

The Preservation of the Monroe Doctrine and the Cold War: Nicaragua and the United States A Historical Survey of U.S.-Nicaraguan Relations throughout the 20th Century into the Present Day.

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I. Introduction

As the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Nicaragua is delicately poised between the struggle of centuries-old revolutionary inclinations and contemporary attempts to participate on the world stage. The introduction of the Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century heightened the involvement of the United States in Latin America. Throughout the 20th century, the Somoza dictatorship ruled Nicaragua from a hardline anti-communist stance that cooperated with U.S. foreign policy and intelligence work in the region. With the collapse of the dictatorship in 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) came to power. Despite initial efforts by the United States to establish diplomatic relations with the new government, the Sandinista Front welcomed relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union. U.S. diplomatic efforts attempted to assuage these concerns with foreign aid and recognition for the new government. However, the Sandinista Front's support for the Leftist guerrilla movement in El Salvador ruptured relations with the U.S. and led to the termination of humanitarian assistance.

The Reagan administration sought to establish a new order of policy in Nicaragua through the Reagan Doctrine, which in many ways, brought about a continuation of the Monroe Doctrine suited to the demands of the Cold War. The efforts of this Doctrine included severed aid, a trade embargo, and U.S. military and financial support for the Contra movement, the right-wing militant group in opposition to the Sandinistas. As a result of these policies and the general political instability, Nicaragua erupted into a bloody civil war between the Sandinista Front and the Contras. During this time period, the Reagan administration spearheaded the global fight against communism. The Iran-Contra scandal effectively violated U.S. law by deceiving stakeholders and securing funds for the Contra movement. Despite U.S. assistance, the Contras were ultimately defeated, and free elections were held in 1990.

In November 2016, President Daniel Ortega of the FSLN party was re-elected for his fourth term, with long-lived grievances against the political elites stirring again. The country's shift to relations with China and Russia has heightened U.S. diplomatic concerns. Once again, the future of relations with Nicaragua remains uncertain.

II. The History of American Involvement in Nicaragua

Throughout Nicaragua's short history as an independent nation, the country has experienced tremendous struggles to establish itself as a democratic republic. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Nicaragua began in 1849, and were marked by periods of U.S. military intervention and armed conflict (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Central to the U.S. security concern was the preservation of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which stated that the U.S. would not tolerate European colonial involvement in the Western Hemisphere. For Nicaragua, the implementation of this doctrine included routine U.S. intervention aimed at maintaining stability in the region (Turner, 1987).

The rise of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua led to an increasingly complex relationship between the two nations in the 20th century. In the early 1930s, General Anastasio Somoza Garcia became the first director of the Nicaraguan National Guard. During this time, the most definitive figure of Nicaraguan socialism and identity in modern standards, General Augusto Sandino, led a guerilla war against the conservative regime backed by the U.S. government and supported militarily by deployed U.S. Marines. In 1934, the Nicaraguan National Guard assassinated Sandino, and Somoza gained the presidency through a coup two years later. By the time Somoza began his presidency, the U.S. was overwhelmed by foreign relations challenges and the Great Depression. The onset of the Cold War allowed Somoza to prove his

loyalty to U.S. interests in the region, leading to the renewal of policies favorable to the Monroe Doctrine.

In 1952, President Somoza Garcia arrived in Washington to discuss building stronger relations between the new nations in the post-WWII era. During this time, the CIA had begun to use covert missions as a way to assert U.S. influence against communism through a cost-effective and clandestine manner. The election of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, a suspected communist sympathizer, heightened U.S. intelligence concerns over the spread of communism in the region. When Somoza met with the CIA during his visit, he contended that if arms were provided to the Nicaraguan National Guard, Nicaragua would support the covert mission of a regime change. With Nicaraguan support, the CIA moved forward with the plan to dispose of President Arbenz and replace him with General Carlos Castillo Armas, a staunch anti-communist loyal to U.S. interests. Containing communism in Central America allowed the U.S. to focus on Vietnam and Cuba.

By the early 1970s, the U.S. had lost interest in the practicality of Nicaraguan democracy when Somoza's son, Anastasio Somoza DeBayle, overtook the presidency. President Somoza DeBayle ruled Nicaragua through the iron fist of the National Guard. Under his presidency, the most notable oppositional group, the Sandinista Front, began to grow, despite the perception that the United States supported the Somozas. The FSLN took its name from General Sandino, and used his legacy to convey their ideological guerrilla fight against the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship.

III. The Sandinista Revolution

On December 23, 1972, an earthquake devastated the capital city of Managua, killing 10,000 people and leaving another 250,000 people homeless (St. John, 1987). The United States and Mexico donated millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance aid. President Somoza DeBayle, along with his close allies, plundered much of the foreign aid to enrich themselves. During this time, opposition grew substantially and the FSLN became more powerful as a guerrilla force. A conservative non-Marxist opposition, friendly to the United States, also began to grow but fell into disarray when, by early 1979, the United States had not convinced Somoza to step aside (Christian, 1987). As a result of this, ties developed between the Sandinistas and the conservative moderates to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship.

During the 1970s, three factions emerged from the FSLN: the Prolonged Popular War (GPP), the Proletarian Party, and the Terceristas, each with different approaches to political strategy and how to remove Somoza from power. While both the GPP and the Proletarian Party anticipated a prolonged struggle to overcoming oppression, the Terceristas advocated a broad-based coalition of all anti-Somoza forces, including business class elites (Sklar, 1988). Unifying these three factions would be instrumental in the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship and Sandinista victory.

In mid-July of 1979, President Somoza DeBayle surrendered the presidency and fled the country. His loyal supporters and members of the Nicaraguan National Guard fled to Honduras, El Salvador and the United States. Following the collapse of the dictatorship, the FSLN set up a nine-person National Directorate with the appointment of three representatives from the three factions of the GPP, Proletarian Party and the Terceristas. The formation of the Directorate raised questions over the direction of Nicaragua's future. The main question, in light of the overwhelming political instability, was the pace and tactics of movement towards Marxist socialism (Tierney, 1982).

While the Sandinista military survived, the coalition force that once included conservatives and moderates in the Terceristas failed. Forces that worked together to oust the Somoza dictatorship soon deteriorated in the face of the new ruling Sandinista Front. The young political force that set out to unify Nicaragua would have to create new foreign relations policies towards the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. Shortly after the inception of the new government, a new war would threaten the stability of Nicaragua- U.S. relations.

IV. Post-Somoza and a Young Democracy

In May 1980, the U.S. Congress approved \$75 million dollars of aid to Nicaragua with the requirement that Nicaragua not support terrorism or violence in other countries in the region (Turner, 1987). For Nicaragua, this amount was the largest donation of aid by any country or donor. The strict requirements forced the Directorate to examine and analyze what type of government Nicaragua would establish. There was competing pressure from Cuba, the United States, and the Soviet Union in the pursuit of establishing ideological influence through varying forms of aid.

To supplement the economic aid, Congress proposed a partnership through the Peace Corps, a program that aimed to establish a direct relationship between the two countries, while introducing American and U.S. democratic values to counter anti-Yankee rhetoric. The Peace Corps program failed to be implemented, while Cuban and Soviet doctors and teachers continued to operate in Nicaragua. By dispatching Soviet and Cuban professionals into the countryside, the FSLN perpetuated a sympathetic image of Marxist revolution from the bottom-up. The peasant farmer masses were glorified as the foundation of liberation and Marxist revolution.

During this time, U.S. intelligence reports indicated growing Nicaraguan support for Salvadoran Marxist guerrillas. The reports noted that massive amounts of arms, ammunition, and military equipment began arriving in Nicaragua from Vietnam and other communist states (Turner, 1987). The U.S. prioritized continued involvement in the region in order to establish control for fear of the region's shift towards communism. In the aftermath of Vietnam, U.S. intelligence policy was now focused increasingly on the conflicts in Latin America. The threat of Soviet involvement in the region led to U.S. uneasiness about Nicaragua's strengthened ties with Cuba and Central American Marxist groups. The U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo, met with Junta leaders Sergio Ramirez and Daniel Ortega to discuss evidence that showed FSLN aid being given to Salvadoran guerrilla forces. Pezzullo addressed U.S. concerns, and identified measures that Nicaragua would have to take in order to demonstrate their good faith and adherence to conditions of foreign aid (Pastor, 1987). Rather than resolve the issue, the Sandinista's resentment and opposition towards U.S. influence and involvement grew. Directorate and Junta leader Daniel Ortega remarked:

We have decided to defend our revolution by force of arms, even if we are crushed, and to take the war to the whole of Central America if that is the consequence... We have an historical prejudice towards the United States, because of that country's attitudes which makes us fear attack from it, and look for all possible means of defense. We are interested in seeing the guerrillas in El Salvador and Guatemala triumph, when we see that there is no good will in the United States towards us. (Pastor, 1987)

In the aftermath of these actions, the Carter administration suspended aid. Any further considerations regarding humanitarian assistance and the future of relations with Nicaragua would be left to the Reagan administration set to take office in January 1981. However, the Reagan administration's reluctance to reach new agreements and concessions with Nicaragua led to the eventual termination of foreign aid on April 1, 1981.

Additionally, the Reagan administration was effective in putting pressure on multilateral banks, including the World Bank, to reduce assistance. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) provided Nicaragua with \$193 million and the World Bank gave \$91 million between August 1979 and June 1981. From late 1981 to 1984, the IDB provided Nicaragua with just \$34 million, while the World Bank gave only \$16 million (Leogrande, 1996). The organizations declared that the decision to reduce aid was a result of Nicaragua's need for revitalization of their private sector. As a result of this policy, the Nicaraguan government faced serious constraints and debts.

The Reagan administration began to examine other possible options to address the Nicaraguan issue and its implications on U.S. national security policy. The new administration believed in taking greater action to prevent further communist gains in Central America. This approach was evidenced by growing hostility over severed diplomatic and financial ties for the Sandinista Front. The administration's efforts to push Nicaragua to its breaking point only reinforced the ideological struggle over Nicaragua's future as a free republic. Instead of countering that through diplomatic efforts, the Reagan administration worked to develop an alternative strategy: a covert mission that militarized and armed the opposition party in exile, the Contras.

V. Formation of the Contras and U.S. Military Aid

The moderate opposition that once unified itself with the Sandinistas in order to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship soon felt disenfranchised by the new Leftist rise. This group, along with old Nicaraguan National Guard members in exile, presented the United States with a separate option for establishing influence in the region and rebuilding relations. The many factions required military assistance, training, financial assistance and guidance on solidifying themselves into one united force against the Sandinista Front. To make this united force possible, the Reagan administration turned to the CIA to spearhead control of the operation. These early efforts were the beginning of the Reagan Doctrine, a policy of supporting anti-communist resistance movements against the Soviet Union's Marxist-Leninist satellites in the Third World (Leogrande, 1986). While U.S.-backed involvement in the region was once dictated by military intervention and the Monroe Doctrine, the modern world required policy plans of covert actions to address the Leftist ideological shift.

A declassified CIA report entitled "The Soviet Policy Toward Nicaragua" described important Soviet motives that strengthened America's response and involvement in Nicaragua. The CIA ascertained that Nicaragua's importance for Soviet policy in Latin America was second only to Cuba, and that military assistance to Nicaragua began in 1982. Soviet ideological support of Marxist-Leninist state rule, together with increasing amounts of aid, effectively shaped anti-Americanism and the buildup to protect that mission. The CIA concluded that, "It is conceivable, although we have no evidence for it, that the Soviet leadership itself views its support of the Sandinistas not only as a move to build Communism and extend Soviet influence in the Western Hemisphere, but also as a counterweight to U.S. assistance to insurgencies against Soviet clients elsewhere" (Directorate of National Intelligence, 1986). Soviet policy towards Nicaragua was viewed by the United States as an act of aggression to gain influence in the region, highlighting the importance of revitalizing the Monroe Doctrine through building relationships with forces in the region that were friendly towards U.S. interests.

VI. The Reagan Doctrine

The concept of the "Reagan Doctrine" describes the policy of the Reagan administration through which financial and operational support was given to anti-communist movements in an effort to defy Soviet-supported aggression. Rather than seeking to contain communist expansion, the Reagan doctrine worked within the John Foster Dulles' "roll-back" strategy, through which the United States would actively push back against the influence of the Soviet Union in various state and state actors (U.S. Department of State, 2009). The perpetuation of the Monroe Doctrine to prevent the influence of European powers in the Western Hemisphere, coupled with a strategy that took action against the Soviet Union, solidified the importance of Nicaragua in the region. To make that possible, the Reagan administration would face an uphill battle in seeking the funds necessary to implement this policy.

On November 17, 1981, President Reagan signed National Security Decision Directive 17, approving a \$19.95 million program to organize anti-Sandinista rebels against the Cuban-Sandinista support structure in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America (Morley & Petras, 1987). To complement this directive action, President Reagan signed an intelligence order directing the CIA to organize a team to begin operations against the Sandinistas (Pastor, 1987). The mission overshadowed the fact that Reagan still sought

diplomatic concessions with Nicaragua, in the hope that covert actions and militarization of the Contras would not be necessary. These efforts were led by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas O. Enders. Enders attempted a diplomatic initiative to reopen negotiations with Nicaragua, but his efforts were struck down by hardliners in the Reagan administration. National Security Adviser William Clark, Director of Central Intelligence William J. Casey, members of the NSC and the Defense Department, argued that negotiations with communists were futile and only useful to silence critics in Congress and the public (Scott, 1997). At the same time, the Sandinistas began campaigns that solidified a commitment to the ideological revolutionary state, much like what had occurred in Cuba.

Hardliners in the Department of Defense, CIA, and NSC sought the implementation of a trade embargo while the departments of State, Commerce, and Treasury ascertained that such measures would violate the Organization of American States and UN charters (Scott, 1997). Nicaragua relied heavily on trade as a means of economic development, investment, and livelihood.

The publicity of U.S. support for Nicaraguan rebel activity led to opposition from Congress. At first, this opposition was in the form of a proposal to prohibit the use of CIA funds in overthrowing the Nicaraguan government. However, in December 1982, Intelligence committee Chairman Edward Boland (D-MA) replaced the proposal with an amendment (Scott, 1997). The Boland Amendment aimed to limit governmental assistance to the Contras. Hardliners continued to block suggestions from Congress and the State Department that called for negotiations. The result was years of discord amongst the various agencies that fought over defining exactly what was occurring in Nicaragua, and what this meant for the future of stability in the region.

By July 1983, the administration's attempts to influence and persuade Congress into continued aid for the Contras had mixed results. The Boland Amendment barred funds for support of military or paramilitary activities in Nicaragua (Scott, 1997). While the House members voted to pass the Boland Amendment, the Senate did not pass the legislation. This allowed for the continuation of U.S. funds and Contra aid. However, the fight over aid questions continued, and President Reagan signed a resolution that included the Boland II Amendment. Boland II stated:

During Fiscal Year 1985, no funds available to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, or any other agency or entity involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose or which would have the effect of supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group, organization, movement or individual (Sobel, 1995).

The Reagan Doctrine and Contra aid brought up memories of Vietnam, and the casualties and wasted funds that failed to accomplish the mission of containing communism. The Reagan administration used the communist victories in Vietnam and Cuba to justify why Contra aid was necessary. Vying for power over the policy-making process in Nicaragua, the Reagan administration would seek alternatives in getting around the Boland II Amendment and securing the support to continue the Reagan Doctrine. The following table shows the breakdown of Congressionally-approved funds to the Contras from 1982-1990. Despite varying levels of assistance, the Contras were well supplemented by U.S. aid in both nonlethal and military financial assistance.

Fiscal Year	Total	Nonlethal	Military
1982	19	-	19
1983	29	-	29
1984	24	-	24
1985-1986	27	27	-
1986	13	13	-
1987	100	30	70
1988	32.9	32.9	-
1989	27	27	-
1989-1990	49.75	49.75	-
Totals	321.65	179.65	142

Source: Nina Serafino, "Contra Aid: Summary and Chronology of Major Congressional Actions" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Services, 1989), 17.

VII. The Iran-Contra Scandal

An initial strategy to circumvent Boland II was through the use of private and third-country donors. Private donors included wealthy U.S. citizens sympathetic to Reagan's Contra policy. The funds were donated through the tax-exempt foundation *The National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty* (Walsh, 1993). U.S. government personnel solicited third-country donor funds from Saudi Arabia, an unconstitutional and illegal course of action. While third-country assistance was cost-effective, survival of the Contras required greater financial support.

Beginning in 1984, the White House began a secret effort to procure additional aid for the Contras. Oliver North, a military aide for the NSC, was responsible for overseeing this task. North proposed the direct sale of arms to Iran with the proceeds to be given to the Contras in Nicaragua. The short-lived scheme did little to support the Contras; it is estimated that the Contras received only about \$2 million in aid from this policy, far less than the \$32 million in third-party aid that they received from Saudi Arabia (Brown University, n.d.). Despite such small gains in funds, the scandal shocked the world and embarrassed the Reagan administration. The efforts violated the Boland II Amendment and a Congressional Committee later investigated the abuse of power.

On November 26, 1986, President Reagan publicly announced the arms sales diversion scheme, leading to the creation of the Tower Commission. The Tower Commission examined the operations and role of the NSC in the Iran-Contra scandal, and criticized Reagan for his lack of awareness on behalf of his administrative staff. Congressional hearings and indictments of several key intelligence officials led to convictions, all of which were later pardoned by President George H.W. Bush.

In an effort to protect the Intelligence Community's role in global national security operations, President Bush created the statutory Inspector General of the CIA (IG) position in 1989. The IG is nominated by the President and is confirmed by the Senate to oversee the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in the management of CIA operations. The office of the IG is responsible for advancing the agency's mission in deterring fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement through working with the Department of Justice and other federal agencies (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2011).

The Iran-Contra scandal highlighted the extent to which the Reagan administration went in order to restore democratic order and influence in Nicaragua. The administration felt empowered to take the chance of committing illegal operations with the hubris of the Reagan Doctrine. The deeper history and connections

demonstrates the United States' unwavering commitment to the spread of democracy throughout the Latin American region.

VIII. Sandinista Victory

In 1987, the Sandinista Front signed peace agreements with the Contras, bringing the long civil war to an end. Soviet arms deliveries to Nicaragua came to an end in 1990 when Violeta Chamorro of the National Opposition Union (UNO) beat opponent Daniel Ortega of the FSLN to become President of Nicaragua. After decades of struggle, the FSLN succeeded power to the opposition, while the world watched with amazement. While tension between the two groups continued throughout the 1990s, national reconciliation efforts were successful to bridge the divide and move the country forward.

In 2006, Daniel Ortega of the FSLN was elected president of Nicaragua, and has been in power ever since. Municipal elections for local state governments were held in 2012, and Transparency International found evidence of fraud in 70 of 153 municipalities. As a result of those elections, the FSLN now controls 134 of the 153 city halls across the country (Rogers, 2012). Both of Ortega's presidential elections in 2006 and 2011, as well as the municipal victories in 2012, were denounced by the State Department as a setback to democracy in Nicaragua, undermining the ability of Nicaraguans to hold their government accountable (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2014). In 2014, the Sandinista-controlled General Assembly approved Ortega's constitutional amendment abolishing presidential term limits. On November 6, 2016, President Ortega was reelected with his running mate and wife, Rosario Murillo. Nicaragua continues to reinforce concerns in the region and the future of stability is dependent on continuing to build stronger relations between Latin America and the United States.

IX. Conclusion: The Future of Stability in Nicaragua

Nicaragua lies just south of the most dangerous criminal region in the world, the Northern Triangle of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Growing instability and crime have risen dramatically in these three countries and have created a policy crisis for Mexico and the United States. Unlike its northern neighbors, Nicaragua is less frequently referenced in America's public diplomatic efforts to address drug trafficking, illegal immigration and public safety. However, Nicaragua has, and will remain, an element of concern in America's sphere of influence.

Despite consistent diplomatic relations with the United States since the conclusion of the Nicaraguan Civil War, President Ortega has developed stronger relations with China, Russia, Venezuela and Iran. Growing tensions among the United States, Russia and China can be felt in Nicaragua. A Chinese billionaire proposed the project of the Nicaraguan Canal in 2013. The canal would cut through delicate environmental regions and indigenous lands. There has been strong opposition and pushback from Nicaraguan citizens and social justice groups, citing environmental and human rights concerns. As of this year, construction still has not begun on the canal, calling into question the validity of any future Chinese cooperation. The supporters of the project hope it will increase FSLN support, but it has only fueled anti-Sandinista tension instead. The United States is losing some of the influence it once held in Latin America, and Russia is eager to become involved in the region.

Over the last decade, Russia has enjoyed a relationship with Venezuela through the sale of arms and military contracts. Recently, Russia has begun to cement a similar relationship with Nicaragua. In May, Russia shipped several battle tanks to Nicaragua and began talks over a proposed Russian airfield on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. The possibility of Russia flexing their strength as a global power, while gaining military access to Nicaragua, could bring new focus to the region. Nicaragua will remain an element of concern in the United States' sphere of influence especially with Daniel Ortega as president indefinitely.

The maintenance of the Sandino ideology has fostered important relationships among similarly-governed

countries in Latin America, including Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In terms of fiscal support, the most significant of these diplomatic relations is that with Venezuela. Nicaragua has enjoyed a stable level of foreign aid from Venezuela's state-owned oil fund. This aid led to the creation of ALBANISA (ALBA de Nicaragua, South America) managed directly by the FSLN's treasurer, Francisco Lopez Centeno ("Daniel Ortega", 2016). At its height in 2012, ALBANISA's total holdings were totaled at more than \$728.7 million (*Stratfor*, 2015). Total foreign aid contributions over the course of nine years are estimated at around \$3.5 billion dollars, as revealed in a special report from the Nicaraguan newspaper *Confidencial*, citing 1207 leaked documents from ALBANISA (Olivares, 2016). The aid is critical to Ortega's social programs and public transportation for the Nicaraguan people. However, with Venezuela's economy in decline, significant cuts have been made to foreign aid. In the first half of 2015, aid to Nicaragua was decreased by almost a quarter to about \$193 million, a reduction that could have serious political implications for the future of Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista party (*Stratfor*, 2015). The importance of Nicaragua's simultaneous membership in the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which includes trade provisions with the United States, suggests a thin line between Ortega's pronounced discontent for America's "imperialism" and the pragmatic acceptance of American governmental foreign aid and investment.

Ortega is in a delicate position as a former guerrilla fighter who now holds the presidency in a country aligning itself with despots as corrupt as those he fought against. If the FSLN continues to operate in a fashion similar to the dictatorship that they once overthrew, the threat of a new revolution lingers. In addition to deepening corruption in the political realm, rumors have surfaced of former Contra groups reestablishing their traditional rural strongholds of Jinotega and Nueva Guinea. The government denies that politically motivated rebels exist, stating instead that "criminal groups" are responsible for recent killings such as the 2014 attack on Sandinista supporters, when five people were killed and 19 wounded by masked assailants machine-gunning a bus returning from an FSLN rally (Robles, 2016). In February 2010, former Contra leader Jose Gabriel Garmendia was mysteriously murdered two weeks after he posted a video denouncing Ortega's bid for reelection and declaring that he had taken up arms against the government. Since Garmendia's death, anti-Sandinista groups, including the Armed Forces of National Salvation and the Democratic Force Commander 3-80, have pledged to "use bullets" if Ortega stays in power (Pachico, 2011). The existence of anti-FSLN factions in Nicaragua could prove dangerous to the Ortega's presidency in the years to come. Additionally, the growing threat of instability in Latin America reinforces the need for U.S. involvement in the region.

President Ortega's need to subdue the threat of oppositional groups could lead to increased cooperation and involvement with Russia. Russia's arms sales and military talks with Nicaragua in the last year brings back memories of Soviet military aid during the 1980s. With a new U.S. President, the future of national security policy in Latin America will be tested. Nicaragua's proximity to the United States and the question of great power alliances must be addressed by U.S. foreign policy in an effort to develop stronger regional diplomatic relations and ensure the future stability of the region.

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