

2. the destruction or weakening of traditional social institutions as part of the same process, without the development of any substitutes. This left an institutional vacuum, with attendant alienation and frustration;
3. the uneven distribution of the gains of economic growth, with the result that economic development in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s actually widened the income gap between rich and poor. This was exacerbated by extremely rapid population growth at the lower end of the income scale;
4. massive corruption, which alienated not only the poor, but also many elements of the private sector of business;
5. the sudden end to economic growth associated with the oil price increases of 1973 and 1979 and the recessions and shrinking markets for Nicaraguan goods that followed. One major political consequence of this stifling of the growth process was that it became impossible to maintain political stability during a period of rapid social change by giving rising social groups a better economic, if not political, deal;
6. a rising tide of nationalism among the educated élite which, given the realities of power in the region, was and is generally expressed as anti-Americanism.

In such conditions, the development of armed groups committed to the destruction of the domestic politico-economic status quo and to a re-ordering of their country's relations with the United States was natural. There seems to be little need to explain it in terms of external involvement.

This is not to say that external forces had no role whatsoever in the Nicaraguan Revolution. Many of the leaders of the Sandinistas had longstanding ties to Cuba, and were inspired by the example of the Cuban Revolution. Although the Cubans remained aloof from what remained of the guerrilla movements in Central America in the early and mid-1970s, the abortive 1978 uprising in Nicaragua rekindled their interest in the region.⁴³ Though solid evidence is lacking, it would not be surprising if Cuba contributed to some degree to the financing and arming of the Sandinistas in the last stages of their struggle for power. It is generally accepted, however, that the major sources of external assistance to the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement were the sympathetic non-communist states of Panama, Venezuela and Costa Rica.

⁴³ W. Leogrande, "Cuba", in R. Wesson, ed., *Communism in Central America and the Caribbean* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), pp. 39, 41.