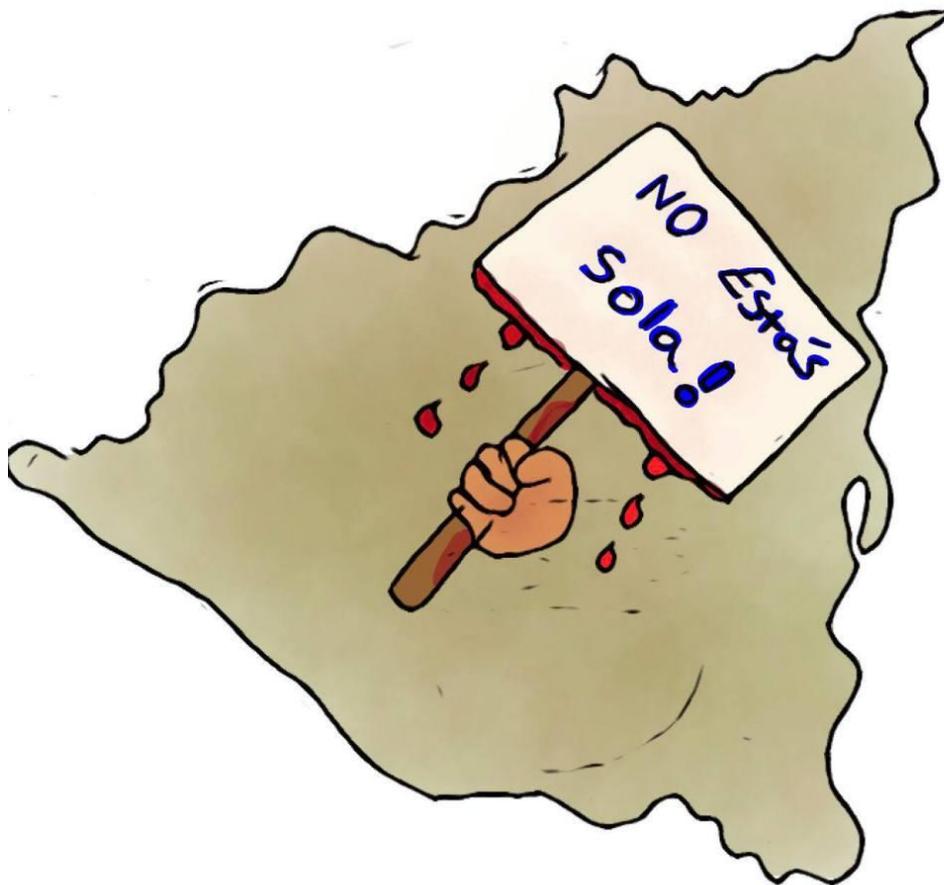


# POLITICAL MANIPULATION? NICARAGUA PROTESTS

Disclaimer: It is extremely important to identify that the frustration and upset that the violence and government errors have caused before entertaining political theories. The deaths must be respected, and those responsible for those killings must be held accountable in every possible way.

Upon reading the news about Nicaragua, the first thing that jumps out is the clear aim from the US for a 'regime change' in the country. There's a very good reason why many have started to believe that there has been an aspect of political manipulation involved with the devastating protests.



To summarise extremely briefly, since mid-April a wave of violence

rapidly escalated around Nicaragua. Recent reports state that 215 lives have been taken, whilst hundreds more have been injured. The entire country has been polarised, beginning as a stand against a new social security law which tidal waded into political threats, attacks and destruction. The deaths, mainly of protesters, have mainly been a result of the police inexcusably and demoralizingly using live ammunition – something which hasn't happened in Nicaragua for thirty years. Situations like this are heart-breaking threats to the very fragile democratic rights that we, all over the world, have. Additionally, outbreaks like this have detrimental consequences to the economy – especially the tourist industry. It's important to recognise that those living on poverty margins are the ones most affected by economic disruptions, making it our ethical responsibility (As sheltered observers) to help those that are most vulnerable. So, why has a country that had a promisingly growing economy, with great investment in education, health and social programmes so quickly erupted into such violence?

## MEMORIES OF THE PAST

Whilst the country appears to be slowly reducing the tension now, the families, friends and communities continue to mourn the death of their loved ones. This new violence hauls painful memories from the past right back up. In the 1980s 30,000 people died as a result of the Contra War. The Contras were the name given to the various right-wing rebel groups, funded and supported by the US, as an opposition to the Socialist government in Nicaragua. The war ended in 1990 and since then, the country has seen peaceful transitions, remaining basically completely stable until these very recent events.

Of course, passion for politics and peaceful protests are an almost innate part of Nicaragua. In these cases, the blatant disregard for democracy and human life has caused a major shudder that has undulated many Western countries with shock and horror.

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION

We won't speak for everybody, but here in Britain social media has been basically our main source for news and updates of the Nicaragua crisis. And although social media is a wonderful platform, it can be extremely difficult to dissect the truth from the fabrications. Without even realising, we all pick and choose exactly what we want to see choosing to believe whatever fits our opinions, with social media it is much easier to filter which articles, videos and overall thoughts that you choose to see – usually deriving from the people and news sources that you have selected to appear on your timeline. Independent reporters or news sources are wrongly being passed as unbiased experts on social media, using rhetoric that ultimately reflects their position and further fuelling the polarisation... disguising itself as thoughtful objective reporting.

## THE US INVOLVEMENT?

It's actually extremely easy to draw comparisons to the conflict which is happening now to the conflict Nicaragua experienced in the 1980s. One read of the CIA Freedom Fighters Manual from the 1980s could give you more than enough indication as to why there's scepticism surrounding the protests. The Manual gives gainful tips on how to destabilise a government these include; sabotage, spreading rumours, destruction of infrastructure, blocking roads etc. This combined with the very blatant observation that Daniel Ortega is almost, like, unfinished business for the US, there's every reason to suspect that there could be slight manipulation here.



Photo Credit: Alisdare Hickson / Flickr

Examining just how quickly protests, that was initially about social security, intensified into such devastating obliteration, just screams politically motivated operation in our opinion. Not only that, NED (set up by the Regan administration to allow the CIA to interfere in internal affairs of other countries) granted about \$4.2million to Nicaraguan NGOs that were opposed to Ortega... we'll let you draw your own conclusions from that.

Is it possible that given the destabilisation deriving from the Trump administration that the US now wants to mould Nicaragua into what they believe is the right type of democracy? Swaying any positivity away from left-wing ideologies? You see before the very recent violent protests, the economy in Nicaragua was growing, tourism was better than ever, and a newer, positive image of Nicaragua was being projected internationally. Politics and theories aside, what is extremely clear is that those that will be the most affected by this wave of conflict will be those living on

poverty lines. Price rises, food shortages and destruction of buildings will be felt most heavily by those already disadvantaged in society, especially women. It's also important to recognise the innocent lives that have been lost, including that of a [one-year-old baby](#). There's really no excuse for these actions.

Of course, change needs to happen, for the impoverished more than anybody. These past weeks have been a telling symbol of how fragile Nicaragua is both politically and economically. But there is hope; the country has bounced back once before and there's no reason why they can't do it again.