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The Left and the Situation in Nicaragua: A Latin American Debt

The change of governments in Brazil and Colombia, the position of López Obrador, in Mexico, or Alberto Fernández, in Argentina, are an important basis for the coordination of these policies. The political parties of the South need to be present in Central America.



A [report by USAID subcontractor Chemonics International Inc.](#) evaluates the results of various programs developed in Nicaragua between April 2013 and February 2018. Its 61 pages define the objectives and results of the various support programs for 17 Nicaraguan civil society organizations.

Among the objectives of the programme was to strengthen the capacity of these organizations "to better defend the demands of citizens through the civil society capacity building project".

The aim was to provide USAID with useful information so that key organizations – which were already receiving resources from [this](#) US agency for activities that the project calls "*democracy and governance*" – could better achieve their common objectives.

It was intended to increase the work of NGOs to raise awareness and mobilize citizens; "*increase the coordination capacity of NGOs and individuals, the private sector and the media to promote awareness, advocacy and activism*".



The project aimed to strengthen communication capacities, especially creating "*digital media tools*".

We would see later the content of these awareness and activism campaigns. The document specifies some beneficiary organizations, conducting workshops with journalists and human rights groups, particularly important for what it describes as *Nicaragua's "challenging political context."*

The participants "learned to encrypt information on their cell phones, computers and other equipment to prevent cyber attacks and the manipulation of their communication devices or websites with important information for Nicaraguans."

The program's resources also gave NGOs a greater capacity to "*raise grievances and develop specific actions of demands.*"

A multimillion-dollar interference

The document we refer to is not the only one on USAID's activities in Nicaragua.

[The USAID website](#) reads that "*the U.S. government has provided nearly \$2.5 billion in development assistance to Nicaragua, primarily through AID,*" since its establishment in 1962.



The Biden government, while maintaining sanctions against Nicaragua, continues with US interference through millionaire funds distributed through USAID to conservative sectors of opposition to Daniel Ortega's regime.

According to its current strategy, the definition of which can be viewed online, USAID *"provides training and technical assistance to civil society organizations on international standards and best practices to effectively vindicate democratic practices and human rights."*

Of the 2.5 billion dollars that the agency invested in Nicaragua, 507 million were used in *"efforts to stabilize the economy, to face growing inflation, and the payment of debts with multilateral institutions,"* in addition to 36.3 million invested *"in employment generation programs"* in the 90s.



Daniel Ortega has shown a tough hand against his opponents, the vast majority of whom are financed by Washington.

It should be remembered that on April 25, 1990, President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro took office, elected after years of war organized and financed by the United States against the Sandinista government.

Celebrated in the midst of the chaos caused by the military intervention, with the economy affected by economic sanctions, the Sandinistas had no chance of victory, if we consider, in addition, that the US government had promised to continue the war if that happened.

In short, the United States dedicated millions of dollars to fight the Sandinista Revolution in the 80s, to cause chaos in its economy, including the resources of the scandal known as "[Iran-contras](#)", to then contribute another millions aimed at supporting the reconstruction plans of its allies.

How can we not recognize the responsibility of the United States in the economic chaos created in Nicaragua, which it then tried to solve with the little more than 540 million dollars, which proved insufficient to reorder the country's economy, as has become evident if we see the results 30 years after that intervention?

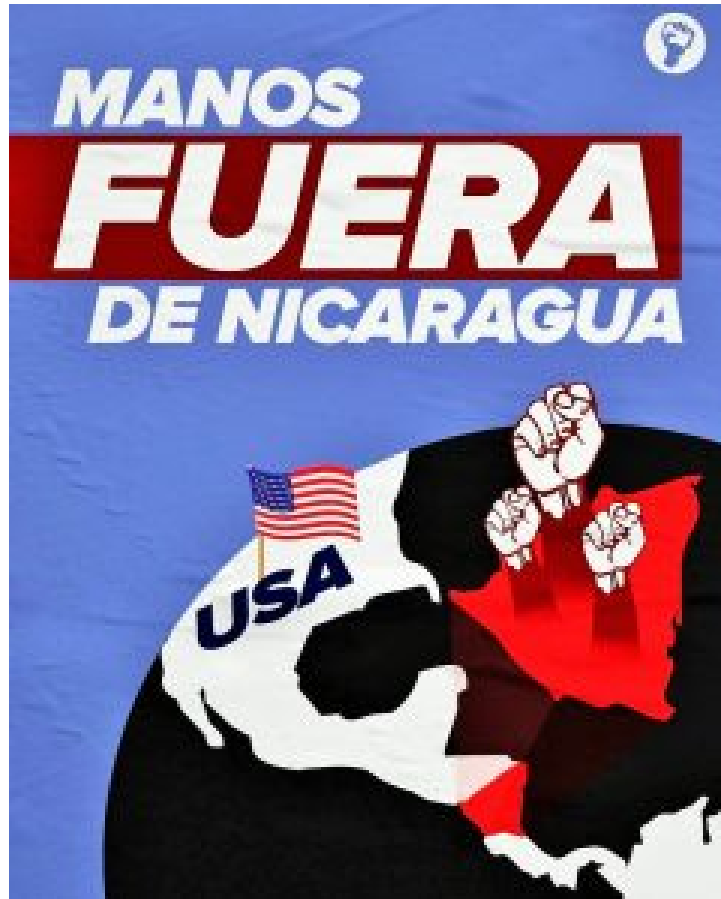


The special interests in a possible interoceanic canal through Nicaragua, in competition with that of Panama, made U.S. military interventions in Nicaragua a common policy. As a consequence, resistance to this intervention acquired particular relevance with the rebellion of [General Augusto César Sandino](#), assassinated in February 1934 by the Nicaraguan political and military forces installed in power by Washington.

Since then, Nicaraguan politics has been unable to find a scenario where Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas can confront each other, without US intervention unbalancing what should be a "*normal*" political dispute over different visions of the country.

The massive intervention of the 80s gave rise to a new political stage, in which Sandinismo and anti-Sandinismo, blurred, have sought to rearrange themselves and survive; causing Sandinismo to split; that Daniel Ortega assumed power in successive elections, with the opposition increasingly cornered; until leading to the protests of 2018 and the repression that followed.

The division of Sandinismo in the period following the electoral defeat of February 1990 is one of the events that contributed to the development of the current political order in the country. The imprisonment, exile, expropriation, withdrawal of nationality of prominent leaders of the Sandinista revolution of the 80s can only be seen as the failure of a process that then managed to bring together a majority will in support of the revolutionary process.



Knowing the programs and resources made available to the opposition by USAID, reviewing its objectives and the period of development of those programs (2013-2018), [to think that the protests of April 2018 were a spontaneous rebellion is, at least, naïve.](#)

The opposition came out to overthrow the government and the government responded by killing and imprisoning opponents. As elsewhere in the world, another Maidan, another color revolution, generated a confrontation that a development without such interference could perhaps have avoided.

The refreshing air of Latin America

It is in this context that the Nicaraguan opposition develops an intense campaign to undermine the support of the Latin American "left" for Ortega. That campaign – entitled "*The Latin American left with its back to the dictatorship*" – is organized by digital media of the Nicaraguan opposition.

Such a campaign could offer the Latin American left an alternative to the [Ortega government](#). But he merely argues that Ortega's government is not "*leftist*." It would be logical to think then that the "*left*" is in opposition. But that's not the case.



Given the dismantling of the opposition, its inability to organize within the country due to government repression, that opposition is defined or united behind the objective of deposing the government. But it is practically impossible to find an explicit vision of the country they intend to build, the economic order they intend to organize, of their vision of the international scenario.

Under these conditions, one way to glimpse the political character of this opposition is to review the positions of the opposition presidential candidates in the last elections, all of them imprisoned and then extradited and expropriated by Ortega. A real chaos, applied with unacceptable cruelty. In that opposition there is nothing that can be described as "*left*", as the media campaign might suggest.

The Latin American "*left*" is caught up in this game. Between those who support Ortega to the letter and those who consider any support for his government unthinkable, an almost disappeared shortcut has been hidden by the forest. A shortcut that takes us to the Central American house, where it is necessary to open two windows: one to let out the suffocating air of Washington. Another, so that the refreshing air of Latin America enters.

New realities

45 years ago it was unthinkable that Latin America could extend its interests to a region subjected for more than a century to American influence and interests, born not only of geographical proximity but, mainly, of a strategic location, capable of facilitating the transit between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Today, not only is the situation different, but it is in rapid and profound change. In the new world order, a greater Latin American political presence in the region seems possible and necessary. Asked about the situation in Nicaragua, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said he was not very informed. It no longer seems like a reasonable answer.

The U.S. policy of unilateral sanctions against Latin American countries, whose main expression is that imposed for more than 60 years on Cuba, is unacceptable, despite the practically unanimous rejection, year after year, of the United Nations General Assembly.

It would be completely inconvenient for Latin America to see a Nicaraguan government that, in case of victory of the opposition, would join this policy of sanctions of Washington against countries of the region. But the Nicaraguan opposition does not speak publicly about such things, although it does so in private.

Just as important sectors of the Latin American left feel uncomfortable with the situation in Nicaragua, the opposition carefully avoids defining itself in the political scenario, which some of its representatives prefer to explain by saying that neither left nor right exists anymore. Naturally, the more conservative sectors, which lead the opposition, feel comfortable on the right.



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Central American chaos

It is clear that the century of U.S. intervention is no stranger to the inability of Central American countries to organize politically. Nor is it oblivious to its poverty and economic inequality, the foundation of the wealth of old American magnates, well described by the [Costa Rican essayist Vicente Sáenz](#) in his books, already in the first half of the last century.

Costa Rica is the exception in that chaos. But that has an explanation. From our point of view it was due to the work of a notable politician, [José Figueres Ferrer](#), the same one who, at the end of the 40s, abolished the National Army (something constantly remembered by politicians and academics), but who did something even more important: he nationalized the banks. That was the key to the country having resources to meet the demand of its population better than other countries in the region and to organize a political and administrative order that would better respond to those needs.

It is true, however, that since the beginning of the 80s, when the neoliberal model was making its way in the world and they tried to convince us that there was no alternative, a government that claimed to be of the same line as Figueres began a process of privatizations that, with resources from USAID, he pointed out, First, to nationalized banks. Over the next 40 years, that same party (the social-democratic National Liberation) consolidated the neoliberal path, including a campaign for the passage of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States based on a strategy known as the ["Memorandum of Fear."](#) Today, the country also feels that it has lost its way, that a certain order, sustained by a State concerned about the lives of its citizens, has gone, little by little, to bites, being disarmed.



Latin America's debt

If the unbalancing factor of politics in Central American countries, particularly in Nicaragua, is US intervention, it is true that the absence of Latin America has not only left the entire scenario available to Washington, but has also deprived Nicaraguan political sectors that do not feel comfortable with the current scenario of other options.

The new Brazilian government has chosen not to join in self-serving condemnations, the abusive use of the issue of "human rights", transformed into a political instrument thanks to provisions to which Washington never adhered, specially designed to put Latin Americans to fight. The Brazilian government has expressed its disagreement with measures such as extradition, expropriation and withdrawal of nationality from opposition leaders, but has wanted to leave a door open to dialogue. It is not enough to propose an alternative policy whose results will only be seen in the medium or long term. There is a developing situation that requires more urgent attention.



The change of governments in Brazil and Colombia, the position of López Obrador, in Mexico, or Alberto Fernández, in Argentina, are an important basis for the coordination of these policies. The political parties of the South need to be present in Central America.

A very conservative right, that of Piñera and Macri, of Calderón, and Fox, of Aznar and Rajoy [has come together to strengthen "freedom and democracy" in the region.](#)

It is inconceivable that Latin American politicians can meet with colleagues such as the [Spanish José María Aznar](#), precisely when it is [20 years since the invasion of Iraq](#), which [he justified by swearing to have evidence of weapons of mass destruction in the possession of Sadan Hussein](#). With its allies, it has the destruction of a country and hundreds of thousands of deaths to its credit.

It is these people who intend to defend "*freedom and democracy*" in the region. To confront them, we must propose a different vision and organize an alternative that responds to Latin American interests.

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