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Title: Necessity for Consistent and Understandable Engagement Policies with Non-State Actors

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Thesis: The U. S. must assume a more consistent and understandable engagement policy regarding non-state actors when transitioning to state actors when the basic tenets of U.S. objectives are met, namely capitalism, democracy and stability.

Discussion: How does a non-state actor, namely a recognized armed insurgent group, transition in the political realm from insurgent to a state actor in the context of U.S. foreign policy? The U.S. does not appear to have a cohesive comprehensive policy toward non-state actors during the transition phase of assuming the leadership role in a sovereign state. Non-state actors or groups exist throughout the world and are found in every country. Non-state groups exist in many forms and have very diverse ideologies and goals. Some non-state groups take up arms against the indigenous host government for a myriad of underlying root causes, but each of those armed groups each seek to affect a regime change in the state's government. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua provides a unique case study to look at a non-state actor transitioning to assumption of national ruling party and long-term U.S. policies. U.S. engagement in Nicaragua began as fledgling state as it gained its independence. The U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 and again from 1926 until 1933. The U.S. exercised hegemonic power in Nicaragua through maintaining the Somoza regimes with economic and military aid supporting U.S. aims. The basic tenets of democracy, capitalism, and human rights were ignored largely as U.S. policies empowered the corrupt Somoza regimes. The FSLN was created in 1961 and began operations against repressive Somoza forces. U.S. perceptions of the Sandinistas were juxtaposed with another closely held policy objective regarding containment of communism. The FSLN defeated Somoza and his repressive National Guard forces in 1979 and assumed the national leadership. U.S. policy towards the Sandinistas was consistently negative, but U.S. policy did not address the undercurrent of necessity creating the environment for Sandinista success. U.S. policies toward the Sandinistas ranged from overt opposition to covert hostility despite clear signs that domestic and international initiatives were well within the margin of U.S. acceptability. It was the inclusive wide-ranging political make-up of the FSLN was intolerable. The Nicaraguan presidency was peacefully transferred in 1990 and the FSLN maintained a significant presence in Nicaraguan politics and the government. Finally, sixteen years after turning over the presidency, Daniel Ortega was sworn in as the Nicaraguan President for his second term re-igniting the debate.

Conclusion: As the U.S. continues to exercise its hegemonic power around the world, it is imperative to formulate and execute a consistent and understandable engagement policy regarding non-state actors.

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Thesis Intro

How does a non-state actor, namely a recognized armed insurgent group, transition from insurgent to state actor? What are the steps necessary in the context of U.S. foreign policy? The U.S. does not appear to have any comprehensive policy toward non-state actors during the transition phase from violent actor to legitimate state leader. Non-state groups garner mixed support from the U.S. and this manifested itself in U.S. foreign policy and strategy. The U. S. must assume a more consistent and understandable engagement policy regarding non-state actors when transitioning to state actors when the basic tenets of U.S. objectives are met, namely capitalism, democracy and stability.

Non-state actors or groups exist throughout the world and are found in every country. Non-state groups exist in many forms and have very diverse ideologies and goals. Non-state groups take up arms against the indigenous host government for a myriad of underlying root causes, but each of those armed groups each seek to affect a regime change in the state's government. A small number of armed non-state groups actually achieve the desired end state and rise to power within the state. International government acceptance and recognition of non-state actors are essential to the survival of those groups, particularly when the group transitions from armed insurgent group to becoming a state actor. As a hegemonic superpower, the United States' recognition of the government of a sovereign nation is desired and considered crucial in the international arena. Many sovereign nations experienced regime changes or significant policy changes through the use of armed conflict, Nicaragua, Israel, and the Philippines to name a few.

The focus of this paper will be on the transition of the Sandinistas from armed group to legitimate political leaders of the Nicaraguan state. This case was chosen for

four essential reasons. First, the Sandinista case illustrates the complete lack of consistent U.S. policy toward non-state actors. Second, the case is beneficial from the recent historic value and that it remains current politically. Third, there is ample information available from contrasting perspectives. Finally, the case provides lessons learned.

Nicaraguan Political History

U.S. engagement began when Nicaragua was a fledgling state gaining its independence. From the onset, U.S. policy in Nicaragua lacked consistency and set the stage for continued U.S. political dominance, economic dependency, and armed intervention.

Nicaragua became an independent state in 1838 after incremental steps toward sovereignty. The first step was separation from the Spanish Empire in 1822, the second step from the Mexican Empire in 1823, and the final step from the Central American Federation in 1838.[1]

Nicaragua is still plagued by the legacy of the Spanish Empire's colonial period, 1522-1822. Nicaragua's indigenous population was decimated by Spanish conquest, disease, and the slave trade. "It appears that Spanish chroniclers and early historians were fairly accurate when they reported that an original native population of around a million was reduced to tens of thousands within a few decades."[2] Today, the population of Nicaragua is largely homogenous ethnically and tied to its Catholic faith and Spanish heritage culturally and linguistically. Further, the population is almost exclusively mestizo, a mixture of Spanish and Indian, and therefore little racial tension exists.[3]

Agricultural land, natural energy resources, timber, and minerals abound in Nicaragua. Nicaragua was a strong contender for the location of a transoceanic transit route. The route was to take advantage of the proximity of the many deep rivers and lakes that span the country the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean. The waterways were extensively used for commercial transportation from the earliest days of the colonial period and remain a viable possibility for a transisthmus transit route. Eventually, the waterway was constructed across the Isthmus of Panama, but the international interest and corresponding intervention remained a constant well into the twentieth century.[4]

Political rivalry within Nicaragua existed from the very early period of Spanish rule. Leon became the Liberal stronghold while Granada became the Conservative stronghold. The intercity rivalry played prominently in a crucial role in Nicaragua's post-colonial period and was amplified by foreign powers and the Catholic Church. The legacy of the rivalry between Leon and Grenada provides part of a foundation required to understand the Liberal and Conservative political alliances that remain in existence in 2008.[5]

The United States has a significant history of engagement and involvement in Nicaragua. In 1850, the U.S. protested British attempts to consolidate control over the Miskito Coast, a region the British essentially maintained as a protectorate. The British control measure was seizure of the region at the mouth of the San Juan River. The U.S. expansion to the Pacific coast and California gold rush intensified U.S. interests in Nicaragua as a potential transoceanic trade route. "In 1850, the U.S. and U.K. attempted to diffuse the potential for conflict by signing the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, in which both sides forswore any unilateral attempt to colonize Central America or to dominate any

transisthmus transit route."[6] Tension remained high between Britain and the United States in spite of the treaty.[7]

An armed group of Americans entered the Nicaraguan civil war in 1855. The Americans entered the conflict under a pact with Nicaraguan Liberals in Leon. William Walker led the group of American expatriots. After seizing Grenada, Walker implemented liberal investment strategies involving foreign investment and resource exploitation, and Walker formally assumed the presidency in June 1856. The U.S. government's apparent tacit approval of Walker caused serious alarm in Central America and in the United Kingdom. Tension culminated in 1857 when the U.S. backed dictator-president William Walker surrendered to a Central American coalition force financed by Britain.[8]

The early engagement era between the U.S. and Nicaragua demonstrated the lack of U.S. consistency in foreign policy towards the fledgling country. The U.S. was focusing on economic interests and expansion of U.S. influence within the region.[9]

Following Walker's ouster from Nicaragua in 1857, the country entered a period of relative peace and stability under conservative rule, which lasted until 1893. The Conservative government's ability to elect and transition power between presidents every four years without incident marked the period between 1857 and 1893. Liberal and Conservative dissidents overthrew the Conservative government in 1893 and within four months Jose Santos Zelaya assumed dictatorial powers. Zelaya staunchly promoted Nicaraguan economic modernization, secularization of the Nicaraguan society, separation of church and state, free education, and government investment in infrastructure. In spite of Zelaya's efforts, the U.S. assumed and maintained a position that vilified the Zelaya

regime. "Careful examination of the facts, however, reveals that this depiction has much less to do with the reality of Zelaya's rule than with official U.S. frustration and resentment over the Liberal dictator's stubborn defense of national and Central American interests in the face of burgeoning U.S. interference in the affairs of the region following the Spanish-American War."[10]

U.S. involvement in Nicaragua gained momentum in 1903 when Zelaya refused to grant U.S. canal-building rights. The U.S. sought sovereignty rights over Nicaraguan territory through a canal-building negotiation process. U.S. demands were unacceptable to Zelaya. The net result was a significant increase in friction between the U.S. and Zelaya. The U.S. made it clear to opponents of the regime that an overthrow of the Zelaya dictatorship would be viewed favorably. The overthrow occurred in 1909 after two detained Americans confessed to conducting mercenary activities and were subsequently executed in Nicaragua. The U.S. immediately severed diplomatic ties with the Zelaya regime and deployed troops to the region to ensure Zelaya's defeat. A pro-U.S. Conservative regime took the reigns of government in 1910 after defeating Madriz, Zelaya's appointed successor. Nicaragua was in shambles politically and ruined economically.[11]

Ultimately, the U.S. sent Marines to Nicaragua in 1912 to maintain the peace and protect U.S. lives and property. The Marines remained until 1925 and returned in again 1926 remaining until 1933. "During the first occupation, from 1912 to 1925, the United States ran Nicaraguan affairs through a series of Conservative presidents."[12] Most importantly, the U.S. secured exclusive canal-building rights under the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914. The terms of that treaty were disputed by El Salvador and Costa Rica on

grounds that that the treaty violated their respective sovereignty. The treat asserted utilization of Salvadoran and Costa Rican territory without compensation, but provisions were made to compensate Nicaragua. The Central American Court of Justice, a judicial body the U.S. helped to create, decided against the U.S. The U.S. chose to ignore the ruling of that court, which aided in the courts' ultimate demise. U.S. forces re-deployed in 1926 after Nicaraguan Conservatives requested assistance following a Liberal rebellion.[13]

U.S. diplomatic and military strategies and processes changed during the second period of occupation. Elections were held and Liberal candidates won the presidency in 1928 and again in 1932. The U.S. accepted election results without question largely due to the U.S. stronghold over the remainder of the Nicaraguan governmental power structure. Most significantly, U.S. forces trained indigenous military forces, known as the National Guard of Nicaragua, that would have a powerful impact on the country for the next four decades. "Washington had long felt that what Nicaragua really needed was an apolitical constabulary that could maintain stability and create a healthy environment for political and economic development."[14] As U.S. Marines departed, control and leadership of the National Guard, or *Guardia*, transferred to Anastasio Somoza Garcia, a Conservative English speaking politician. The second occupation also witnessed the rise of Augusto Cesar Sandino, a Liberal insurgent who led a long guerrilla campaign against government forces and the U.S. His trial and error method of warfare quickly led to the development of effective guerrilla hit and run tactics. Essentially the departure of U.S. forces witnessed the changing political environment culminating in Sandino's

assassination in 1934, *Guardia* stranglehold within the country, and Somoza's ascendancy to power as dictator in 1937.[15]

A summary of U.S. foreign policy during this era shows a continued lack of consistency with respect to the tenets of democracy. U.S. policy was a matter of increasing and protecting U.S. economic interests and exercising political dominance within Nicaragua.[16]

The Somoza Dynasties

U.S. policies toward Nicaragua during the period of the Somoza dynasties were consistent and understandable with respect to limited U.S. objectives at that period of time. The limited U.S. objectives did not include the basic U.S. ideals of democracy, capitalism, and human rights. The ascendancy of Anastasio Somoza Garcia marked a period in which the U.S. placed a priority on the stability of a ruling government as the primary foreign policy objective in Latin America. The U.S. exercised hegemonic power in Nicaragua through maintaining the Somoza regimes with economic and military aid supporting the U.S. aim of regime stability.

Anastasio Somoza Garcia's dictatorship lasted nineteen years by effectively consolidating power and adeptly maintaining strategic alliances. Somoza relied heavily on strong support from the *Guardia*, a campaign to continually woo the American political apparatus, and drafting and neutralizing internal political rivals. Somoza pursued developmentalist economic strategies. However, the economic strategies benefited only the Somoza family and political cronies. The citizens of Nicaragua realized very little economic benefit.

Somoza also maneuvered positions of power for his sons, Luis and Anastasio, effectively constructing the conditions for dynastic dictatorships after his death. Anastasio Somoza Debayle was appointed head of the *Guardia* in 1955. Luis Somoza Debayle was president of the Nicaraguan Congress at the time of his father's death and constitutionally empowered to assume the presidency in the event of an unexpected vacancy. Somoza was assassinated in 1956 and his sons acted immediately. Luis instantaneously assumed the presidency while Anastasio arrested and imprisoned all political opposition. Conditions for dynastic rule had been constructed by the elder Somoza and met by his sons.[17]

Luis Somoza Debayle was elected to the presidency in 1957 and officially ruled until 1963. Unofficially he maintained governmental control until his death in 1967 through puppet presidents. Luis effectively utilized the combination political-military apparatus built by his father to maintain power. Notably, he pursued a strategy of courting the U.S. by crafting reformative domestic policies to conform tightly with the U.S.-sponsored Alliance for Progress. Domestic policy agendas included public housing, education, social security, and agrarian reform. Luis attempted political reform by encouraging Liberal dissidents and increased civilian participation in government. The net result of the reforms was insignificant on the average and poor citizens. The Nicaraguan elites had a significant advantage as bureaucracy expanded and created jobs that were filled by elites. Democracy did not exist in Nicaragua and the economic divide between the elites and the poor was growing rapidly. The division between ruling elites and peasants created the conditions for armed groups to form and commence operations. It was a case of the rich elitists continuing to get richer and the poor were getting poorer

and the poor had no voice within government. "Not surprisingly, therefore, there were a number of attempts to overthrow the system through armed revolt."[18] One of the armed groups commencing operations in Nicaragua was the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN).[19]

Anastacio desired to consolidate power of the presidency and leadership of the *Guardia*. Luis Somoza strongly objected to his brother Anastasio's presidential aspirations. The first opportunity to assume the presidency presented itself in 1963. Luis thwarted his effort 1963 effort with a constitutional block, but was unable to enact another block in 1967. Luis died in 1967 just a few months before Anastacio was elected president in June. "The bloody suppression of a mass protest rally shortly before the election symbolized the end of an era of cosmetic liberalization and the return of cruder and harsher style of dictatorship."[20]

Anastasio Somoza's reliance on a strict foundation of military power vice a civilian political power base marked his regime in even more stark contrast to Luis. Systematically, *Guardia* officers replaced civilian government officials. The Somoza family fortune and network expanded as Anastasio and his cronies utilized public office for personal enrichment. "As the Nicaraguan economy expanded, so too, did the wealth of the Somoza family. They became the country's largest landowners and major investors in industries."[21] By 1970, government corruption was rampant and marginalization of the citizens continued unchecked.[22]

An earthquake leveled Managua in 1972, which exacerbated the already divisive economic conditions. The Somoza family and political elites funneled huge portions of international funds destined for relief efforts and reconstruction into personal and

business accounts. The citizens received very little benefit from the international efforts to provide relief. The economic gap continued to increase the ruling elites and Nicaraguan peasants.[23]

Attempts by Somoza to maintain control of the government were executed by political sleights of hand. Anastasio maintained power unoffically from 1972 until his re-election in 1974 through a puppet triumvirate under his direct control and by retaining command of the *Guardia*. Anastasio's second presidential term was to end in 1981 under the new constitutional mandate enacted by the triumvirate. Somoza's second term actually ended in 1979 as the Sandinista's wrestled control of the country.[24]

The strong and historic ties between the Somoza family and the elements of the U.S. government ensured Nicaragua maintained a perception of a stable state. The basic tenets of democracy, capitalism, and human rights were ignored largely as U.S. official policies empowered the corrupt Somoza regimes. Clear and understandable policy toward Nicaragua necessitated the incorporation of democratic reform, capitalist policies, and stability of the state. Finally, the U.S. government outreach efforts toward indigenous non-state organizations were non-existent during a period of great change.

The Sandinista Movement (1961-1990)

The U.S. also failed to engage the Sandinista movement in the eighteen years (1961-1979) of operations against the Somoza regimes. U.S. perceptions of the Sandinistas were juxtaposed with another closely held policy objective-containment of communism. U.S. policy towards the Sandinistas was consistently negative. U.S. policy did not address the undercurrent of economic and political necessity in Nicaragua. This

economic and political necessity provided an environment for Sandinista success. The people's needs included economic opportunity and equanimity and political freedom. The solutions to those needs were encapsulated by the words and views of the Nicaraguan nationalist, Augusto Cesar Sandino.

The Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN), or Sandinista Front of National Liberation, founded in 1961, takes its name from the slain Nicaraguan freedom fighter and national hero, Augusto Cesar Sandino. Sandino's guerrilla tactics, sociopolitical objectives, and nationalist rhetoric were the inspiration and foundation of the indigenous Nicaraguan movement.[25]

Augusto Cesar Sandino fought the U.S. Marines stationed in his country from 1926 to 1933.[26] His ideas and action garnered notoriety throughout Latin America and as far away as Asia. Labeled a communist and rebel by the U.S., Sandino technically was neither. After self-imposed exile in 1921, Sandino lived in Mexico from 1923 to 1926 and associated with communist and revolutionary ideologues operating there. Logically, Sandino incorporated some of the revolutionary vernacular and perspective into his own view and rhetoric, but he was a known spiritualist and therefore doctrinally not a Marxist. Class struggle and warfare were not primary motivators for Sandino. "In general, all Sandino's most passionate utterances, all those that are treasured by contemporary Sandinistas, are expressions of exalted nationalism."[27]

Sandino led a long guerrilla campaign against the U.S. and supporting Nicaraguan government forces in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Insurgent operations ceased immediately upon the withdrawal of U.S. Marines from Nicaragua in 1933. Sandino was captured and subsequently assassinated by the pro-U.S. National Guard in February 1934

after he dined with President Juan Bautista Sacas, the very moderate Nicaraguan president.[28]

Sandino became a Nicaraguan folk hero after his death. Sandino admirers and supportes liberally altered some of the basic facts about his life to support their ideology. For example, Sandino was known to be an animist, but purported ideas embraced by most monotheistic religions. Christian supporters skewed this information to insinuate Sandino assassination truncated his transition to Christianity. Sandino's folk legend status grew in the decades as the roots of Nicaraguan nationalism continued to grow. The repressive Somoza regimes acted as a fertilizer to the nationalist roots.[29]

Carlos Fonseca, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomas Borge founded the Sandinista movement and previously been members of the pro-Soviet Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) prior to 1961. "For these young Nicaraguans, this old Communist party was too Stalinist in organization and too subservient to the Soviet policy of 'peaceful coexistence,' which in Latin America often meant the docile acceptance of pro-U.S. dictatorships."[30] The Sandinistas aim was to create a truly indigenous Nicaraguan revolutionary movement in the tradition of Sandino.[31]

The Sandinista movement's creation and subsequent operations against the Somoza regime resulted from over thirty years of oppression by the three Somoza dictators. Morley notes, "Political revolution in Nicaragua was not the product of economic stagnation, underdevelopment, economic dependence, or the absence of capitalist production."[32] Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s Nicaragua enjoyed significant international investment, dynamic economic growth, and access to foreign capital, which benefited the regime and their families. Conversely, the working class and rural poor

experienced downward pressure on wages. Exports were the foundation of economic growth and fueled not only the state economy, but also lined the coffers of the expanding Somoza family fortune. The economic disparity between the ruling clique and working class and peasants increased dramatically during the country's economic boom.[33]

Early operations by the Sandinistas were relatively unsuccessful. The FSLN, based in Managua after inception, attempted to replicate Sandino guerrilla tactics, which ultimately proved disastrous. After a major defeat at the hands of *Guardia* forces at Pancasan, the Sandinistas assumed a posture of "accumulation of force in silence."[34] The posture's focus was organization of the rural peasants and urban poor in an environment outside the purview of the *Guardia*. The Sandinistas shifted operations into the countryside and cities of Masaya, Grenada, Carazo, and Rivas. Popular support for the Sandinistas by the peasantry increased steadily and Sandinistas received food and shelter within the countryside.[35]

Guerilla warfare operations resumed in 1974 with the successful kidnapping and ransom of a group of Nicaraguan elites in Managua attending a party for the outgoing U.S. Ambassador, Shelton. Somoza responded to the kidnapping with imposition of martial law and deployment of *Guardia* forces into the countryside to locate and destroy Sandinista forces. Ultimately, *Guardia* forces were given free reign of the operation, which culminated in extensive destruction, rape, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, and summary executions. "To deprive the FSLN of support, eighty percent of the rural population was uprooted and herded into resettlement camps. The countryside then became a free-fire zone."[36] These atrocities were conducted within areas shepherded by Catholic missionaries and clergy who reported the carnage to the Catholic Leadership and

international community. The Catholic Church denounced the Somoza regime's actions. The U.S. government remained surprisingly silent.[37]

The public face of the FSNL in 1979 showed an ideologically diverse coalition, which included three major subgroups, the Terceristas, the Prolonged People's War Tendency (GPP), and the Proletarian Tendency (TP). The coalition was extremely important in terms of organization, recruiting, establishing goals, international outreach, and post-Somoza governmental cooperation. "The FSLN was also the best organized political group in the nation, perhaps the only one with the capacity to mobilize mass popular support."[38]

The Terceristas were the largest and more moderate arm of the FSLN. Many of its members were social democrats committed to a democratic movement within Nicaragua. Terceristas planned and executed the most notorious operations which propelled them to becoming the most commonly known FSLN faction. "Of all the FSLN factions the Terceristas were considered the most likely to uphold the moderate program of the provisional government, endorse gradual change, and pursue an electoral road to socialism."[39] This proved to be an opportunity lost for the U.S. as it failed to capitalize on the moderate democratic tendencies within the Tercerista faction.[40]

The GPP and TP were strongly aligned with Marxist doctrine and were critical to the explosive expansion of the support base throughout Nicaragua. The explosive expansion was a direct result of the *Guardia's* retaliatory campaign against the FSLN, which included torture, forced resettlement, and mass execution. "The war brought thousands of new recruits to both factions."[41] The GPP operated and recruited amongst the peasants in the northern rural areas. The TP concentrated operations and recruiting

within urban areas. The union of rural and urban membership within the FSLN structure lent popular legitimacy and credibility to the movement.[42]

The Sandinistas relied primarily on Cuba for military weaponry and financial sponsorship beginning in the 1960s. Cuba and Nicaragua shared a common history of Spanish colonialism, intense intervention by the U.S., and considerable economic disparity between the elites and peasants enable by a repressive regime. The ties between Nicaragua and Cuba were largely a manifestation of need. Nicaragua was devastated by years of severe fighting. The U.S. refused to provide aid and blocked other governments from providing aid. Cuba was incapable of shouldering the burden of the Nicaraguan movement alone or for the long-term financial obligations. It relied on its primary benefactor, the Soviet Union.[43]

The Soviet Union did not desire to underwrite another country in the same manner as Cuba. Nicaragua posed a significantly different set of constraints for the Soviets. Nicaragua's geography and political boundaries presented a significant risk for counter-revolutionary attacks. Economically by 1974, the Soviet economy was on the verge of implosion and it could not absorb or sustain the Nicaraguan reconstruction requirements. Finally, the will of the Soviets did not support serious involvement in Nicaragua. The Soviets were embroiled in the war in Afghanistan, and by the mid 1980s, Soviet funding had dried up, which equivocally meant Cuba was unable to support Nicaragua either.[44]

The Sandinistas suffered from significant logistics and arms shortfalls throughout the 1960s and 1970s, up to the Final Offensive of 1979. Cuba funneled a limited number of arms to the Sandinistas through Honduras to support Sandinista efforts. Large-scale popular support for the Sandinistas carried the day. "When teenagers in Nicaraguas cities

held off the National Guard with hunting rifles, they called themselves Sandinistas, and when victory was won, the cheers and banners which filled Managua were the slogans and emblems of the FSLN."[45]

Cuba sent military, medical, and education advisors in 1979 when the Sandinistas successfully pressed the Somoza regime into exile. "Both before and after the victory, Fidel Castro advised the Nicaraguans to preserve a private sector and retain good relations with the United States."[46] The strength of the bond between the Sandinistas and Cuba were extremely problematic and directly shaped U.S. policy towards the new Nicaraguan government.[47]

U.S. policies toward the Sandinistas between 1979 and 1990 ranged from overt opposition to covert hostility and were consistently negative. While the Sandinistas were known to incorporate membership from a wide political spectrum, the U.S. narrowly focused on the Marxist elements and crafted policies to reflect disapproval. Many Sandinista programs encompassed significant progress towards a healthier capitalist economy, emphasis on human rights, democratic reform, and inclusion in the international community. Seemingly all of these initiatives are aligned with U.S. ideals and would garner an understandable engagement policy from the U.S., but that was not the case.[48]

U.S. Policies: The Somoza Regime and the Sandinistas

U.S. policies toward Nicaragua and the Somoza did not waiver during the insurgency and subsequent ouster of Somoza in 1979. However, U.S. policy towards the Sandinistas did not change during the same period. Every U.S. president prior to Carter

supported the Somoza oligarchic dynasty in order to keep communism away from the Americas. The Somoza dictators nurtured strong U.S. political and economic ties and were staunch anti-Communists. The anti-Communist stance was critically important to U.S. strategic interests in the midst of the Cold War. "From the late 1940s to the 1970s American presidents regarded the implacably anti-communist Somoza regime as a valued sub-regional ally and pursued policies that assured the consolidation and longevity of the Nicaraguan dynasty."[49] Cuba's revolution and installation of a Communist regime in the Western Hemisphere proved to be a black eye to American foreign policy. The blight of Communism in the virtual backyard of the U.S. was not desired nor to be tolerated and U.S. foreign and economic policies reflected that premise. The stance and associated polities had a profound impact on Nicaragua and the fledgling Sandinista government. Key U.S. legislative officials, lobbying efforts, and a cohesive U.S. public relations campaign reinforced the Somoza regime legitimacy in America.[50] The U.S. turned a blind eye toward the suppressive policies of the Somozas for decades and provided key military support, aide, and training to the *Guardia*. The *Guardia* were the strong arms of the regime and maintained Somoza dictators in power, without which the dictatorship's demise was assured.[51]

The U.S. policies toward the Sandinistas during the insurgency were overtly hostile. "In the decade prior to Somoza's overthrow, Pentagon largesse reached new heights. Between 1968 and 1978, Nicaragua was the largest per capita recipient of U.S. military assistance in Latin America."[52] U.S. hostilities were a result of the inclusion of Marxist elements within the FSLN membership. The Sandinistas did not hide the Marxist elements and incorporated some of the Marxist rhetoric in its ideology. The U.S.

maintained a strong policy of a communist containment, which denied aid or outreach to the Sandinistas. The policies reinforced support to Somoza's regime.

Three different American administrations developed and implemented vastly dissimilar foreign policy during the ten-year period leading up to Somoza's ouster. Those were the administrations of Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, and Jimmy Carter. An additional two administrations were involved after the revolution. Those were the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.[53]

The administration of Richard M. Nixon executed a "low profile" policy within Latin America. Essentially Latin American regimes allied to the U.S. that were threatened by civilian political or military challenges received covert financing, public economic aid, military assistance and training. The purpose was to maintain the regime in an effort to maintain regional stability and U.S. hegemony. Allegations of human rights violations, political repression, or issues of morality were not seriously considered. Nixon considered Somoza a valued ally. Unwavering political, military, and economic support to Somoza were considered essential. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger led the effort to maintain U.S. hegemony and low profile relations with Latin American.[54]

After Nixon resigned in August 1974, the administration of Gerald R. Ford instituted a policy of distancing U.S. government officials from Somoza. The policies were intended to brush aside overt attempts to court the U.S. President, Vice-President, and senior State Department officials. "The State Department was particularly concerned and sought to deny the Nicaraguan leader any opportunity to exploit the bilateral relationship for his own domestic or regional purposes."[55] The Ford administration officials recognized Somoza's political base was beginning to decay and internal conflict

within the *Guardia* jeopardized the regime. Distancing American leadership from Somoza was intended to encourage moderate anti-Somoza opposition. Conversely, U.S. economic and military ties did not waiver.[56]

President Ford retained Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State. Kissinger refused to contemplate any policy changes regarding Nicaragua or Somoza. Kissinger strongly contended there was no tie between human rights and U.S. policy.[57]

Somoza was a U.S. Military Academy graduate. Somoza used that fact to vigorously maintain ties within the Department of Defense. Somoza's design was to continue portrayal of strong U.S. alignment and support. The Department of Defense remained Somoza's strongest voice and ally within the executive branch of the U.S. government. The executive branch was truly divided on handling Nicaragua during Ford's administration.[58]

The U.S. Congress was similarly divided on the question of Somoza, appropriate U.S. support to Nicaragua, and attention to human rights in Nicaragua. Influential members of the U.S. Congress were among Somoza's most ardent supporters and lobbied on his behalf. Somoza critics in the Ford administration remained reluctant to openly challenge powerful pro-Somoza legislators. Congress was increasingly focused on human rights violations throughout the Third World and passed the Harkin amendment in 1976. The Harkin amendment mandated the executive branch to halt all economic aid to governments guilty of gross and consistent human rights violations. "Irrespective of these Congressional demands for greater attention to human rights questions in the conduct of foreign policy, the overall Ford White House posture remained a mixture of

reluctant accommodation, subtle resistance, and outright rejection."[59] Kissinger remained steadfast in opposition to a confluence of morality and foreign policy.[60]

A complete disconnection within the administration complicated any chance of a cohesive U.S. policy with respect to Somoza. The disconnect was magnified by the alienation of the U.S. Ambassador in Nicaragua. Decisions regarding dispersal of military aid were made in Washington and leaked to the press. The press reports proved problematic because neither Somoza nor the ambassador was forewarned.[61]

Jimmy Carter campaigned in 1976 with a position elevating human rights to a central focus point within foreign policy. However, the transfer of the U.S. presidency in early 1977 did not equate to a significant shift in polity toward Nicaragua nor it's dictator. In essence, the aim of Carter's human rights policy required allies to gain greater control of their military and police forces and restrict the use of excessive force domestically. The human rights policy was selectively applied with surgical precision. Political and strategic sensitivities outweighed the promoting of human rights in most instances. Key U.S. regional allies were not included in economic sanctions when considering human rights. Iran was a prime example. Central America did not factor as a priority within the administration, but provided the administration with a low risk proving ground for the human rights policy. "The Carter approach toward Nicaragua and the other Central American dictatorships was symptomatic of a reluctance to translate human rights criticisms into measures prefiguring a fundamental change in bilateral ties."[62]

The executive branch was openly and deeply divided over Nicaragua during the Carter administration. The division within the State Department became the most

significantly divided. The State Department released a mixture of criticism of the *Guardia* interspersed with significant outpouring of economic and military aid to Nicaragua. The fractured application of policy did not provide a cohesive interlocking approach to policy or its application.[63]

The Carter administration's assumption was Somoza remained the U.S. point man in Nicaragua and would follow U.S. direction. The Carter administration believed reports received from Somoza's government. Policy decisions were made on the face falue of Somoza's reports. Somoza purported the FSLN threat was defeated. The presumption of FSLN defeat was dispelled in late 1977 as the situation in Nicaragua deteriorated rapidly. Somoza followed U.S. orders and direction as expected. The *Guardia* was ordered to cease oppressive offensive operations against the Sandinistas and peasant supporters. Somoza eased restrictions and allowed for a limited freedom of the press. The U.S. failed to recognize the resilience of the Sandinistas and the enormity of the popular support. The U.S. underestimated the compounded impact of providing civil and political liberties to a population starved for liberty and reduction of repressive policies. The confluence of events created an environment of increased destabilization in Nicaragua.[64]

Contrary to Carter administration estimates and reports, the Sandinistas were not defeated. An increasingly more diverse and moderate support base became progressively more vocal. The immediate U.S. countermeasure attempted a three-pronged approach to the Nicaraguan situation. The first was to downplay the human rights campaign. The second was to preserve the *Guardia* and the Nicaraguan elite while reaching out to the moderates. The third was outright obstruction of the Sandinistas from gaining any more

political support. The Carter administration desired a post-Somoza Nicaragua de-emphasizing the FSLN and pursued passage of foreign aid and military aide to the Somoza regime in excess of $18 million in fiscal year 1978. Ironically, Carter sent a letter to Somoza congratulating the dictator regarding his promises of human rights improvements.[65]

In January 1978, Nicaragua witnessed the assassination of Pedro Juaquin Chamorro, a prominent Nicaraguan opposition leader and newspaper publisher of *La Prensa*. The Carter administration failed to fully grasp the implications of the assassination or subsequent distancing of the Somoza regime and Nicaraguan elites. "Determined to bring an end to the dictatorship, a coalition of business, political, and labor leaders issued an immediate call for a general strike."[66] In Latin America, general strikes indicated the demise of reigning dictatorships and were the catalyst to toppling of the government. The strike did not manifest itself in the overthrow of Somoza, but did signify to the U.S. that the Somoza regime lacked legitimacy and was facing a broad based public and governmental dissatisfaction. The Sanidinistas capitalized on the failure of the strike by conducting two successful hit and run campaigns against the *Guardia.* The two successful Sandinista campaigns increased sympathies from the populous.[67]

Conditions continued to disintegrate during the summer of 1978 with the FSLN National Palace operation and subsequent massive urban uprising. "Extremely worried, the administrations promoted an Organization of American States (OAS) effort at mediation in which an attempt was made to get Somoza and representatives of the privileged elite to agree to a solution that would have removed Somoza, preserve the

Guardia and Somoza's Liberal party, and excluded the broad-based coalition led by the FSLN."[68] Clearly, support for the insurrection exploded in 1978 and 1979.[69]

The situation reached a culminating point during the summer of 1979 as the Sandinistas closed on Managua in its Final Offensive. The U.S. response was to implore the OAS to deploy peacekeepers to Nicaragua. The request was unanimously rejected and the U.S. was forced to drop all pretenses and recognize all diplomatic alternatives were exhausted. Once the realization Somoza's overthrow was imminent, the U.S. opened formal communications with the Sandinistas. "In sum, the role of the United States in the downfall of the Somoza system was entirely unwitting."[70] The Somoza dynasty ended abruptly on July 17, 1979 leaving the U.S. little choice except to begrudgingly accept the new regime as an estranged associate.[71]

The Sandinista Government

The Marxist origin of some of the Sandinista leadership caused dismay within Washington DC. The friendly country-to-country relationship between Nicaragua and Cuba exacerbated the dismay. The new Nicaraguan government remained leery of a U.S. sponsored counterrevolution. The U.S. maintained a strong Somoza-U.S. alliance and had a history of military intervention. Diplomatic tension was high between the two countries continued until the U.S. presidential election of 1980. Ronald Reagan defeated President Carter significantly changing the situation between Nicaragua and the U.S. [72]

Reagan was a staunch hard-line anti-Communist and was determined to eradicate Communism from the Americas. Reagan campaigned for strong anti-Sandinista policies. The U.S. president elect and many Latin American political forces began posturing in anticipation for post-inauguration policy shifts prior to Reagan's inauguration in 1981.

For Nicaragua, that included the immediate replacement of the U.S. ambassador in Managua, adoption of hostile U.S. policies toward Nicaragua, and significant military aid to El Salvador.

The military aid to El Salvador posed a very significant dilemma for Nicaragua. The Sandinistas were under pressure from Salvadoran revolutionary forces to increase the supply of arms shipments to mount a final offensive against the Salvadoran government prior to Reagan's inauguration. "Though the Sandinistas had turned a blind eye to the Salvadorans' use of Nicaragua as a way station in their own arms smuggling operations, the Nicaraguans had refrained from making a major commitment to the guerrillas in order to maintain their relationship with the United States."[73]

Policies were enacted rapidly after the change in office. "The Reagan administration immediately seized upon Central America as a perfect issue to which assert its new hard line foreign policy."[74] The administration believed defeat of Salvadoran insurgents was an intermediate step in rolling back communism in Central America. The decision to release economic aid to Nicaragua was postponed. U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo, was effectively cut out of the decision-making and information loops. Reagan hard-liners leaked the administration's decision to cut off all economic aid to Nicaragua without first notifying the State Department or Pezzullo. Pezzulo resigned his ambassadorship as a direct result. The Reagan administration utilized the full array of national power to try to coerce the government of Nicaragua.[75]

Diplomatically, the U.S. proposed signing a nonaggression pact in exchange for curtailing Nicaragua's military buildup and cessation of support to the Salvadoran

insurgents. The proposal was declined by Nicaragua, which was becoming increasingly alarmed by political and economic actions by the U.S. Mexican President Jose Lopez-Portillo and Venezuelan President Herrara Campins engaged Nicaragua and the U.S. in an attempt to reduce tensions. The U.S. stalled and impeded every effort to deal with the Sandinista regime. The totality of U.S. effort was the objective of removing the Sandinistas from power.[76]

Information campaigns launched by the Reagan administration were designed to denounce Nicaraguan regime as Marxist-Lennon dictatorship guilty of more heinous violations of human rights than the Somoza regime. The information campaigns targeted the U.S. citizens and the international community. The information campaigns were a coordinated effort of the President, various cabinet departments, and intelligence agencies. The U.S. goal was to utilize the information campaign to isolate Nicaragua from its neighbors and potential friends in Western Europe. "The rhetoric grew so intense Mexican president Jose Lopez-Portillo was moved to describe it as 'verbal terrorism' and to warn that a U.S. attack on Nicaragua would be a gigantic historical error."[77] Finally, the CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency conducted a joint intelligence press briefing in an identical fashion to the briefing the Kennedy era Cuban missile crisis. The brief was to depict Nicaraguan military build-ups beyond the levels required for normal defense. The briefing was to illustrate Cuban and Soviet involvement in Nicaragua and purport claims of Nicaraguan intent to aggressively use force against other Central American states. The briefing was perceived as very disingenuous because the briefing failed to provide compelling evidence of arms trafficking to El Salvador or new weaponry within Nicaragua itself. "The most ubiquitous photographic evidence was

'Cuban-style obstacle courses' at various Sandinista military bases."[78] The coordinated information operation ceased within days.[79]

The U.S. did not initiate overt offensive military action against the Sandinista regime. The U.S. increased military aid to El Salvador and Honduras coupled with significantly expanded presence operations in the region. The presence operations were to demonstrate overwhelming U.S. ability to project power and resolve. Presence operations included large-scale military exercises in neighboring Honduras and off the Nicaraguan coast.[80]

In a speech to the National Press Club in November 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger disclosed what became known as the Weinberger Doctrine. The Weinberger Doctrine was a list of points to be followed and in order to keep U.S. forces out of untenable military engagements. The administration approved expanded CIA intelligence gathering operations and covert paramilitary operations against Nicaragua. The covert paramilitary operations and funding proved divisive within the administration and U.S. Congress. The CIA paramilitary operations embroiled the administration in the Iran-Contra scandal.[81]

The Contras

The Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, or contras, operated in Honduras. The contras were former Somoza supports or *Guardia* members who sought to continue Somoza policies and style of government. The CIA funded and trained the contras for paramilitary operations against the Sandinistas.

Suspension of economic aid was imposed immediately upon Reagan's inauguration. Further, the administration undertook an economic strategy overtly hostile toward

Nicaragua. The administration sought to cripple the Sandinistas economically. U.S. banks and commercial activities were discouraged from investing in Nicaraguan ventures and loaning the country funds. "The U.S. government's Inter-Agency Exposure Review Committee, which rates underdeveloped nations' creditworthiness, downgraded Nicaragua's rating in early 1983 from 'substandard' to 'doubtful'—despite the fact that Nicaragua was at that time on schedule with its repayment of the massive external debt inherited from Somoza."[82] The U.S. effectively blocked funding from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank by leveraging U.S. political and economic clout in those organizations. The infusion of external funding and loans to Nicaragua nearly ceased by the end of 1983. Finally, the CIA coordinated economic sabotage targeting Nicaragua's agricultural resources, transportation infrastructure, petroleum depots, and mining of Nicaragua's major ports. The latter garnering such extreme criticism from Latin America, Western Europe, the U.S. Congress, and World Court that mining operations quickly ceased. The economic policies of the U.S. coupled with the rampant inflation of the 1980s dealt a devastating blow to the Nicaraguan economy.[83]

All observations by non-U.S. observers indicated the Sandinista government was making significant strides across the economic, social, and political spectrum. The U.S. remained steadfast in damnation of the regime. Nicaragua continued to develop limited alliances with communist countries worldwide and tolerated leftist membership to remain within the Sandinista party. "One example, again bearing on 'democracy promotion,' was the 1984 Nicaragua elections, which had doctrinally unacceptable results—the Sandinistas won—and therefore, *did not take place,* though they were closely observed and generally approved, including by hostile observers and a delegation of specialists on

Nicaragua sent by the professional association of Latin America scholars."[84] The U.S. continued funding the contras despite the significant positive efforts of the Sandinistas and over concerns of regional international leadership. The contras attempted to enter into face-to-face peace negotiations in 1988.[85]

Finally, in 1990 the Nicaraguan citizens sought peace at the ballot box after suffering through ten years of the U.S. led onslaught. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega was voted out of office. He peacefully transferred the reigns of power to Violeta Chamorro. The Chamorro administration was deemed acceptable by the George H.W. Bush administration and within a very short time, the U.S. again exercised hegemonic power over Nicaragua. Subsequent to the regime change and regaining U.S. favor, contra operations were disestablished, trade sanctions removed, and U.S. aid trickled into Nicaragua. "In addition, much of it was periodically held back as a carrot to guide the new government in U.S.-approved economic and political directions."[86]

After sixteen years of Liberal party administrations, Daniel Ortega reclaimed the presidency in early 2007 through a national election. During the election Ortega received a majority of the popular vote. As in previous post-Somoza national elections, international observers monitored the election, including former U.S. president Carter. The observers stated the election was conducted fairly and without serious anomalies. The George W. Bush administration maintains the long tradition of anti-Sandinista ideology. The Bush administration purports that Ortega's electoral win was based on a tainted and corrupt election process. The George W. Bush administration remains poised to utilize economic pressure against Nicaragua and the Ortega administration it considers illegitimate.[87]

An Assessment and Analysis of U.S. Policy

The United States is the hegemonic superpower in the world and provides leadership in the international community economically, militarily, and politically. As the world's superpower, the U.S. asserts itself as the self-imposed leader of the free world and in doing so institutes foreign policy to match the assertion. The meteoric rise of the Sandinistas from ineffectual armed group to ruling party of Nicaragua provides a number of lessons for the U.S. regarding foreign policy development and implementation.

The United States must be able to properly assess another country's internal government viability and also the viability of any non-state challengers. Clearly U.S. assessment efforts were inadequate in Nicaragua before and after the Sandinistas assumed control of the government. The Somoza regime was crumbling rapidly and lacked legitimacy amongst the citizens and within the Nicaraguan political machine. The rapid deterioration within Nicaragua seemingly went unnoticed in the U.S. The U.S. assessment efforts were based on reports from Somoza rather then by internal U.S. government sources. The U.S. failed to properly recognize the extent of political and economic repression, human rights violations, and brutality of military operations. U.S. involvement was required much earlier in the process to realign the Somoza regime and for the U.S. to influence changes, but the U.S. failed to act. The U.S. administrations from 1933 to 1981 deemphasized Nicaragua and its problems creating the appearance of complete support of the serious human rights violations and economic deprivation. The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush emphasized Nicaragua as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy. However, the emphasis was based strictly on political

ideology and did not consider the legitimacy of the Sandinista regime in the eyes of the Nicaraguan people. Conditions in Nicaragua clearly were not acceptable by any measure nor did they conform to U.S. values. U.S. complicity in Nicaragua and the funding of the covert counter-Sandinista movement prolonged an environment ripe for armed insurgent group activity and blunted Sandinista reconstruction efforts.

The United States must be able to recognize political engagement opportunities to encourage democratic reform. In Nicaragua, the U.S. did not recognize the groundswell associated with FSLN activities or the overwhelming grass root support throughout the country. The FSLN activities had a very de-stabilizing effect on Somoza's control. The Somoza regime's only tactic to counter FSLN operations was to increase the violence furthering Sandinista recruiting efforts. Even as Somoza curtailed the violence based on the urgings of the U.S., the regime was in a death spiral. The U.S. missed a huge opportunity to engage the moderates within the Sandinista Terceristas. The U.S. strategy was to reach out only to non-Sandinista moderates and Nicaraguan elites, which proved disastrous when the Sandinistas took control. The U.S. and Sandinista governments distrusted each other and the overt blocking efforts of the U.S. were ineffective in the short-term.

Consistent cohesive strategy is necessary by the U.S. government when dealing with a failing state and possible overthrow of the government by armed insurgents. Internal divisions within the U.S. government exacerbated the problems of assessment and lack of engagement with the FSLN. Career diplomats and government service employees were pitted against politicians, political appointees, and members of the military over the Nicaraguan crisis. The U.S. Congress enacted legislation further

complicating the crisis. A steady inclusive engagement policy coupled with a sensible economic aid package was critical to stabilizing post-Somoza Nicaragua. The country was destroyed by the internal conflict and required expertise and funds to jump-start the reconstruction effort. Instead, the U.S. pursued anti-Sandinista policies, withheld aid, blocked international influx of capital and investment, and waged a covert war. The Reagan administration effectively squandered every opportunity to engage the fledgling regime and expand positive country-to-country relations. Marxist ideology of some Sandinista members was the basis for squandering opportunities. The U.S. is inconsistent here as well. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) includes Marxist and socialist membership within its ranks. Yet the U.S. worked with the PLO in order to foster peace in the Middle East and work toward solving the question of a sovereign Palestine. The myopic view by the U.S. that democracy and democratic governments should disavow socialist participation is simply inconsistent with the idea of democracy.

"The United States considers itself not only a legitimate leader but actually more legitimate then indigenous leaders who did not meet the U.S. definition of freedom-loving behavior."[88] The notion of legitimacy poses a significant dilemma for governments who are not aligned in accordance with strict adherence to U.S. ideology. The U.S. denounced the Nicaraguan elections in 1984 as illegitimate although international observers certified the election to be within every acceptable election standard. The same holds true with respect to Nicaragua's 2006 election. Categorization of certifiable elections as illegitimate is inconsistent with the tenets of democratic rule. No other democracy on the globe mirror images the U.S. form of democracy.

State and non-state actors routinely challenge the U.S. in its role as leader of the free world, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Hamas, and Al Qaida to name a few. Hugo Chavez' regime is not politically aligned with the U.S. Venezuela is economically tied closely to the U.S. Venezuela imposes itself as a counterbalance to the U.S. in Latin American affairs. Clearly, discourse between sovereign states is orderly and acceptable within the international community. The U.S. and its allies label armed non-state actors as terrorists when the armed groups are not aligned with U.S. foreign or military policy.

Some of the non-state challengers take up arms against the U.S. or the U.S. sanctioned regime entrenched in the state. Those armed groups are labeled as terrorists. An act of terrorism, as defined by the United Nations, "any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians of non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."[89] The Sandinistas rose up in defiance of Somoza's brutality and repressive regime and would meet the definition of a terrorist organization. Motivating factors behind the armed groups action is not identified when classifying a group as a terrorist organization. The U.S. labeled the Contras operating against the Sandinista regime as freedom fighters, but they clearly fit the definition of a terrorist organization. The terrorist label becomes very significant within the current context of the Global War on Terror.

The 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States avows two basic principles on which the entire strategy rests. "The first pillar is promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity—working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies. The

second pillar of our strategy is confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies."[90] The pillars of current U.S. strategy have changed in a post-Cold War world, but the basic ethos remains a constant. The lessons of U.S. engagement with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua provide a unique opportunity to examine U.S. strategy in a historic setting while utilizing lessons learned in the context of the present day. U.S. reactions to President Ortega's election in the 2006 Nicaraguan election speaks of a return to a flawed strategy of containment at all cost without an appreciation of the democratic tenets and capitalist tendencies currently exercised in Nicaragua.

The focus of this thesis has been to examine U.S. foreign policy and the transition of an armed group to legitimate state leader by closely examining the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) of Nicaragua. As the U.S. continues to exercise its hegemonic power around the world, it is imperative to formulate and execute a consistent and understandable engagement policy regarding non-state actors.

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