

Nicaragua: The Right to Live in Peace

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“Sovereignty is not argued about. It is defended” – Cesar Augusto Sandino

It is an irrefutable fact that the United States orchestrated, financed and unleashed the violent coup attempt in 2018 against the democratically elected FSLN government. Spokespeople of the U.S. establishment, from former president Trump, extreme right-wing senators and deputies, all the way down the food chain of its formidable ‘regime change’ machinery, including National Security Advisor John Bolton, the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and, of course, USAID, repeatedly stated their aim was to bring about ‘regime change’ in Nicaragua. In this connection, the significance of U.S. Nicaraguan proxies is ephemeral and purely utilitarian (does anybody remember Adolfo Calero, Miami-based Contra leader?). Such proxies are activated to sow chaos, violence and confusion to facilitate a U.S.-driven ‘regime change’ intervention, but for the huge U.S. democracy-crushing machine, when plans do not work, its proxies are disposable human assets. In the 2018 coup attempt, the operatives on the ground, disguised as civil society bodies committed to the rule of law, democracy, civil liberties, human rights and other fake descriptions, were in fact U.S.-funded proxies entrusted with the task to bring down the FSLN government by means of violence. The resistance of the Nicaraguan people defeated the coup and thus the nation will go to the polls in November 2021, prompting the U.S. ‘regime change’ apparatus to launch, in despair, an international campaign aimed at demonising the electoral process itself.

The brutal ‘regime change’ machinery

The US, through open and shady channels, disbursed millions to pay, organise, and train thousands of the cadre that would carry out the coup attempt in 2018. Between 2014 and 2017 the U.S. funded over 50 projects in Nicaragua for a total of US\$4.2 million. Furthermore, William Grigsby, an investigative journalist, revealed that USAID and the NED distributed over US\$30 million to a range of groups opposed to the Nicaraguan government who were involved in the violence of 2018.¹

A pro-U.S. commentator, writing in NED-funded magazine *Global Americans* (1 May 2018), admitted that these resources had been deployed to lay the ‘groundwork for insurrection’: “Looking back at the developments of the last several months it is now quite evident that the U.S. government actively helped build the political space and capacity of Nicaraguan

society for the social uprising that is currently unfolding”.² Furthermore, millions of U.S. taxpayers’ money also went into financing a Nicaraguan coup-plotting media.³

The ingredients of U.S. ‘regime change’ operations are buttressed by illegal unilateral coercive measures (aka sanctions) aimed at isolating internationally the target government and causing as much havoc as possible to its economy so as to destabilise it thus bringing about a crisis, leading to the ousting of the government, and to a U.S.-led transition. For example, since 2016-17, the U.S. has applied 431 and 243 sanctions against Venezuela and Cuba, respectively. With the NICA Act and the RENACER bill, the U.S. is piling up sanctions against Nicaragua’s economy and FSLN government officials. The strategy is invariably complemented by a worldwide intoxicating corporate media demonization campaign labelling these governments ‘authoritarian’ and ‘dictatorial’, sometimes going as far as charging them as ‘fascists’ and, in the case of Nicaragua, even of ‘Somocismo’.⁴

This technique has been used in the efforts to violently oust the government of Venezuela (including the recognition of Juan Guaidó as “interim president”), and also in the recent violent push to overthrow the government in Cuba⁵. U.S. National Security Adviser, John Bolton, identified Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua (“a troika of tyranny”) as target governments to be overthrown. In the speech (1 Nov 2018), he also praised Bolsonaro as one of the “positive signs for the future of the region”).

U.S. war on Latin American democracy

Reams have been written about U.S. interventions in Latin America (and the world) both by U.S. sycophants and detractors, who, despite their antipodal viewpoints, agree that notwithstanding the altruistic pronouncements of U.S. officialdom and their accomplices, they have never led to the establishment of democracy and, in most cases, such as in Salvador Allende’s Chile, ended in its total destruction. Thus, the 1954 U.S. military invasion of Guatemala leading to the violent ousting of democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz, was celebrated by U.S. president Eisenhower as a “magnificent effort’ and “devotion to the cause of freedom”, an event that was followed by decades of US-supported and US-sponsored slaughter of well over 200,000 Guatemalans. El Salvador did not have the ‘benefit’ of a U.S. military invasion but in the 1980s, U.S.-funded, US-trained and U.S.-armed death squads, would slaughter about 80,000 mostly innocent civilians.

Nicaragua has been the target of many U.S. interventions, the largest being the military invasion of 1926-1933 that was heroically resisted by General Sandino’s guerrillas. It did not lead to anything resembling democracy but to the 43 years-long Somoza dictatorship that ended in 1979, when the Sandinista revolution implemented democracy for the first time in the country’s history. Sadly, the U.S. sought to prevent Nicaragua from pursuing an alternative, democratic, sovereign pathway by unleashing a destructive war by proxy through organising, funding, training, arming and directing the Contras under the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations. The war led to the obliteration of the economy, the electoral defeat of the FSLN in 1990, and to well over 40,000 people killed.⁶ The Sandinistas respected the election result – even though it had been obtained under U.S.-led war conditions – did not engage in violent confrontations during the 16 years of neoliberal governments (1990-2006), and participated in all electoral processes during that period, dutifully recognising unfavourable election results in 1990, 1996, and 2001.

Neoliberalism in Nicaragua was socially and economically disastrous: by 2005, 62% of the population was below the poverty line with high levels of extreme poverty (14% in 2009); 85% had no access to healthcare systems; 64% of the economically active were in the informal sector with no pension or health cover; the level of illiteracy was 22% even though it had been eradicated during the 1979-1990 Sandinista government⁷, and so forth, mirroring neoliberal wreckage elsewhere in the region.

Unsurprisingly, the FSLN gathered electoral strength: winning the presidency by 38% in 2006; re-elected in 2011 with 63% and again with 72% in 2016. The return of the FSLN to government in 2006 led to a reduction of poverty to 42.5% and extreme poverty to 7% in 2016, on the back of a 4.7% average rate of economic growth, one of the highest in the region. The country's social economy, driven primarily by the informal sector, was given a gigantic impetus making Nicaragua 90% self-sufficient in food (a dream for nations under U.S. siege, such as Cuba and Venezuela). By 2018-19 poverty had been halved, 1.2 million children were taken out of food poverty, 27,378 new classrooms had been built, 11,000 new teachers had been employed, 353 new healthcare units had been created including 109 birth & childcare facilities, 229 health centres, 15 primary hospitals, plus social housing, social security, the mass inclusion of women earning the nation the 5th world position on gender equality, and much more. So why would the FSLN, enjoying an electoral support of 70%+, resort to state violence in 2018 when the economy was going well, social indexes were improving and standards of living going up? Why would the FSLN turn viciously against its own people by becoming a dictatorship overnight?

Demonization, prelude to aggression

The intense, intoxicating and well-orchestrated worldwide demonization campaign against the FSLN government has inevitably influenced and obfuscated the vision of many individuals of goodwill who may have a healthy concern about the media-generated torrent of allegations of undemocratic behaviour attributed to the Nicaraguan government. Many also believed that Evo had fathered an illegitimate child – which, *The Guardian* (24 June 2016) labelled a scandalous “telenovela of sex lies, and paternity claims” – that was an undeniable factor in Morales narrowly losing a referendum in 2016. However, the child never existed but was ‘materialised’ by the world media just before the referendum was held. No media outrage was elicited by such grotesque fabrication. So, never underestimate the power and impact of U.S.-led psychological warfare carried through the world corporate media, especially when it comes to Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, or any government targeted by U.S. ‘regime change’ plans.

Psychological warfare and its concomitant media demonization have the function to alienate progressive public opinion support from U.S. targeted governments or individuals. Lula and his party, for example, were subjected to such media demonization managing to persuade many primarily in Europe and the U.S. of his culpability in the Lava Jato corruption scandal that rocked Brazil, for which he was tried and convicted on [T]rumped up charges that led to his illegal and unjust imprisonment for over 580 days. No media outrage has followed Brazil Supreme Court's verdicts of his being innocent of all the charges. Nevertheless, the damage done is pretty hefty: the lawfare against Lula prevented him from being a presidential candidate, creating propitious conditions for the election of fascist Bolsonaro.

The demonization of Evo seems to have been part of a broader plan aimed at his ousting, which was achieved in November 2019 thanks to the corrupt intervention of OAS Secretary

General, Luis Almagro, who, with the support of the European Union ‘electoral mission’ in Bolivia, falsely reported ‘irregularities’ implying election fraud. The coup brought to power the de facto racist and fascist government led by Jeanine Añez, that unleashed brutal police repression and persecution against the social movements, perpetrated several massacres, and engaged in vast amounts of corruption. No media outrage has followed Almagro’s disgusting behaviour, not even after him being publicly denounced by Bolivia’s president, Luis Arce, and Mexico’s foreign minister.

Actually, the plot thickens: the Bolivian government with the help of the government of Argentina, have produced irrefutable evidence that in November 2019 right-wing former president of Argentina, Mauricio Macri, sent to Bolivia a war arsenal of thousands of rounds of ammunition, 70,000 anti-riot cartridges, thousands of rubber bullets, many long and short weapons, including machine guns, as a ‘contribution’ to the coup that ousted president Morales. No media outrage has followed this either; instead, most of the corporate media has opted for omitting it.

In Venezuela, President Maduro has denounced several attempts on his life, one of which in 2018 was televised; yet it led to no corporate media condemnation. In May 2020 Venezuela was subjected to a mercenary attack with the perpetrators publicly admitting it, yet it led to no media condemnation either. At least the brutal assassination of Haiti’s president Jovenel Moise by a hit squad of Colombian mercenaries that appear to be connected to the Colombian authorities, has received a modicum of media condemnation and there is some journalistic probing into Colombia’s involvement in it. Haiti’s gory magnicide (Moise was first tortured then killed with 12 bullets) shows the U.S. and its allies in the region are prepared to go to any lengths to obtain results. There is no reason to think Nicaragua, as the 2018 coup attempt shows, would be treated differently.

The empire’s desperation

Right now the issue for the U.S. interventionist machinery in Nicaragua is the coming election to be held on 7 November 2021 with the likely victory of the FSLN. The people of Nicaragua will elect president, vice-president and 90 national assembly deputies. The U.S. is desperate to discredit these elections by orchestrating a stream of media-oriented provocations that may allow it not to recognise the results (though, after the embarrassing experience with corrupt *primus inter pares*, Juan Guaidó, it is unlikely to proclaim a Nicaraguan ‘interim president’; though I wouldn’t hold my breath). The desperation of the U.S. interventionist establishment, especially its extreme right-wing (Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, the NED, USAID et al), manifests itself in a media-driven effort to discredit the coming election by seeking to influence international progressive public opinion with a narrative of disillusionment with the FSLN (labelled *Orteguismo*), aimed at creating the impression the FSLN is isolated, thus resorting to dictatorial measures, and that it has betrayed Sandinismo. Apart from being malicious this is thoroughly false.

Under president Daniel Ortega and vice-president Rosario Murillo Nicaragua has successfully defended the nation’s sovereignty by restoring the social gains of the 1979-1990 revolution, by defeating the U.S.-orchestrated violent coup attempt of 2018, and by deepening the progressive socio-economic measures implemented since 2006. A good gauge of what would have happened had the 2018 coup attempt been victorious are the Añez government actions in Bolivia, Bolsonaro’s fascist brutality and recklessness, Guaidó’s criminal “interim presidency”, and Almagro’s abject servility to imperial objectives, whose common factor is the United States. Had the coup succeeded, the structural connection between Nicaragua’s

socio-economic developments and national sovereignty, on which the latter rests, would have been brutally demolished, including the repression and murder of many Sandinistas and social leaders. The atrocities perpetrated during the coup attempt in 2018 (torture, burning people, setting fire to houses, health centres, radio stations, and generalised violence), are irrefutable proof of this.

The FSLN government is not isolated; it not only enjoys majority support in Nicaragua but it also has the robust solidarity of the Sao Paulo Forum, the Latin American body that brings together 48 social and political organizations. Among these are the Cuban Communist party, Venezuela's PSUV, Bolivia's MAS, Brazil's Workers Party, Argentina's Frente Grande, and Mexico's MORENA – just to mention the most important ones – parties that command literally well over 120 million votes, and are or have been in government. *The Forum* (16 June 2021) has issued a robust statement in support of Nicaragua's sovereignty stating as false the allegations of “arbitrary detention of opposition figures”.⁸

The Puebla Group, a body that assembles a large number of regional political leaders set up jointly by Lopez Obrador and Alberto Fernandez, presidents of Mexico and Argentina, respectively, issued a manifesto in February 2021 expressing support for Nicaragua (as well as Cuba and Venezuela) and condemning the aggression, external interference, and destabilisation these nations have been subjected to by the U.S.⁹ Among the Group's members are Lula, Dilma Rousseff, Evo, Rafael Correa, Fernando Lugo, Ernesto Samper, Leonel Fernandez, Luis Guillermo Solis and Jose Luis Zapatero, former presidents of Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Spain, and many other prominent politicians.

Furthermore, the Executive Secretary of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), Sacha Llorenti, also condemned the aggression and the illegal sanctions against Nicaragua (and Cuba and Venezuela). Llorenti praised the “lessons of dignity given by the Nicaraguan people to the world” and paid tribute to them for the “achievements [of] the Sandinista Revolution.”¹⁰ He was attending the 42nd anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution held in Caracas. ALBA-TCP is a radical coordination founded in 2004 that includes Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada and the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Though in Europe opposition to U.S. aggression is strong, it is less so than in Latin America. Foreign affairs are dominated by the European Union's abject and systematic capitulation to U.S. foreign policy (on Latin America, and the world). Thus we have witnessed the shameful spectacle of Europe's recognition of Guaidó as Venezuela's ‘interim president’, and the European Parliament, led by the nose by Spanish extreme right-wing Vox party, to issue condemnations of Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia. The latter for the temerity of bringing Jeanine Añez to justice, key player in the 2019 coup against Evo and directly responsible for the persecution, repression and massacres perpetrated against Bolivians during her illegal 11 months in office.

Since the EU supports every violent assault against democracy in the Americas, it would be coherent to have supported the Trump-inspired assault on Washington's Capitol. On January 6, 2021, U.S.'s extreme right applied techniques of “regime change” at home as the televised violent storming of the Capitol showed. The assault was carried out by armed, extreme right-wing (white supremacist) thugs, almost identical to U.S.-led efforts in

Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Cuba, which involved non-recognition of election results, incessant spread of fake news, questioning the credibility of state institutions, fanaticization of supporters, all aimed at bringing about a crisis seeking to prevent the proclamation as president of the real winner.

Conclusion

Supporting any form of U.S. interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation under U.S. attack, by calling for 'the international community to act', or by (un)wittingly parroting U.S. State Dept. narrative on that nation, is tantamount to legitimising U.S. policy of "regime change".

Were it not for U.S. aggression and interference, countries such as Nicaragua would have taken off and developed democracy and social progress, as the short national sovereignty intervals (1979-1990 and 2006-2018) have demonstrated. Cuba, for example, is an educational, sport, medical and biotechnological power, even though it has lost US\$144 bn. (that is, the equivalent of 10 Nicaraguan economies at current prices) in the past six decades due to the U.S. blockade. Imagine how Cuba could have developed and multiplied its generous solidarity contribution to the world if it had not had to endure the criminal Yankee blockade.

Taking from its 1909 intervention, the U.S. maintained Nicaragua militarily invaded from 1912 until 1933, exerted direct control during the Somoza dictatorship until 1979, then when the Contra War (1980-1990) and the neoliberal governments (1990-2016), are added, the U.S. systemically curtailed or annulled Nicaragua's national sovereignty for 97 years in the 20th century! If we add U.S. aggressive 19th century expansionism in the Caribbean, including the U.S. mercenary incursion of William Walker in 1856 –when he took power by military force and restored slavery – poor Nicaragua has been under the U.S. imperial thumb for over 140 years!

Nicaragua is entitled to embark on its own alternative path of development that, as a matter of sacrosanct moral principle, must be determined by Nicaraguans only without any external interference, and above all, in peace.

U.S. hands off Latin America, U.S. hands off Nicaragua!

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Notes

1 Nicaragua – USAID, corporate non profits and CIA coup attempts – <http://tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/11930>

2 Benjamin Waddell, Laying the groundwork for insurrection: A closer look at the U.S. role in

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3 M Blumenthal & B Norton, "How US govt-funded media fueled a violent coup in Nicaragua, The Grayzone, 12 June 2021 - <https://thegrayzone.com/2021/06/12/coup-nicaragua-cpj-100-noticias/>

4 Name comes from the Somozas, a brutal dictatorship whose family led a US-protected and US-supported dynasty for 43 years, characterized by the assassination of opponents, repression, torture, vicious undemocratic practices and huge amounts of corruption.

5 The only way to end economic hardship in Cuba is to lift the blockade, Tribune, 17 July 2021,
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6 Under pressure from the 'Vietnam syndrome', these US Republican administrations circumvented Congressional and public opposition to wars, they resorted to drug trafficking and selling secretly and illegally weapons to Iran (The Intercept, 12 May 2018 - <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/12/oliver-north-nra-iran-contra/>

7 J M Franzoni, Social protections systems Nicaragua, ECLAC,
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9 Manifiesto Progresista del Grupo de Puebla, 10 February 2021,
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10 <https://www.albatcp.org/en/2021/07/20/nicaraguan-people-has-given-lessons-of-dignity/>

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