

withdrawal of foreign military advisers; restrictions on arms imports and on the holding of foreign military bases and the cessation of aid to irregular forces; the establishment of a Verification and Control Commission, composed of an international corps of inspectors, to monitor the implementation of the security clauses. In addition, the treaties have addressed the origins of conflict — social and economic injustice and the lack of democratic development — without prescribing a particular political system for their resolution in any nation.

On two occasions, September 1984 and June 1986, Nicaragua agreed to the Contadora proposals. On both occasions, however, the United States persuaded other Central American nations to voice reservations concerning control and verification as well as other matters. Although several key security clauses still remain to be negotiated, the core issue remains the draft treaties' call for regional and extra-regional governments to cease giving support to armed opposition groups. This provision conflicts with the Reagan Administration's policy of military assistance to the *contras*, who seek to overthrow the Sandinista government and reverse the revolutionary process that began in 1979 with the deposition of the Somoza family dictatorship, which had ruled Nicaragua since the 1930s.

While Contadora leaders have interpreted the Nicaraguan Revolution (as well as the rise of insurgencies in other Central American countries) as a response to longstanding socio-economic and political problems, the Reagan Administration has viewed it as a manifestation of Soviet and Cuban expansionism. Even before his election, the President's advisers had already concluded that "the Americas are under external and internal attack. Latin America . . . is being overrun by Soviet supported and supplied Satellites and Surrogates." Accordingly, the United States has been unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of the Sandinista government.

In March 1981, shortly after his inauguration, President Reagan authorized \$19 million² for covert operations against Nicaragua. With the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), a counter-revolutionary military force — the *contras*, commanded by deposed dictator Somoza's former National Guardsmen — was organized in Honduras. Later, *contra* operations were also directed from Costa Rica and El Salvador. In the course of the so-called secret war, it was revealed that the United States had mined Nicaragua's harbours and organized attacks on its oil storage installations during 1983-84. When Nicaragua took the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the

² All currency figures are in US dollars unless otherwise indicated.