Abbreviations

AI = Amnesty International
CIA = Central Intelligence Agency
DEA = Drug Enforcement Administration
FDN = the main Contra organization
FDR = Franklin D. Roosevelt
FSLN = Sandinista National Liberation Front
GA = General Assembly
HRW = Human Rights Watch
ICJ = International Court of Justice
IMF = International Monetary Fund
OAS = Organization of American States
PPS23 = Policy Planning Study 23
RC = Roman Catholic Church
SOA = School of the Americas
UDHR = Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN = United Nations
UNSC = United Nations Security Council
USG = United States Government
WB = World Bank
WWII = World War Two
Abstract

This paper critically examines various dimensions of the US-backed Contra-Sandinista war between 1981 and 1990. The result of our finding points to the fact that: 1) the United States did in fact terrorize Nicaragua during the 1980s through a proxy force named the Contras, much of the funding for the covert terror war having necessarily been derived from narco-trafficking, 2) the reason for the attack had to do with the institutional need to punish independent development in Nicaragua (which is an empirical observation that can more or less be generalized and applied to most if not all Third World interventions by the US since WWII). The approaches that we use for this analysis are historical, institutional (political and economic), legal and humanistic, the latter connoting fundamental human rights and needs. By addressing these and other related issues of importance, it is hoped that new light might be shed on this dark chapter in modern history at least in the Swedish academic world.

Key Words

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Introduction

The aim and purpose of this essay is to analyze and provide insight into the war of attrition against the revolutionary Sandinista government and ordinary citizens in Nicaragua during the period 1981-90. Even though a limited amount of focus will be put on agency, the greater part of our efforts will be structure-oriented, meaning we will attempt to identify causal links by unearthing and deciphering the institutional and/or geopolitical imperatives underlying the war against Nicaragua, since North-South relations are always underpinned by power (as opposed to ethical) considerations, in accordance with the fragile and very dangerous rules of the Cold War, which we will bring to light, albeit unconventionally (in Chap. 3).

Of course, whether the conflict is a resolved one or not may be debatable, since there were no efforts to redress past injustices on the part of the aggressors, hence no reconciliation. The World Court ruling in 1986 certainly did not contribute to any kind of mitigation so far as the violence that was unleashed against Nicaragua is concerned—quite the contrary. The Contadora Peace Accords did not contribute to peace either, since the US sabotaged the peace process. What brought an end to the conflict were the devastating effects of the long proxy war itself, coupled with the severe economic strangulation that the country was subjected to. In other words, violence and coercive economic measures ceased only when the population finally voted, under great duress, for the candidate favored by the US. So yes, in a sense, this is an armed resolved conflict, but only because the long proxy war coupled with the severe economic strangulation understandably resulted in large-scale, deep exhaustion of the population of Nicaragua, thereby forcing it to capitulate and accept US terms and conditions for ending armed hostilities in 1990.

In Chapter 2, the genesis, development and some of the activities of the Contras will be discussed. The main thrust of this chapter pertains to how the Contra-Sandinista war was funded and why. To the latter effect, we will delve into the murky world of clandestine operations by the CIA and its clients, i.e., the drug trade, since a considerable amount of the funding for the Contra war came from CIA-directed narco-trafficking in Central and North America, which we will demonstrate by citing uncontroversial sources.

Chapter 3 will consist of a discussion of the institutional cause or causes that lay behind the illegal proxy war against Nicaragua, but only after having unveiled the real meaning of the Cold War, since Cold War mythology is still pervasive in the West.
Chapter 4 will consist of the actual atrocities generated by the Contras against the Sandinista government as well as against ‘soft targets,’ meaning unarmed civilians. This will be followed by a brief discussion of why the Contadora Peace process failed.

Chapter 5 pertains to a discussion of the economic strangulation that was applied to destabilize the Sandinistas, finally removing them from power.

Chapter 6 consists of a discussion of the ICJ ruling in 1986. The latter and its implications will be examined succinctly, but some shortcomings in the Court’s deliberations will also be brought to light, since they were evidently lacking in some significant ways, even if we agree with the main thrust of the Court’s judgment, however understated it was. Of course, the US reaction to the Court’s ruling will be scrutinized closely, including the legal measures undertaken by the Sandinistas when the US refused to abide by the Court’s ruling.

In the conclusion, we spell out some implications that need to be spelled out. But we also condemn the predatory and unviable structures that produced chaos and suffering in a poor and defenseless country, which is our right and our duty.

Research Questions

1. What structural cause or causes lay behind the Contra-Sandinista war between 1981-90?
2. How was the war funded? And why was it funded the way it was?
3. What are the overall implications of the interplay between the ICJ’s ruling, America’s reaction, and Nicaragua’s response?

Sources/Material

The sources/material used to substantiate our claims and arguments are both primary and secondary: books, articles and essays (mostly by independent political commentators), declassified government documents, NGO reports, daily newspapers, respectable journals of opinion, views expressed by at least one leading figure of the Contras (Edgar Chamorro), Veterans for Peace (veterans from WWII and Vietnam, along with thousands of ordinary Americans, who traveled to Nicaragua during the 80s in the hope that the sight of white faces might prevent the Contras from continuing the massacres), the World Court, the liberal intelligentsia, and independent political analysts.

We purposely leave out much commentary by the extreme right, because such commentary is scarcely believable, given its extremely hawkish nature. Had we included more such commentary than we have (we barely do this), it would prompt most readers to denounce us on grounds of “lacking objectivity,” which we are likely to be found guilty of even without citing views from the extreme right. Whether we really are lacking in objectivity or not is, of course,
ultimately dependent on the facts and realities on the ground at the time of the protracted armed conflict rather than on any whimsically subjective criteria. Still, we respect the fact that different people have different premises, perspectives and modes of interpretation, even if we may not respect the “less-than-honest” views emanating from these. For the sake of transparency, it should be noted that our outlook is very liberal, and that our sympathies are not with the victors but with the vanquished, for which we do not feel that we need to apologize, since we are not apologists for necrophilous power. If this, coupled with our explicit concern for humanistic values, constitutes a bias, so be it.

**Method**

Our method is first and foremost analytical and inductive. To a much lesser degree, it’s also comparative, argumentative, deductive and narrative. The approach that we adopt is liberal, but not in a contemporary sense—rather, in a classical liberal sense. So far as theory and method are concerned, our approach is somewhat positivist with an empirical and normative touch.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework: Dependency Theory

The theoretical approach adopted herein is the economic theory of dependency, otherwise known as ‘dependency theory.’ The war against Nicaragua had to do with sustaining the economic dependency of a Third World country in the interests of imperial power.[1] According to the Brazilian social scientist Theotonio Dos Santos, “by dependency we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected.”[2] Accordingly, the emphasis is on the unequal military, political, and economic relationships between a dependent economy and the dominating external economy. The structure of the former is shaped very much by the requirements, or, rather, by the unreasonable demands, of the external economy. In other words, the domestic political economy is not only shaped by the interactions with a more powerful external economy, but is also shaped by the realities of fiscal starvation for social purposes, which is an inevitable corollary of being linked to a predatory military-industrial complex whose primary goal is the narrow concentration of capital, which evidently depends heavily on coercive economic measures and military prowess.[3] But we reject that part of ‘dependency theory’ which asserts that the economies of dependencies would be impossible to maintain without the support of the external factors, since such an argument is obviously flawed—for the sake of self-serving fraud. In point of fact, a substantial part of Third World indebtedness is illegitimate,[4] so such an argument cannot be taken seriously at all, since if a substantial part of Third World debts were to be cancelled, as they well should (since they are odious, which is a legal concept), then Third World countries could very well function without external assistance, the bulk of which is geared towards socially destructive means and ends anyway, in the form of economic assistance to develop the export platforms of mal-developed countries—to facilitate the export of raw materials, like cheap energy, minerals, beef, specialized vegetables, flowers and pet foods for the American and other Western markets—at the expense of social spending domestically, of course, coupled with military assistance to repress indigenous populations and their (usually) peaceful and (at times) armed resistance.

The Chilean Economist Osvaldo Sunkel has put forward the argument (in the context of dependency theory) that ‘foreign factors are seen not as external but intrinsic to the system, with
manifold and sometimes hidden or subtle political, financial, economic, technical, and cultural effects inside developing (sic) countries.’[5] Thus the concept of ‘dependency’ links the post-war evolution of capitalism internationally to the discriminatory nature of the local process of underdevelopment in peripheral countries. Correspondingly, access to the means and benefits of independent development is forcefully and effectively thwarted in the interests of imperial expansion. Thus, the principle of self-sufficient style of independent development chosen by the Sandinista government in Nicaragua provoked the wrath of the US, since the fear among the US leadership that successful defiance might spread to other pauperized countries was and still is quite pervasive and potent. In other words, “the threat of a good example” in the Third World has always been viewed as a contagious disease that might spread and infect other nations, which in turn would bring an end to American hegemony, specifically, would reduce the dependency of the Third World on the First, thereby endangering the asymmetrical structures under which unfair relations of power and subordination are perpetuated to the detriment of non-elites everywhere.[6]
Chapter 2: Genesis, Development and Activities of the Contras*

1.1. The Contras: Remnants of Somoza’s Vanquished National Guard

As FDR once remarked of Nicaragua’s dictator long before the Sandinista revolutionary force toppled the right-wing dictatorship, “Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he’s our son of bitch.” When Anastasio Somoza’s son was overthrown on July 19, 1979, the US spared no efforts until the country was under complete US control again—in 1990. Somoza junior’s days apparently being numbered, as a result of the significant gains being made by the Sandinistas towards the end of the 70s, President Carter “tried to ease him out of power, unaware that retired CIA agents were providing him with further weaponry. Carter’s plan was to keep Somoza’s private army, the National Guard, in power, while Somoza escaped to enjoy his $900-million fortune.”[1] An overwhelming majority of the Nicaraguan population, having suffered 46 years of the Guard’s unrelenting brutality, had no qualms about Somoza’s flight. “When Somoza fell, so did his hated National Guard,” many of whom “were evacuated on US planes.”[2] They were reassembled, armed and supplied by the US. Many had also been trained by Argentine death squads, eventually to be sent back to harass the new regime (it’s precisely because they were so despised in Nicaragua that they were given the name: the Contras, short for counter-revolutionaries in Spanish). It didn’t take long for bloodshed to result.

As a matter of fact, the Contras adopted methods that they learned from the CIA’s Freedom Fighter’s Manual[3] and Psychological Operations in Guerilla Warfare,[4] which had been leaked to the press. Not surprisingly, these manuals gave detailed instructions on a host of dirty guerilla warfare techniques: political assassination, blackmailing ordinary citizens, sabotage, kidnapping, mob violence and the slaughter of civilians, and blowing up public buildings. It was to prove very effective indeed. For example, it said that upon entering a town, “establish a public tribunal” where the guerillas can “shame, ridicule and humiliate” Sandinistas and their sympathizers by “shouting slogans and jeers.” “If…it should be necessary…to fire on a citizen who was trying to leave the town,” the guerillas should explain that “he was an e-

* See Appendix 1 for a chronology of events pertaining to the Contra-Sandinista conflict.
nemy of the people” who would have warned the Sandinistas who would then “carry out acts of reprisals such as rapes, pillage, destruction, captures, etc.” The second manual even says that “professional criminals should be hired to carry out selective jobs” such as “taking the demonstrators to a confrontation with the authorities to bring about uprisings and shootings that will cause the death of one or more people to create a martyr for the cause,” the cause being “seeing the light” and rising against the allegedly Communist regime. Others will be “armed with clubs, iron rods and placards and, if possible, small firearms, which they will carry hidden.” Still other “shock troops,” equipped “with knives, razors, chains, clubs and bludgeons” will “march slightly behind the innocent and gullible participants” as the uprising gains momentum. Finally, a section called “Selective Use of Violence for Propagandistic Efforts” informed the Contra student that “It is possible to neutralize carefully selected and planned targets, such as court judges, police and state security officials,” among others.\[5\] Not long afterward, the manuals could be found in distribution in other Central American countries (after having undergone minor changes). This is putting aside the fact that “the Somozist National Guard was trained in the US Army School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone”\[6\] to begin with. And the notorious SOA has in fact been heavily criticized by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, SOA Watch, and other credible organizations and activists (for a long time), for training (mostly Latin American) officers in the latest counterinsurgency techniques, which is doublespeak for egregious human rights violations in the South (if not terrorism,* or, worse yet, outright aggression, in some cases). Case in point:

‘We routinely had Latin American students at the School of the Americas (SOA) who were known human rights abusers, and it didn’t make any difference to us.’ The continued existence of the Army’s school serves one main purpose,… ‘to sustain and promote a wealthy, elite ruling class.’ A secondary function is that the school, through its training and contacts, contributes to U.S. arms sales to Latin America.’\[7\]

This is why the SOA has been heavily criticized by many human rights organizations (and countless independent activists), chief among them SOA Watch, which has been a staunch advocate for closing the SOA, because of its and its graduates’ past activities, including torture techniques.\[8\] In brief, the US lavished aid on the Contras, both military and financial, for the purpose of terrorizing mostly rural Nicaraguans.

To backtrack a bit, many of the peasants were delighted that the Sandinista government had instituted far-reaching social and agrarian reforms throughout the country, providing the poor peasants with teachers and doctors, for the first time ever, among other services. Predictably, the war machine targeted precisely those who began to raise their heads (including the Catholic

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\* See Appendix 2, where official definitions of the term ‘terrorism’ are cited.
Church, for adopting ‘the preferential option for the poor,’ a crime for which it paid with blood and tears, due to the extremely violent US reaction, virtually making the RC a prime US enemy at the time). Harbors were mined, fuel tanks were blown up, by the CIA (as noted by the ICJ), which then told the Contras to claim credit. Attempts were made to assassinate the Nicaraguan leadership, and the CIA pumped millions of dollars into opposition politicians. But it was unarmed, innocent civilians that bore the brunt of the attacks (as we’ll see below).

So much for the genesis, early development and some of the terroristic activities of the US-backed Contras, about which there should be no unreasonable doubts, given the ICJ ruling which we will discuss shortly, but also because of the following frank admission by former CIA director, Stansfield Turner, who testified before the House Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs on April 16, 1985, that US organization and support of the Contras would “have to be characterized as terrorism, as state-sponsored terrorism.”[9]

1.2. The Drug Connection: How the US-Nicaraguan War was Funded

Before opening this discussion, it’s important to uncover some basic facts, as to why the CIA has to seek allies in the milieu of the underworld, particularly the drug trade. As Alfred McCoy put it:

…there aren’t very many groups that know the clandestine arts. When you think about the essential skills it takes to have an extra-legal operation – to have somebody killed, to mobilize a crowd, to do what it does when societies are in flux, when power is unclear and to be grabbed and shaped and molded into a new state – you want to overthrow a government and put a new one in – how do you do it? Who does this? Accountants? They go to the office every day. Students? They go to classes – they’re good for maybe one riot or something, but they’ve got to get on to medical school or law or whatever they’re doing. Where do you get people who have this kind of skill? You have your own operatives and they’re limited. Particularly if you’re a foreigner, your capacity to move something in the streets is very limited. You know, sometimes you can turn to a state intelligence agency in a country you’re working with, but most effectively you can turn to the underworld. That’s why the CIA always worked very effectively with the warlords of the Golden Triangle. It’s worked very effectively with Corsican syndicates in Europe, worked very effectively and continuously with American Mafia – because they have the same clandestine arts. They operate with the same techniques. And they have the same kind of amorality. They are natural allies. There was a conversion of cultures between the milieu of the underworld and the world of the clandestine operative… [So this is how] the policy of integrating intelligence and cover (sic) operations with narcotics gets established. You get, then, an entire generation of covert action warriors used to dealing with narcotics as a matter of policy. In short, you get a policy and personnel which integrates covert action with narcotics.[10]

Against this background, it’s clear to see why covert wars have to be funded by drug money, since ordinary Americans and (if possible) Congress men and women have to kept in the dark about such covert activities (especially so when the crimes in question are of such a grave nature and of such a magnitude as to have the real potential of not only incriminating high level
government officials but of endangering the traditional structures of power and privilege. So the drug trade provides a perfectly logical solution to the problem of bypassing Congressional and public scrutiny, the former being, unlike multinational corporations and CIA operatives, minimally constrained by human rights standards, if only for public relations purposes. But at the same time, even though “Covert wars, insurgency (sic) and drug trafficking frequently go hand-in-hand without regard to ideology or sponsorship,”[11] it would nevertheless be naïve to believe that the drug trade is functional only for financing covert wars and activities.[12]

As the evidence in the Kerry report (and other official documents, in the footnotes) shows, there’s no doubt that the Contras were largely funded by cocaine operations, smuggled on custom-free flights to and from the US, with CIA assets in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama[13] and Honduras having helped to facilitate the trade. And as Jack Blum, investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee, noted in his testimony under oath on February 11, 1987: “The Contras moved drugs not by the pound, not by the bags, but by the tons, by the cargo planeloads.”[14]

The culmination of the Kerry investigation, which heard scores of witnesses and lasted 2.5 years, was a report of 1000 pages.[15] The report’s main conclusion was undisputable: “It is clear that individuals who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking. The supply network of the Contras was used by drug trafficking organizations, and elements of the Contras themselves received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers.” The report also concluded that Contra members themselves were involved in drug trafficking, by playing a key role in Contra supply operations and by maintaining business relationships with Contra organizations. The Contras received money, weapons, planes, pilots and supply services from drug traffickers. Over $806,000 was paid to known drug traffickers by the US State Department to carry out humanitarian assistance to the Contras. This, despite the fact that, and after, the Latin American drug traffickers had been initially indicted on drug charges by US federal prosecutors (a number of whom ended up receiving mild sentences or were unjustifiably absolved of criminal liability, ultimately). Senator John Kerry charged that “[t]he largest Contra organization, the FDN, did move Contra funds through a narcotics trafficking enterprise and money-laundering operation.” The report also said, “The [US] military and intelligence agencies running the Contra war turned a blind eye to the trafficking.” Kerry’s committee also concluded that the CIA and Oliver North’s enterprise knew that drug traffickers had exploited “the clandestine infrastructure established to support the war and that Contras were receiving assistance derived from drug trafficking.” Another conclusion of the investigation was that “US officials involved in Central America failed to address the drug issue for fear of jeopardizing the war effort against Nicaragua.” Of course, there was constant government obstruction, which made it impossible to go a great deal further than issuing a report full of damning conclusions, meaning not a single
high level US official was ever brought to justice for the devastating acts of terrorism against Nicaragua, or for the curse that was visited upon black ghettos with super-cheap, highly addictive crack cocaine, an epidemic that first erupted in South-Central Los Angeles, but gradually spread throughout pretty much the whole nation, even if it destroyed the social fabric of many African-American communities more than others. Case in point: “…millions of black lives have been ruined and America’s jails and prisons are now clogged with young African-Americans because of a cynical plot by a CIA that historically has operated in contempt of the law.”[16]

After an in-depth series of articles—written by the late Gary Webb, titled “Dark Alliance”—that exposed the Contra-crack epidemic connection (which appeared in the San Jose Mercury News in 1996, claiming that the CIA actively developed the crack cocaine market in African-American communities of Los Angeles), an ABC reporter talked to Senator Kerry, who stated:

There is no question in my mind that people connected with the CIA were involved in drug trafficking while in support of the Contras. We had direct evidence that somewhere between $10 million and $15 million was going to the Contras. And I am quite confident that this was the tip of the iceberg. The Contras were desperate for money. So in a sense they took a bridge loan from anyone available and the drug lords were available.[17]

In conclusion, the Reagan administration, being as enthusiastic as it was in its support of the Contras, and seeing them as allies in the fanatical anti-Communist crusade, nevertheless was faced with a skeptical Congress, which passed two different “Boland Amendments,” the first in Dec. 1982, the second in Oct. 1984. The first prohibited the use of CIA funds “for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Nicaragua.”[18] The second stipulated that only humanitarian aid could be provided to the Contras. The reduction in military support from the US afforded an obvious solution (in the light of the shortage of revenues needed to finance the Contras war efforts, especially when one considers the previous involvement in drug trafficking on the part of some of the transport companies, Contra leaders, and their allies).[19] Airplanes loaded with supplies flew to Central America. But it didn’t make sense to return to the US with empty planes. Hence a protected conduit allowing for cocaine shipments to the US conveniently took place under the guise of “national security” (the latter being an Orwellian doublespeak term for national insecurity, literally).
Chapter 3: Why did the US Attack Nicaragua?

What cause or causes lay behind the proxy-terror war unleashed by the US against Nicaragua? It’s not enough merely to give a direct answer to this question, however easy or tempting it may be to do so. First we need to understand the real meaning of the Cold War. Only then can we begin to appreciate the very dangerous rules of the Cold War, and, by extension, what happened in Nicaragua, which is not substantially different from what happened (and/or has been happening) in places like Vietnam, Indonesia, Cuba, Guatemala, Zaire, and numerous other Third World countries since at least WWII.[1]

1.1. The Real Meaning of the Cold War

According to one of the leading figures in the post-revisionist school, John Lewis Gaddis, the origin of the Cold War should be traced to 1917, because that’s when the communist powers began to express their unwillingness and inability to complement the Western industrial economies (which was supposed to be their usual service role), which was perceived in the West as the primary threat of communism. In other words, the primary threat was never a military threat (since on average the missile gap was about 10 to 1 in favor of the U.S., a well-known fact) but an economic one.[2] To quote directly from the Study Group of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the National Planning Association, the primary threat of communism was described as the economic transformation of the communist powers “in ways which reduce their willingness and ability to complement the industrial economies of the West,”[3] “their refusal to play the game of comparative advantage and to rely primarily on foreign investment for development. If the ‘developing nations’ choose to use their resources for their own purposes, or to carry out internal social change in ways which will reduce their contribution to the industrial economies of the State capitalist world, these powers must be prepared to employ sufficient force to prevent such unreasonable behavior, which will no doubt be described as ‘internal aggression’ by agents of international communism.”[4]

In other words “the superpowers settled into a system of global management…in which each appeal[ed] to the threat of the global enemy to justify violence, subversion, terror and aggression in its own domains—for the US, much of the world. Any such act is in “defense” against the great Satan, a standard technique of mass mobilization throughout history. Each
superpower may lend support to the other’s depredations, though the US regards itself as having the sole prerogative, in accordance with its senior position in the partnership of global management.”[5] And now comes perhaps the most essential operative feature, if not the essence, of the Cold War, as applied to the case of Nicaragua (but which can be applied to any other military and CIA intervention since at least WWII by the US): “Those who devote themselves to the needs of the poor majority, or who seek to construct a political system that will not be controlled by business-based groups and a military system not linked to and dominated by the US, are “Castros” who must be driven to reliance on the Soviet Union by unremitting attack, subjected to terrorist violence and other pressures, and crucially prevented from perpetrating the crime of successful development in the interests of the poor majority. These are the reasons for the attack on Nicaragua.”[6] In other words, Sandinista social reforms were the prime reason for the US attack. Private property had to be restored to the owning class, in accordance with the “neoliberal” agenda. Failing this, it’s not possible to sustain the prerogatives of corporate investors in the West, since the alliance between First and Third World elites is precisely what enables the accumulation of capital in the West to proceed unhampered (for which purpose Third World elites are of course rewarded generously). For example, in his 1953 State of the Union message President Eisenhower observed, “A serious and explicit purpose of our foreign policy [is] the encouragement of a hospitable climate for investment in foreign nations.” A natural corollary to this is egregious human rights violations in the South, since the best way to improve the investment climate in a Third World country is to murder union organizers and peasant leaders, torture priests, massacre peasants, undermine social programs, etc.[7] In the light of these facts, it was almost inevitable—during the official Cold War—that a Third World country committed to making radical or modest moves on behalf on the poor majority would turn to the former Soviet Union and/or its dependencies for help, to defend itself as best it could. And of course, it and/or they would indulge all too happily (as it and/or they did in the case of Nicaragua), for perfectly cynical reasons. But the main point is that, in this case, Nicaragua’s reliance on the Soviet Union and/or its dependencies couldn’t honestly be invoked to justify, either in retrospect or at the time, US actions against it, since, as stated above, it’s the social reforms which “provoked” the wrath of Uncle Sam. The Cold War was, and still is (since it ended only partially), a war against humanity. As John Pilger has duly observed, it has been fought since 1917 with the blood of “expendable” people over strategic resources, and it was a war of control. It has been a war fought by the West against people trying to improve their position in the world, which, if allowed to succeed, would bring an end to Western hegemony.

It’s in accordance with imperial prerogatives that George Kennan (head of the State Department policy planning staff in the late 1940s), who was responsible for shaping policy for the post-WWII period, said in a Top Secret Document from 1948, PPS23:
We have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity... We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction... We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.[8]

Of course, the idealistic slogans have to be constantly trumpeted by the ideological system: the media, scholarship, the schools, etc., in order to pacify the domestic population and to conceal the real goals of US foreign policy.

1.2. Oxfam’s Report on Nicaragua’s Far-reaching Social Programs

The highly respected charitable relief and development organization: Oxfam, published in 1985 (reprinted in 89), a report aptly titled Nicaragua: The Threat of a Good Example?, which describes the significant achievements of the Sandinistas before and during at least the early stages of the war, as well as how the changes came about (we cite here the most relevant parts to substantiate the claim made above). It said:

[Oxfam’s] long-term development work is most likely to succeed where governments are genuinely committed to the needs of the poor majority. Rarely is this the case. Nicaragua stands out because of the positive climate for development based on people’s active participation, which Oxfam has encountered over the past five years [i.e., since 1979 under the Sandinista government]. ... [S]ince 1979 the scope for development has been enormous, with remarkable progress achieved in health, literacy and a more equitable distribution of resources. ... The new Government of National Reconstruction stressed its desire to develop a mixed economy and political pluralism in a country that had no tradition of democracy or free elections. Great importance was also attached to achieving a high degree of national self-sufficiency and an independent, non-aligned foreign policy. This radically new focus of social policy in Nicaragua towards the needs of the poor presented enormous scope for Oxfam’s work. In addition to locally-based projects, Oxfam was now able to support nationwide initiatives to tackle problems rooted in poverty. The concept of actively involving people in development through community organisations is neither new nor radical, but widely recognised to be a precondition for successful development. However, as the World Bank points out: “Governments . . . vary greatly in the commitment of their political leadership to improving the condition of the people and encouraging their active participation in the development process. From Oxfam’s experience of working in seventy-six developing countries, Nicaragua was to prove exceptional in the strength of that Government commitment.[9]

In brief, the report documents a wide range of Sandinista reforms (pp. 14-26), which included a national program of mass inoculations against diseases which resulted in a 98 percent fall in new malaria cases; 127 percent more schools and 61 percent more teachers, with a corresponding decline in the national illiteracy rate from 53 percent to 13 percent; 55 percent more children at primary school, as well as popular education collectives established in 17,000 communities;
agrarian reform, including compensation for expropriated land, since up to a third of arable land (mainly on large estates) was idle or under-used; 49,661 families in a total population of 3 million receiving titles to land between late 1981 and late 1984; and an 8 percent increase in overall agricultural production between 1979 and 1983. The Inter-American Development Bank summarized: “Nicaragua has made noteworthy progress in the social sector, which is laying a solid foundation for long-term socio-economic development.” As the New England Journal of Medicine put it: “In just three years, more has been done in most areas of social welfare than in fifty years of dictatorship under the Somoza family.”[10]

In conclusion, “…a fundamental commitment of US policy [is] to make the world safe for corporate investment abroad.”[11] So reformist governments, whether left populist regimes or right-wing moderates, have consistently been punished if and when they’ve made radical or even modest moves on behalf of the poor and against the prerogatives of corporate investors in the US. The severity of the punishment depends on how much stake publicly-subsidized Western conglomerates have in the country in question. At best, the country would be punished by unilateral coercive economic measures. At worst, it would be attacked militarily, regardless of whether the Soviet Union and/or its dependencies was/were supporting the country in question, reactively or proactively.[12]
Chapter 4: Violence and the Threat of Peace

1.1. A Tiny Sample of the Horrors Visited upon Nicaragua

The deliberate campaign of terrorism that the Contras carried out against the people of Nicaragua was unusually brutal in nature. For example, Edgar Chamorro, a former colonel with the Contras, testified before the World Court:

We were told that the only way to defeat the Sandinistas was to use the tactics the agency [the CIA] attributed to Communist insurgencies elsewhere: kill, kidnap, rob, and torture… Many civilians were killed in cold blood. Many others were tortured, mutilated, raped, robbed, or otherwise abused… When I agreed to join…I had hoped that it would be an organization of Nicaraguans… [It] turned out to be an instrument of the U.S. government…[1]

John Stockwell, a 13-year veteran of the CIA and a former US Marine Corps major described the unimaginable horrors visited upon Nicaragua thus:

They go into villages. They haul out families. With the children forced to watch, they castrate the father. They peel the skin off his face. They put a grenade in his mouth, and pull the pin. With the children forced to watch, they gang rape the mother, and slash her breasts off. And sometimes, for variety, they make the parents watch while they do these things to the children.[2]

A survivor of a raid in Jinotega province, which borders on Honduras, recounts her experience thus:

Rosa had her breasts cut off. Then they cut into her chest and took out her heart. The men had their arms broken, their testicles cut off, and their eyes poked out. They were killed by slitting their throats and pulling their tongue out through the slits.[3]

What is the best way to interpret these crimes? Is it enough to dichotomize between ‘evil’ and ‘good,’ thereby enabling us to, in effect if not intent, rationalize human cruelty and sadism (as if these traits were innate), which in turn can be said to have a self- perpetuating property or effect? Or might be more wise and constructive to explain (as opposed to condone) such inhumane behaviors in terms of an institutional need to behave this way, which nevertheless does not absolve the perpetrators of such crimes from responsibility? Erich Fromm, in one of his seminal
works, provides an insight that’s worth reproducing here (since we’re not qualified to psychoanalyze abnormal human behavior):

The thesis that war is caused by innate human destructiveness is plainly absurd for anyone who has even the slightest knowledge of history. The Babylonians, the Greeks, up to the statesmen of our time, have planned war for what they thought were very realistic reasons and weighed the pros and cons very thoroughly, even though, naturally, their calculations were often erroneous. Their motives were manifold: land for cultivation, riches, slaves, raw materials, markets, expansion – and defence. Under special circumstances, a wish for revenge or in a small tribe the passion for destruction has been among the factors that motivated wars, but such cases are atypical. This view that war is caused by man’s aggression is not only unrealistic but harmful. It detracts attention from the real causes and thus weakens the opposition to them… To conclude, major wars in modern times and most wars between states of antiquity were not caused by dammed-up aggression, but by instrumental aggression of the military and political elites.[4]

1.2. The Contadora Peace Process

The Contadora peace process was launched in January 1983 on the island of Contadora off the Pacific coast of Panama. The Contadora group consisted of the mediator counties of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama. The aim of the Contadora group was to discuss how tensions could be eased through dialogue and negotiations for the states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.[5] The discussions resulted in a 21-point treaty that addressed such issues as civil war, foreign intervention, elections, and human rights.[6] Moreover, the treaty stressed that no outside aid should be given to guerrillas, and “the presence of foreign elements involved in military activities should be eliminated.”[7] The Reagan administration initially supported the agreement. However, when Nicaragua announced its intentions to sign the treaty, the US immediately withdrew its support. The State Department stated that the Contadora group “didn’t intend that this treaty document be the end of the process.” However, according to a high-ranking diplomat from one of the Contadora countries, “Everyone had treated it as a final document from the beginning.”[8] Some have pointed to the fact that the US was alarmed by the treaty because of its prohibition on “aid to insurgent forces who were seeking to dismantle standing governments,”[9] and also because the settlement would legitimize the Sandinista government.[10] Although Nicaragua accepted the draft treaty, known as the Contadora Acta, it was rejected by Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica and never implemented.[11] The Reagan administration prevented implementation of the treaty through lobbying efforts and over the next three years Contadora peace talks were significantly compromised by the US.[12]

The threat of peace in the Third World (that is to say, in North-South relations) is a potent force among American elites and their allies, since Western industrial economies are highly militarized; and elites would not be able to make out like bandits without an uncontrolled armed
race and, correspondingly, an endless series of concocted enemies in order to properly frighten the domestic population, so that the anti-democratic program of public subsidy and private profit (euphemistically called “free enterprise”) can continue to operate unhampered, a program through which “the Pentagon system [forces] the public to invest in high tech industry by means of the state-guaranteed market for the production of high technology waste (armaments),”[13] in the interests of plutocratic and kleptocratic power.
Chapter 5: Destabilizing the Sandinistas through Economic Strangulation

1.1. Economic Strangulation

The economic embargo imposed on Nicaragua in 1985 by Reagan was one of the many tactics the US used to destabilize the Sandinista government. It is said, “economic warfare has long been used by Washington as a political instrument against countries considered unfriendly or threatening to US interest, and is usually aimed, as Henry Kissinger once put it with regard to Allende’s Chile, at making the economy scream.”[1]

Predictably, the economic boycott had severe repercussions for the Nicaraguan people, since they were deprived of basic social services, most notably health care. The boycott started as a blockade of trade between the two countries, but eventually the US persuaded its allies in Europe to join them in the embargo. However, a handful were reluctant. Even though the UN condemned the embargo, the US unilaterally enforced the embargo by convincing the IMF and WB to suspend further loans to the Sandinista government.

It’s argued by many non-partisan commentators that the economic war was designed to grind away at the country’s productive infrastructure, which had already been weakened by the Contra attacks, such as mining the harbors and blowing up underwater oil pipelines (which were imputed to the US by the World Court). The physical destruction was to be complemented by external economic pressures, including the trade embargo, the blocking of multilateral credits and the exclusion of Nicaragua from European and Latin American commerce. In fact, the 1985 embargo merely capped the creeping economic blockade,[2] which Reagan initiated soon after his second term began.

According to the findings of a group known as “Veterans Peace Action Team” (VPAT), the “United States boycott is killing civilians everyday through denying children and civilians access to medical supplies, clean drinking water, repairs to vehicles, safety and sanitation needs, and in some areas, food and livelihood.”[3]

The first move by the Reagan administration was to suspend until further notice the final payment of a US loan package to Nicaragua that had been approved by the outgoing Carter Administration. This was followed by a reduction of 20% of sugar importation to the US from Nicaragua and a proposed loan of $400 million dollars to the poor country from bilateral and
multilateral institutions, which the US blocked. This was a massive blow to the Sandinista government, as 34% of the country’s external financing came from the above sources.

By May 1985, an embargo was in place, prohibiting all imports into the US of goods and services of Nicaraguan origin and all exports from the US of goods destined for Nicaragua (excepting funds needed by the Contras to subvert the Sandinista government), as well as all air and sea travel between the two countries, which was the culmination of the four-year blockade.[4]

The embargo went a long ways in causing the Nicaraguan economy to go into a tailspin, because Nicaragua depended on the US for supplies for all its imports ranging from medical equipments to spare parts, and etc.

1.2. Damage Assessment

It’s difficult to precisely quantify the damage inflicted on the Nicaraguan economy by the US economic warfare, because specific losses are inextricably linked to losses accruing from other categories of US aggression, including the ripple effects of the latter as well as of the economic sanction itself. For example, it’s impossible to determine how much the GNP might have grown if the country had received the nearly $500 million dollars in credits blocked by the US. Nor is it possible to quantify losses in terms of the value of goods not produced due to the embargo.[5] Be that as it may, the overall impact is not debatable, in light of all the negative developments since 1990. Nicaragua is, after all, the second poorest country in the Western hemisphere, thanks in large measure to the consequences of the devastating terror war and economic warfare directed against it in the 80s.
In 1986, the ICJ, after carefully studying the case brought to it by Nicaragua, and after ruling out any Cold War connections, held the US in violation of international law for the “unlawful use of force,” both through its own actions and those of its Contra proxy army.

In fact, the US not only refused to recognize the Court’s jurisdiction but even escalated the atrocities, with bi-partisan support. Before the Court’s ruling, the ultra-right advocated the use of extreme violence to accomplish its goal (in Nicaragua), which was to destroy independent development. The “liberal left” agreed with the end but not with the means, prior to the Court’s judgment. It advocated extreme economic strangulation instead. But once the Court ruled in favor of Nicaragua, even ordering the US to immediately cease, desist and pay substantial reparations, the atrocities were, again, escalated with by-partisan support, virtually destroying the country to the point that it has still not recovered (and may never do so, as long as the majority in the West remains indoctrinated and, subsequently, apathetic).[1]

So the ICJ ruling from 1986 should be understood against the following background (in order to understand the reason for the mild and diplomatic language used by the Court in its ruling, including the fact that it makes no judgment about, or even mention of, ‘soft targets,’ thereby possibly casting some doubts in the minds of those who are not sufficiently familiar with the case): The ruling does talk about the unlawfulness of the US intervention through the Contras in Nicaragua’s internal affairs and violation of its territorial sovereignty, since the Contras were based in Honduras and Costa Rica where they were receiving training (“Honduras was [actually] a frontline country in the Contra war, [where] the Honduran military officers were working with the CIA to protect the Contras”[2]), but also because US involvement rendered the conflict international. And there can be no doubt that “unlawful use of force” is a technical term for “international terrorism.”

Be that as it may, there are a number of shortcomings in the Court’s judgment, which unfortunately space does not allow us to discuss. So let us bring to light the most significant shortcoming: The ICJ makes no mention of “soft targets” because the official authorization of attacks on soft targets was after the Court ruling. The Court used the term “unlawful use of force,” which is the legal term for either (1) international terrorism or (2) aggression, the latter be-

* The complete text of the ICJ ruling against the USG is available at [http://www.sandinovive.org/17b/JugmntJune27-86.htm](http://www.sandinovive.org/17b/JugmntJune27-86.htm)
ing a far more serious crime than the former. The ICJ could not take up the charge of aggression, or any other major issue, because it bent over backwards to accommodate the US, and threw out most of the Nicaraguan case (prepared by the distinguished Harvard law professor Abram Chayes, former US government official). The reason is instructive. When the US agreed in 1946 to accept ICJ jurisdiction (the US backed off on that as soon as Nicaragua brought the case), it entered a reservation: that the US would be exempt from any charges based on international law and treaties, such as the UN Charter or the OAS Charter, which make aggression a crime. That would utterly shock Europeans if it was done by some official enemy, but is conveniently suppressed when it is their master. For these reasons, the ICJ restricted itself to customary international law and a narrow bilateral US-Nicaragua treaty. And even on these narrow grounds issued the harshest condemnation it ever has was for international terrorism, also calling on the US to terminate the crimes and pay massive reparations, and drawing some rather strong general conclusions about the use of force. The US responded by escalating the war, including the explicit authorization of attacks on ‘soft targets,’ finally virtually destroying the country, which descended further into misery since the US took over again in 1991, and is now the second poorest in the hemisphere after Haiti, barely surviving. Of course, in the West none of this means a thing, or is even known, because of the deeply rooted imperial mentality, which grants the West the right to crush anyone into the dust at will.

It bears mention that Nicaragua even took its case to the UN, after failing to gain practical redress at the ICJ. A 1988 UN resolution that “urgently calls for full and immediate compliance with the Judgment of the International Court of Justice of 27 June 1986 in the case of ‘Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua’ in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations” was approved 94-2 (US and Israel voting no, as usual). The implication is important to spell out, because vetoing Security Council resolutions amounts to a double veto, since the resolution is typically banned from history, by the media and mainstream scholarship. The same thing applies to General Assembly resolutions, because in the real world of power and intellectual subordination to it, an abstention by the US amounts to a veto, whereas in the abstract world of ideology and academic seminars, an abstention does not amount to a veto (no contradiction; just a choice about the realm in which we choose to operate).

Last but not least, granted, Nicaragua appears to be the only country that has ever brought a case to the World Court against a superpower, but this does not mean that all other US military and CIA interventions have been legitimate.[3]
Conclusion

The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from this case study is that “Crime once exposed has no refuge but in audacity,”[1] which is why the US laughed off the Court’s ruling to desist and pay substantial reparations, and proceeded to even escalate the massive atrocities (from which Nicaragua may never recover), in utter contempt of international law and institutions. The less obvious conclusion is that terror is primarily a weapon of the powerful. The reason this fact is largely unknown among the more educated classes is because the powerful, besides having a near-monopoly on violence, also have overwhelming control over the ideological system: the media, scholarship, the schools, etc., so that their violence, once it’s filtered through the distorting prisms of the ideological system, appears to be benign, well-intentioned, inadvertent, or defensive. Another less obvious conclusion is that the economy cannot be kept afloat for elites without waging perpetual war against Third World countries,[2] for which purpose an endless series of enemies must be concocted, particularly in the U.S., since the more powerful a country is, the more fragile power tends to be, hence the more the powerful must resort to fear, so that by inducing fear in the domestic population, authority is thereby granted to the powerful.

To elaborate, soon after Reagan came to office, he declared a “war against terror.” The focal points of US foreign policy, Americans were told, were going to be Central America and the Middle East.[3] How was the “war against terrorism” fought in these regions? The total death toll in the five Central American countries that were targeted was about 200,000 unarmed civilians, with many more displaced, traumatized and driven to the razor edge of survival. In Lebanon, close to 20,000 unarmed civilians were killed by Israel and its Middle Eastern clients. Thousands of innocent civilians were also killed in the occupied territories by Israel, all with US support and approval, during Reagan’s tenure. So besides the obvious fact that the US-backed Contra war against Nicaragua was part of a much larger project that left close to 2 million dead in three different parts of the world, what does this tell us about the reigning level of the political and moral culture of Western elites? Simply put, that the law does not apply to them, and, therefore, that they can perpetrate horrible atrocities with complete impunity, as we’ve demonstrated.
The long and short of it is that, from time immemorial, the resort to fear has left an endless, horrifying trail of blood and misery by the powerful, all in the name of fighting an imaginary evil, during which time power and profit have been maximized. Those who wish to reverse the powerful currents of reaction and violence and oppression, showing that another world is possible (before the powerful “obliterate humanity, a capacity that they will exercise if the present social order evolves along its current paths,” as Chomsky has noted), can do so, if they commit themselves to radical social reconstruction, based on libertarian goals and visions.
Appendix 1

Nicaragua*

1979

Ruthless, repressive, pro-US and US-backed dictatorship of Somoza overthrown. New government ‘Sandinistas’ formed. The Sandinistas make dramatic improvements in nutrition, health care (reducing infant mortality to a third of the rate previously) and literacy (increasing literacy from 25% to 80%).

An Oxfam report entitled “The Threat of a Good Example?” (which sums up precisely the threat posed to the US by Nicaragua) on the Sandinistas concludes ‘in Oxfam’s experience of working in seventy-six developing countries, Nicaragua was to prove exceptional in the strength of that government commitment [to meeting the basic needs of the poor majority].’ This should be contrasted with Nicaragua’s neighbors at the time (Guatemala and El Salvador) who, as this article reports, had ‘military dictatorships responsible for the sheer institutionalisation of state terror, installed and propped up by the US. Tens of thousands of civilians were regularly slaughtered by government death squads trained and armed by the CIA. The vast majority of the populations were impoverished.’

1983

The CIA responds, under Reagan, by creating a paramilitary force to ‘stop the flow of military supplies from Nicaragua to El Salvador’ (despite little evidence of this actually occurring). The force grows to around 50,000 in the late 80s, and throughout the 80s mounts raids on Nicaragua, attacking schools and medical clinics, raping, kidnapping, torturing, massacres, mining harbors, etc.

* All the information in this Appendix is lifted verbatim from http://www.lossless-audio.com/usa/index8.php
1984

Reagan publicly claims to stop aid to ‘Contras,’ however, continues aid despite a congress ban, leading to Iran-Contra scandal.

1984

Elections are held in Nicaragua and Sandinistas win with 67% of the vote. International observer teams comment that they are the fairest elections to have been held in Latin America in many years.

1984

Associated Press discloses a 90 page CIA-produced training manual called “Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare” giving advice for the Contras on political assassinations, blackmailing, mob violence, kidnappings and blowing up public buildings, and calling for ‘implicit terror.’

1986

Nicaragua takes the case to the World Court in The Hague, who rule in their favor, ordering America to put a stop to its crime in Nicaragua and to pay massive reparations. America ignores the World Court’s ruling, not paying a cent and escalating the war.

1987

ICJ decides on the amount owed by the US to Nicaragua – $17 billion. US continues to ignore ruling.

1987

UN General Assembly calls on US to comply with ICJ’s judgment. US continues to ignore ruling. Call repeated in 1988.

1988

Reagan announces that he will no longer seek military aid for the Contras.

1990

Elections are held in Nicaragua, and the Sadistinas lose to the US-backed Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, after the US spends $9 million on her election campaign.[1]
Today

Nicaragua is crippled by highest per capita debt in the world. If the US were simply to honor the World Court ruling, the debt would be paid off three-fold.
Appendix 2

The reason for this appendix is so that the reader may have a clear understanding of what terrorism means, not in propagandistic terms but in factual ones, in light of the irrefutable evidence provided in this work that terrorism is primarily a weapon of the powerful (the fact that the opposite perception is the prevalent one among the more educated classes particularly is a tribute to agitprop).

Following is a definition of terrorism according to US Army Manuals:

[An] act of terrorism, means any activity that (A) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping.[1]

Implicit in this definition is the following, which might be important to spell out: The sense defined in official US documents should be understood as “the calculated use of violence or threat to attain goals that are political, religious, ideological or economic in nature. This is done through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear.”

Following is the FBI definition of terrorism:

The unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual, who has some connection to a foreign power or whose activities transcend national boundaries, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.[2]

U.S. Department of State’s definition:

Terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents.[3]

British Government’s definition of terrorism:

Terrorism is the use, or threat, of action which is violent, damaging or disrupting and is intended to influence the government or intimidate the public and is for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.[4]
In accordance with these—entirely appropriate—definitions, the recent attacks against the US were certainly an act of terrorism, in fact, a horrifying terrorist crime. There is scarcely any disagreement about this throughout the world, nor should there be. But people who are committed to elementary rationality and minimal standards of honesty will have no misgivings about applying these definitions universally and descriptively, regardless of who the perpetrators might be.
Endnotes

Introduction

[1] Naturally, the overall implications of this interplay between the Court’s ruling, America’s reaction and Nicaragua’s response will be spelled out, so that a distinction may be made between how Nicaragua chose to act within the framework of international law and institutions (rather than setting off bombs in Washington!), while the US chose to act completely outside this framework, thereby endangering the very fragile structure of international law.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework: Dependency Theory

[1] “Imperialism is a system in which financial elites expropriate the land, labor, resources, and markets of overseas populations. The end effect is the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the many. Imperialism involves coercive and frequently violent methods of preventing competing economic orders from arising. Resistant governments are punished and compliant ones, or clients states, are “rewarded” with military aid.” (Michael Parenti, Against Empire, San Francisco: City Light, 1995, p. 132)


[3] Case in point: in the words of the highly influential mainstream political scientist, Harold Lasswell, confirming in no uncertain terms the ferocious anti-democratic thrust among Western elites: “Modern events have sharply reminded us that distribution depends on myth and violence (on faith and brigandage) as well as bargaining.” (Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How, NY: Meridian Books, 1958, p. 8)


[6] “This reflects the power and interests that benefit the uncontrolled arms race, the status quo of domestic economic arrangements, and the external system of multinational expansion and collaboration with the Shahs, Suhartos, Marcos’s in the contemporary “development” and sacking of the Third World.” (Chomsky and Edward Herman, After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology. The Political Economy of Human Rights, Vol. II, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Book_Excerpts/AfterCataclysm_Chom.html)

Chapter 2: Genesis, Development and Activities of the Contras

[2] Ibid.
[4] This second manual, Psychological Operations in Guerilla Warfare, can be found in its entirety at http://www.fas.org/irp/cia/guerilla.htm

In brief, “the US is home to its very own terrorist training school, the School of the Americas (SOA), now located in Fort Benning, Georgia. The SOA was formed in 1946, one year before the CIA was created, in order to train Latin American dictators, death squad leaders, and military and police officers. The school has trained such notorious figures as El Salvador’s Roberto D’Abuisson, a 1972 graduate and the death squad leader responsible for the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980. SOA graduate Leopoldo Galtieri, dictator of Argentina between 1981 and 1982, was responsible for the death or disappearance of more than 30,000 people. Colonel Julio Roberto Alpírez, a two-time graduate of the SOA and a CIA “asset,” commanded the Guatemalan security force responsible for the deaths of more than 100,000 people throughout the course of a four-decade counterinsurgency war.” (Katherine Dwyer, Rogue State: A history
of U.S. terror, International Socialist Review, http://www.isreview.org/issues/20/rogue_state.shtml) This is just a tiny sample of the vast terrorist network and history of the U.S.

[8] For further evidence of illegal SOA activities, see the following works:

h) SOA Watch, the group that organizes annual protests, has a web site at www.soaw.org/. The web site www.thirdworldtraveler.com has a detailed history of the SOA. The official web site of the SOA is at http://www.benning.army.mil/usarsa/.

[12] “One purpose of the drug trade is the covert funding of paramilitary forces to harass or overthrow uncooperative governments. But a larger purpose is to funnel money into US banks and stock exchanges… Money launderers wash up to $1.5 trillion a year, with US banks the preferred vehicle through their correspondent networks. Large US corporations benefit from criminal proceeds, and US banking regulations permit many companies which trade their stock on Wall Street to deposit unlimited amounts of cash without scrutiny.” (Ed Rippy, “Where the Narcodollars Go,” 4/27/02, http://erippy.home.mindspring.com/Where_the_NarcoDollars_Go.html)

For some revealing insights into the interdependence between the CIA, drugs and the Press in the service of power and profit (if this sounds like a “conspiracy theory,” so be it), see Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, Whiteout, The CIA, Drugs and the Press, London and NY: Verso, 1998, chapters 7, 12, and 13, but particularly the latter. See also Gary Webb, “Dark Alliance,” http://home.attbi.com/~gary.webb/wshtml/view.cgi-home.html.html.
[13] This was when Noriega was on the CIA payroll, despite full knowledge of his criminal activities. Case in point: “Noriega facilitated “guns-for-drugs” flights for the contras, providing protection and pilots, safe havens for drug cartel officials, and discreet banking facilities. U.S. officials, including then-CIA Director William Webster and several DEA officers, sent Noriega letters of praise for efforts to thwart drug trafficking (albeit only against competitors of his Medellín cartel patrons). The U.S. government only turned against Noriega, invading Panama in December 1989 and kidnapping the general, once they discovered he was providing intelligence and services to the Cubans and Sandinistas. Ironically, drug trafficking through Panama increased after the U.S. invasion.” (William Blum, “The CIA, Contras, Gangs, and Crack,” http://www.irc-online.org/fpi/pdf/vol1/11fciad.pdf)

It is very important to bear in mind that drug trafficking in the context of the Contra war against Nicaragua was not a deviation from standard policy—quite the contrary. The U.S. government is, in fact, the biggest drug dealer in the world (and that’s putting aside the fact that nicotine is the most addictive and lethal drug in the world. E.g., in the U.S. alone, 400,000 people die from cigarette-related diseases every year, whereas in 1997 a record of 16,000 people succumbed to drug-related deaths in the U.S., i.e., from
hard drugs; and among Chinese children under 20 today, 50 million will die of cigarette-related diseases, courtesy of the US – to verify this claim, see Chomsky, Rogue States, London: Pluto Press, 2000, pp. 80, 150-51. Actually, the whole establishment pushes dope, including Bush Senior (at least in the past), the DEA and CIA, for whom drugs have long been a currency, just as they have been for Delta Force raids, US banks (including Wall Street and the IMF) and chemical companies. For a comprehensive account of CIA involvement in drug trafficking from Latin America to Southeast Asia to Afghanistan, starting in the 1950s, see:

a) Alfred W. McCoy, The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991 (this is the major source on the CIA’s post-war reconstruction of the Mafia by the US as part of its campaign to destroy the European labor movement).

b) Henrik Kruger, The Great Heroin Coup: Drugs, Intelligence, and International Fascism, Boston, 1980.

c) Christopher Robbins, Air America, NY, 1979, pp. 128, 225-243.


g) The Oliver North File: His Diaries, E-Mail, and Memos on the Kerry Report, Contras and Drugs, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 113, February 26, 2004 at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB113/index.htm


k) “CIA and Crack Cocaine” at http://www.geocities.com/~virtualtruth/crack.htm


[17] Michael Agar, The Story of Crack: Towards a Theory of Illicit Drug Trends, Volume 11, Number 1/February, 2003, http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/8cac231aqk5yrcalftx/contributions/e/k/n/vk/nvknrbujf883rjj.pdf (the reader has to create a user name and password with the Francis & Taylor Group to access this article, which is free of charge.) Kerry’s statement also cited in Cockburn & St. Clair, op. cit., p. 308.


Chapter 3: Why did the US attack Nicaragua?

[1] William Blum’s Killing Hope is a book about which not enough can be said. In it, he meticulously catalogues every single CIA and military intervention since WWII, drawing on a wealth of uncontroversial and very compelling sources.

[2] To verify the claim about the fraudulent missile gap, in the sense that it was claimed by many in the US that the Soviet Union was the one with the upper hand, see Raymond Garthoff, A Journey Through the Cold War, Daniel Ellsberg, Secrets (Ellsberg was one of the high-level analysts who discovered the facts in 1960-61 by satellite imaging and that the actual ratio was 10-1 in favor of the US, demonstrating that Eisenhower was correct in his assertions, including his final State of the Union address, that the missile gap was a myth), and McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival.


[7] Which yields a second corollary, namely, US foreign aid and egregious human rights violations. It’s not likely that the West has a particular interest in egregious human rights violations in the South. It’s just that the obsession with short-term profits inevitably leads to such a corollary outcome in the South. Does this absolve the West from all its monstrous crimes against humanity? Certainly not, since the correlation was seriously studied by the leading academic specialist on human rights in Latin America about 20 years ago: Lars Schoultz of the University of South Carolina. In other words, it’s entirely predictable that human rights violations will ensue from an obsession with profits for Western lenders and investors. There are two works by Schoultz on this type of correlation: *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981; and “U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights Violations in Latin America: A Comparative Analysis of Foreign Aid Distributions,” *Comparative Politics*, January 1981, pp. 149-170. An excerpt from the latter (pp. 155, 157, 162):

The correlations between the absolute level of U.S. assistance to Latin America and human rights violations by recipient governments are ... uniformly positive, indicating that aid has tended to flow disproportionately to Latin American governments which torture their citizens. In addition, the correlations are relatively strong. . . . United States aid tended to flow disproportionately to the hemisphere’s relatively egregious violators of fundamental human rights...

As in the case of absolute aid levels, these correlations are uniformly positive. Thus, even when the remarkable diversity of population size among Latin American countries is considered, the findings suggest that the United States has directed its foreign assistance to governments which torture their citizens.

[8] “PPS23: Review of Current Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy,” is available in its entirety at [http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/2496/future/kennan/pps23.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/2496/future/kennan/pps23.html). For the record, Kennan’s view is from the dovish, liberal, humane end of the spectrum. He was dismissed from the State Department largely because his views and policies were not hawkish enough.


[12] In any event, the reasons for Soviet support were, as stated above, always cynical, since power holders almost never act selflessly in their capacity as public officials. This is why we said in our Introduction that our approach is somewhat positivist with an empirical and normative touch, because we are safely generalizing based on the finding in US-Nicaragua relations in the 80s, and because what applied during the Cold War largely applies since the latter has officially been over. Put simply, Nicaragua was attacked because it refused to obey US orders, which has been the fate of all the Third World countries that have been attacked in one way or another by the US since WWII particularly, and by Britain during its days under the sun before the US emerged as a dominant global power after WWII.

**Chapter 4: Violence and the Threat of Peace**


[5] [www.rebecasiemers.efoliomn.com/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC=%7B662309C4-40A-4DC3-B2D2-D20326D06BD1%7D](http://www.rebecasiemers.efoliomn.com/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC=%7B662309C4-40A-4DC3-B2D2-D20326D06BD1%7D)

10. www.rebeccasiemers.efoliomn.com/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC=%7B6662309C4-40A-4DC3-B2D2-D20326D06BD1%7D
11. http://www.country-data.com/frd/cs/panama/pa_glos.html. Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador withdrew their support out of fear that they would lose economic or military aid money from the US if they accepted the treaty, according to the following source: www.rebeccasiemers.efoliomn.com/index.asp?Type=DYNAFORM&SEC=%7B6662309C4-40A-4DC3-B2D2-D20326D06BD1%7D

Chapter 5: Destabilizing the Sandinistas through Economic Strangulation

2. Ibid. p. 2. It bears mention that the US routinely imposes unilateral economic sanctions (which are illegal under international law) on Third World countries that refuse to follow US orders. The severity of the punishment is contingent upon a number of factors, most notably on rich natural resources. If the country in question is lacking in this respect, it must nevertheless be taught a lesson, so that “the rotten apple” effect (i.e., the threat of a good example) doesn’t spread to other countries. To verify the claim about US unilateral sanctions, see Someshwar Singh, Half The World Hit by US Unilateral Sanctions, Third World Economics (Jan. 16-31, 2000), http://wwwtwinside.org.sg/title/half-cn.html. See also Mark Sommers, “Sanctions are Becoming ‘Weapon of Choice’” CSM, Aug. 3, 1993.
4. Robinson, op. cit., p. 3.
5. Ibid., p. 6.

Chapter 6: The World Court’s Ruling

1. This is when representative figures of liberal intellectual life urged that Washington’s wars must be waged mercilessly, with military support for “Latin-style fascists, … regardless of how many are murdered,” because “there are higher American priorities than [Central American] human rights.” Michael Kinsley, who represents “the left” in mainstream commentary and TV debate, warned against unthinking criticism of Washington’s official policy of attacking undefended civilian targets, that is, after the ICJ ruling, since the policy of attacking ‘soft targets’ before the ICJ ruling was not official. Kinsley acknowledged that such international terrorist operations cause “vast civilian suffering,” but they may be “perfectly legitimate” if “cost-benefit analysis” shows that “the amount of blood and misery that will be poured in” yields “democracy,” as defined by the masters of the universe. The exact wording was as follows: “in a Marxist society geared up for war, there are no clear lines separating officials, soldiers and civilians”; what is required is careful “cost-benefit analysis,” a determination of “the amount of blood and misery that will be poured in, and the likelihood that democracy will emerge at the other end” (New Republic editor Michael Kinsley, Wall Street Journal (WSJ), March 26, 1987; New Republic, March 19, 1990). It is, shockingly enough, taken for granted that the US has the right to carry out the cost-benefit analysis and to pour in blood and misery if it determines that the likelihood of “democracy enhancement” at home is sufficiently high.
3. Blum’s Killing Hope and Michael Mandel’s How America Gets Away with Murder, provide irrefutable evidence that all US and CIA interventions since WWII have been both illegal (according to international—as opposed to corporate—law) and illegitimate. The reason corporate law is mentioned here is because everything that the state-corporate power nexus in the US (and elsewhere in the West) does is perfectly legal without being legitimate, whereas by the standards of international law (which means nothing to those with
power), the state-corporate nexus commits massive crimes against humanity on a regular basis. So clearly what has a legal basis is not a matter of law but of power.

**Conclusion**


[2] The reasons for this are a bit complex, which space does not allow us to discuss. For an honest discussion of the hows and whys of the permanent war economy in the U.S., see Chomsky, “Permanent War Economy,” *Counterpunch Magazine*, July 31, 2004, http://www.counterpunch.org/merlin07312004.html

[3] During this time a considerable amount of assistance was given to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, which presided over the slaughter of 1.5 million non-combatant civilians in Southern Africa, not counting the victims in South Africa itself—property damage was estimated by the UN at around $60 billion dollars.

**Appendix 1**

[1] To elaborate, although the Contras captured a number of towns, hurt the Nicaraguan economy and killed at least 13,000 unarmed civilians throughout the 80s, nevertheless, they never posed a military threat to Managua or other large cities as such (www.onwar.com/aced/nation/nap/nicaragua/fnicaragua1981.htm), in the light of the fact that the Sandinista government stayed in power for nearly a decade in spite of the proxy terror war unleashed against it. Its removal came about through unfree and unfair elections (see note 2), as the US had at its disposal more than war and embargo to determine the winner of the election in 1990. Case in point: “The National Endowment for Democracy spent more than $11 million dollars, directly and indirectly, on the election campaign in Nicaragua. This is comparable to a foreign government pouring more than $700 million dollars into an American election, in addition to several million dollars allocated by Congress to “supporting the electoral infrastructure” and the unknown number of millions the CIA passed around covertly.” (Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 304.)

[2] “Suppose that some power of unimaginable strength were to threaten to reduce the United States to the level of Ethiopia unless we voted for its candidates, demonstrating that the threat was real. Suppose that we refused, and the threat was then carried out, the country brought to its knees, the economy wrecked and millions killed. Suppose, finally, that the threat were repeated, loud and clear, at the time of the next scheduled elections. Under such conditions, only the most extreme hypocrite would speak of a free election. Furthermore, it is likely that close to 100% of the population would succumb. Apart from the last sentence, I have just described U.S.-Nicaraguan relations for the last decade.” (Chomsky, *The Boston Globe*, March 4, 1990, cited in Brian Wilson, “How the US purchased the 1990 Nicaragua elections,” http://www.brianwillson.com/awolnicelection.html)

On the other hand, “Contrary to US media predictions, the November 4, 1984, Nicaraguan national elections were not rigged by the ruling Sandinistas nor were they the rubber-stamp of Soviet Communism… In fact, as events were to prove, the election was the very model of fairness itself. More than 70 percent of eligible voters cast ballots, with a third of the votes going to opposition parties on both the political left and right… The election also revealed the fallacy of official U.S. claims of Soviet domination of Nicaraguan politics: total Communist Party votes accounted for only 3.9 percent of votes cast. Finally, accounts of election day activities revealed no evidence of election fraud and no violence—except by the CIA-backed contras.” (Carl Jensen and Project Censored, *20 Years of Censored News*, NY: Seven Stories, 1997, p. 156. See also Andrew Reding, “What Really Happened on November 4?”, *Christianity and Crisis*, 12/24/84, http://www.worldpolicy.org/globalrights/nicaragua/1984-1224-C&C.html)

**Appendix 2**


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