas, was a severe blow to the local economy and resulted in massive unemployment. By the end of 1979, the Sandinista Army had 7,000 men stationed in Puerto Cabezas (Somoza's National Guard had never had an important continued presence on the Coast), and Cuban medical doctors and teachers began arriving in the region. Despite the lukewarm support of the indigenous populations to the Sandinista regime, a group of Miskitos, Sumos, and Ramas had established MISURASATA in support of the Sandinista regime and adroitly handled most of the disagreements. For example, the alphabetization campaign had been conceived in Spanish, but the local inhabitants (costeños) demanded to be taught in English, Sumo, and Miskito. The Sandinista government agreed, avoiding confrontations in order to consolidate the revolution.

However, disagreements over the extent of the coast's autonomy became more and more pronounced, and on February 19 1981, suspecting MISURASATA's leaders of

counter-revolutionary activities, the Sandinistas captured the organization's principal leaders. MISURASATA was officially disbanded in July. In November 1981, Miskito militias began raiding Sandinista outposts on the Coco River. The government responded by militarizing the Atlantic zone and relocating approximately 10,000 Miskitos in five refugee camps seventy miles from the river.

Nicaragua and Costa Rica: Uneasy Neighbors

In 1858, Costa Rica and Nicaragua signed the Cañas-Jerez Treaty that established the Rio San Juan as the international demarcation between the two countries. San Juan del Norte (today's San Juan de Nicaragua, known in English as Greytown, is a town and municipality in the Rio San Juan Department in Nicaragua) was established as common property of both Republics, and Costa Rica was granted perpetual free navigation rights over the San Juan River (clause 6). Moreover, the Treaty stipulated that Costa Rica had the right to defend its San Juan River-related interests, and therefore be part of any negotiation regarding the construction of an inter-oceanic canal (clause 8). In 1888, both countries sought arbitration by U.S. President Grover Cleveland, asking for clarification of the two contentious clauses. Cleveland reiterated Costa Rica's perpetual navigation rights for vessels carrying merchandise and not arms. After Panama's independence from Colombia in 1903, and U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt's decision to finish the canal begun by de Lesseps (the French engineer who built Suez), no new negotiations concerning the Nicaraguan alternative took place. The subject of Costa Rica's navigation rights remains contentious to this date.

During the entire twentieth century, helped by the Cañas Jerez Treaty ambiguities, both countries acted out their interpretations of the place and role of the Rio San Juan.

José Figueres, the legendary leader responsible for the dissolution of the Costa Rican Armed Forces, was a declared enemy of military dictators. A true democrat and sporadic freedom fighter, he had supported efforts to overthrow Batista in Cuba, Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela, and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, but he reserved his deepest antipathy for Somoza, the neighboring Nicaragua dictator who reciprocated amply. As a matter of fact, Teodoro Picado, the Costa Rican President that Figueres had toppled in 1948, sought refuge in Nicaragua. With the support of Somoza García, he

launched an invasion of Costa Rica in 1955. The OAS condemned Nicaragua's involvement. Twenty-five years later, the Costa Rican government actively supported the Sandinista uprising, allowing hundreds of armed rebels to cross the Rio San Juan to fight Somoza Debayle's National Guard.

During the Sandinista regime, the Reagan administration tried, unsuccessfully, to establish Contra training camps near the Rio San Juan; however, arms and supplies were routinely smuggled into Nicaragua to support Eden Pastora's Southern Front. Severe border clashes took place during 1983-84. The Sandinista forces that often crossed the border in pursuit of Contra rebels routinely harassed Costa Rican civil guards patrolling the Rio San Juan.

More recently, in 1998, following the Nicaraguan military's confiscation of patrolling Costa Rican civil guards' service weapons, and after exchanging accusations and diplomatic protests, reaching tentative agreements only to denounce them the morning after and developing Track II-type citizen diplomacy on the border towns, the two countries submitted the dispute to the ICJ. The Court ruled in July 2009:

The ICJ found that the treaty did establish Costa Rica's right to free navigation for 'commercial purposes,' and that 'commerce' meant both cargo and transportation. Accordingly, said the Court, visa requirements would give Nicaragua undue control over a Costa Rican right, and could not be exercised consistent with the Treaty. Similarly, the Court rejected Costa Rica's argument that its free navigation of the river gave its ships the freedom to dock at the Nicaragua bank without coming under Nicaraguan control. Recognizing Nicaragua's sovereignty over the river, the Court found that passport and identification requirements were not an impediment to Costa Rica's use of the river. Further, the court found that official Costa Rican vehicles, including police boats, are not covered under 'commercial purposes,' though should be allowed when performing services necessary to the river region's inhabitants.⁴⁵

The other issue that makes the Nicaragua-Costa Rica relationship a difficult one is the intense flow of Nicaraguan citizens into Costa Rica via the San Juan River.

⁴⁵ Jurist Legal News and Research, 13 July 2009
<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2009_07_13_indexarch.php#561185365743222015>.

Nicaraguans have immigrated to Costa Rica for a variety of reasons, for example, fleeing violence, military service, and political instability as they search for work opportunities, better wages, and better services.⁴⁶ Since the 1970s, there has been a constant inflow of political refugees and economic migrants. Presently, there are between 500,000 to 700,000 Nicaraguans working in Costa Rica. Experts believe that close to half of them are there illegally. If these figures are correct, Nicaraguans constitute approximately fifteen percent of the Costa Rican population of 4.2 million.

In 1998, Costa Rica and Nicaragua signed an agreement regulating seasonal migration. Nicaraguans with work permits enter Costa Rica at the well-regulated western border at Peñas Blancas on the Pan-American Highway. Most Nicaraguans in Costa Rica are farm, construction, or service workers. Despite the formal agreement, human smuggling continues to be a problem—particularly in August, before the coffee harvest begins in Costa Rica.

In one of her first statements to the press after her election, Laura Chinchilla, the Costa Rican president, acknowledged Costa Rican agriculture's debt to Nicaraguan workers, and promised new legislation to better protect the rights of migrant workers.

Continuity, Change and Contemporary NSC: Select Observations

When Daniel Ortega won the November 2006 presidential election, all sectors of society, generally speaking, trusted that he would govern in a manner that would take into account the devastation that rigid ideological positions had wrought on the polity, as well as the relative progress that had been taking place in terms of political modernization since the 1990 elections. During his administration, however, Ortega has pursued policies and initiated actions that threaten to undo the relatively significant progress attained since the 1990 elections.⁴⁷ In short, Ortega has resumed the personalization of politics, and governs from a caudillo-centered form of political organization and administration. The electoral system is once again viewed with skepticism, lacking significant degrees of credibility and trust. Indeed, it is the case that there cannot be genuine democratic elections given the present Electoral Council; the Council's independence has been

⁴⁶ Wages in Costa Rica are six times higher than in Nicaragua.

⁴⁷ Edmundo Jarquín. "Sobre el futuro democrático de América Latina." Paper presented in "Changes, Challenges and Crisis of our times Conference", at the Executive Leadership Center of Boston University, October 8-10, 2009.

compromised, and this development renders it an extension of a personalistic as opposed to an inclusive and representative institution.⁴⁸

On April 20, 2007, President Ortega marked his 100th day in office. Three days earlier, the well-respected Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) issued a report characterizing the Sandinista government as authoritarian, centralist, and nepotistic. Ortega began utilizing traditional bases of caudillo power politics, blurring the party-State-family boundaries in his refusal to work from the presidential palace, and using his office at the FSLN headquarters. Ortega is both Nicaragua's president and the FSLN's general secretary. His wife Murillo has held the powerful post of Communications and Citizen Councils Coordinator. Much to the chagrin of CENIDH and many other civil society groups, El Pacto remains intact.⁴⁹ Indeed, the PLC subsequently backed two FSLN Supreme Court appointees and hinted at being open to discuss reelection.⁵⁰ Regarding the president's strategic alliances and extensive travels, Víctor Hugo Tinoco, dissident Sandinista and MRS head within the National Assembly, has said: "Ortega is putting his personal international sympathies above the fundamental interests of Nicaragua. His anti-imperialist militancy conspires against the resolution of internal problems."⁵¹ However, at the same time, Nicaragua remains in CAFTA-DR and has signed onto the Mérida Initiative, a joint U.S., Mexico, and Central American effort against organized crime. Indeed, the Nicaraguan National Police and the Drug Enforcement Administration have a history of reliable and productive cooperation that has actually increased under the Sandinista government. Nicaragua's domestic security, moreover, is nowhere near as fragile and acute as El Salvador's, Guatemala's, and Honduras's. However, it is within the domestic sphere that the Sandinista presidency has wrought substantial damage to the processes and institutionalization of political and economic liberalization. It is moving toward the very phenomenon that has kept Nicaragua from obtaining development, that is, caudilloism.

⁴⁸ The massive fraud of the municipal elections of November 2008 has been documented and recognized by various governments and international organizations (Edmundo Jarquin).

⁴⁹ Informe sobre los primeros cien días de Gobierno del Presidente Daniel Ortega Saavedra, <http://www.cenidh.org/files/CIEN%20DIAS%20DE%20GOBIERNO.pdf>.

⁵⁰ "Ortega Gets Poor Appraisal on Anniversary," *Latin American Caribbean & Central American Report*, April 2007, 11.

⁵¹ "Ortega Makes New Friends," *Latin America Caribbean & Regional Report*, June 2007, 7.

From the outset, Ortega insisted on creating the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs), a community network ostensibly needed to facilitate the political empowerment of the masses. In 2003, the Law for Citizen Participation passed and was registering incipient success at promoting community participation through the departmental and municipal councils as well as the National Council of Economic and Social Planning (CONPES). This emergent web of councils was attempting to nurture civil society, neither dependent on any party nor the State. On November 30, 2007, the CPCs were installed and their national cabinet created with Ortega himself at its head and his wife as coordinator. He also decreed a reform of CONPES, ostensibly to promote citizen participation in the making of social policy; Murillo was named executive secretary. Both moves seriously compromised CONPES autonomy. The CPCs were launched in spite of the National Assembly's vote to prevent all ties between the Councils and the State, such as the potential for influence that stems from receiving public funds and supervising ministries or any other State institutions. The Supreme Court handed the Sandinistas a victory in their appeal to override the legislature. Due to the influence of El Pacto, Nicaragua's judiciary has been politicized, and is less able to function with significant degrees of autonomy. The dynamics and consequences of the ruling are indicative of the political nature of the decision. The PLC judges were absent, and three of the six Sandinista magistrates were not CSJ members. The CPCs, in effect, constitute a parallel, unaccountable government, a patronage machine funded by Venezuelan capital that is independent of the State budget.⁵² In June 2009, Nicaragua's central bank released figures on Venezuelan aid; between 2007 and 2008, it increased from \$185 million to \$457 million. Ortega has refused to transfer these funds into the annual State budget.⁵³

Two other crucial institutions, that is, the judiciary and the national police, have thus also been attenuated as far as autonomy vis-à-vis personalistic politics. In the judicial realm, corruption and the use of law for political purposes to intimidate and blackmail are threatening the integrity of an independent judiciary. Very recently, in open violation of the Constitution, which forbids the re-election of the President in office, one

⁵² Marifeli Perez-Stable, "Nicaragua's Strategic Culture," paper prepared for Nicaragua Strategic Culture Workshop (Miami: FIU-ARC, Dec. 2009).

⁵³ "Ortega Inaugurates CPCs," *Ibid.*, December 2007; James C. McKinley Jr., "Nicaraguan Council Stir Fear of Dictatorship," *New York Times*, May 4, 2008; "US Cuts MCC Aid; Venezuela to the Rescue," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 18, 2009, 14-15.

of the chambers of the Supreme Court of Justice, controlled by Orteguista judges, issued a ruling authorizing the registration of the presidential candidacy of Ortega for the 2011 elections (and the Electoral Council, also controlled by Ortega loyalists, accepted the Court's ruling).⁵⁴

The police have been subjected to conflicts of interest due to the current administration's efforts to politicize the State's security forces. The adherents of "Orteganism" have readily resorted to the old way of conducting politics, that is, through the use of extra-institutional force, such as street violence and the appropriation of police powers like stopping the transit of people and cars in the streets and highways and requisition of vehicles.⁵⁵ Very recently, three High Commissioners of the National Police, one of them in uniform, actively participated in a political rally supporting Ortega's party, in violation of the Constitution and the law. In addition to the internal politicization of previously autonomous political, social, and legal institutions, externalities have once again become poignant in impacting domestic affairs and NSC.

Externalities in the 1980s involved foreign influence in the civil war that followed the revolution. The nature of the civil war in the 1980s was both external and internal. It was a war of aggression covertly and openly funded by the U.S., and at the same time a brutal civil war unleashed by the policies of the revolution which provoked a revolt from an important sector of the peasantry. This conflict had major international resonance within the context of the Cold War. The East-West confrontation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. strengthened traditional political patterns based on giving predominant weight to external factors. The counterrevolution was directly linked to CIA covert operations, and the civic opposition sought support from the Reagan-Bush administration and the U.S. Congress in Washington. Meanwhile, the government sided with the Socialist camp led by the U.S.S.R. and Cuba.

After 1990, given the great dependency of the Nicaraguan economy on foreign aid, the international factor remained a structural element that generated and continues to generate profound distortions in the balance of power and the prospects for genuine

⁵⁴ See Edmundo Jarquin, "Nicaragua: Notes on Political Culture," Paper prepared for *Nicaragua Strategic Culture Workshop* (Miami: FIU-ARC, December 2009).

⁵⁵ Carlos F. Chamorro, "Strategic Culture in Nicaragua: Notes on the Impact of the Revolution and the Transition to Democracy (1979-2009)," paper prepared for *Nicaragua Strategic Culture Workshop* (Miami: FIU-ARC, Dec. 2009).

political and economic development vis-à-vis implementation of liberalization policies. While the opposition nourishes the belief that external pressure and resources can be a substitute for its own weakness, the government's expectations of obtaining more resources becomes as incentive to transcend the limits of its own economic reality, defined by the national budget, and, in the worst case, to fund political voluntarism. The problem is compounded by the fiscal weakness of the State and its dependence on external resources to finance and augment the budget. This phenomenon has been present in all governments after 1990, and in present Nicaragua the government seeks reorientation of Nicaragua's axis of external dependence from the U.S. and Europe toward Hugo Chavez's Venezuela.

External interference in domestic politics continues to be the case, and remains a key factor in shaping NSC. The Ortega administration (and its limited base of support)⁵⁶ relies heavily on the financial aid provided by Venezuela. This practice of accepting aid that is explicitly premised on ideological affinity has spawned the creation of a loyal political base via a widespread network of patronage, and at the same time has given degrees of autonomy to the administration in relation to other sources of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in a country that critically depends on international support and cooperation. The support from Venezuela, according to an official report of the Central Bank of Nicaragua, totaled \$481 million in 2008, which is equivalent to one-third of the national budget, and almost 8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). To the extent that aid is managed outside the budget, out of the realm of public accountability and through a swarm of companies linked to the ruling family and its close circle of associates, Venezuelan aid not only becomes an indispensable basis for circumventing democratic notions of accountability, but also fuels corruption and adversely affects fragile democratic institutions. Ideology, propagated through non-democratic political processes of allocation and centralization of power, explicitly informs perceptions of security and NSC. With the advent of the Ortega administration, the traditional patterns of Nicaraguan political and Strategic Culture are being reproduced, and are reifying a Strategic Culture inherited from Nicaragua's tumultuous past.

⁵⁶ In 2006, Ortega won with 38% of votes, and all polls reveal that he has not expanded his political support base (Edmundo Jarquin).

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Cristina Eguizábal is the director of the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University. Before moving to Miami and joining FIU, she served as a program officer at the Ford Foundation, Mexico City office, working on Peace and Social Justice Issues. Her portfolio includes grants on peace, security and regional cooperation in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Western Hemisphere in general. From 1995-2003 she was a member of the Human Rights and International Cooperation unit at the Ford Foundation in New York. She has held research and teaching positions at the University of Costa Rica, University of Bordeaux, University of Miami, and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, and has served as advisor for regional projects at the Confederacy of Central American Universities, the Central American Institute for Public Administration, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations University (UNU). In Costa Rica, she was a senior fellow at the Center for Peace and Reconciliation at the Arias Foundation working on issues of negotiations, elections, civil military relations, international cooperation and human rights. Dr. Eguizabal is a member of the editorial board of *Foreign Affairs en Español*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Mexican Council on International Affairs (COMEXI). She holds a Ph.D. in Latin American Studies from the University of Paris-Sorbonne-Nouvelle.

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