

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIV-7

**David J. Lee.** *The Ends of Modernization: Nicaragua and the United States in the Cold War Era.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. ISBN13: 9781501756214 (hardcover, \$54.95).

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Introduction by Alan McPherson, Temple University

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I am proud to say that David Johnson Lee's *The Ends of Modernization: Nicaragua and the United States in the Cold War Era* began as a dissertation in my department at Temple University. Lee wrote it before I joined, so I cannot take credit, but I will claim it for my colleagues.

I am also delighted to introduce a roundtable of reviews that largely agree that Lee's book makes a valuable contribution to several literatures—on US-Nicaraguan relations most narrowly, but also on the study of modernization, development, the Cold War, and US foreign policy. Patrick Iber praises the book as “an erudite and insightful work of history that should rank among the year's best” while Emily Snyder calls it “a welcome addition to a growing historiographical interest in late twentieth-century Nicaragua and revisions of former interpretations of the Sandinista Revolution.” The criticisms in this roundtable largely regret that the book is too brief, or that the author could have pushed his analysis further in several directions, thus demonstrating the complexity and subtlety of any study looking at development in the context of empire.

Stephen Rabe praises Lee's research in Nicaraguan sources and the resulting analysis of economic and social consequences that he gleans of US-led modernization schemes. He does point to some inaccuracies in the book and faults Lee for portraying US policy as “more unified and straightforward than it actually was.” Rabe, like most of the other reviewers, most admires Lee's chapter on the post-earthquake reconstruction of Managua, whose US-designed decentralization, which was meant to spur democratization, led to dictator Anastasio Somoza's enrichment and to the defeat of his political rivals. Finally, Rabe and Lee disagree on whether Lee should have more directly condemned the presidency of Daniel Ortega.

William Michael Schmidli joins Rabe in seeing Lee's Central American research as “a corrective to the US-centric perspective,” especially on a topic such as Nicaragua, which often remains mired in Cold War dichotomies. Lee explores, for instance, Nicaragua's own intellectual traditions and how they informed the struggles for power among Conservatives. Like others, he appreciates Lee's focus on “changing international development paradigms”: from infrastructure development to anti-poverty programs to the promotion of entrepreneurship, from the 1960s to the 1990s. These “ends of modernization” all had political consequences, which often ran counter to Washington's proclamations of democracy promotion.

Iber and Snyder delve most deeply into the implications of Lee's work for modernization studies and the many paths he could have pursued. Iber compares *The Ends of Modernization* to Michel Gobat's earlier work on an earlier era of US empire in Nicaragua and Nicaraguan elites' response to it.<sup>1</sup> He admires Lee's “attending to the multiple actors that had a stake in how development was implemented and understood.” He also notes that Lee breaks free of bilateralism, including as he does the role of other Central American nations, Canadians and Europeans, the Catholic Church, and the Socialist International. He does identify some areas where questions remain, for instance “whether the US experiences with development in Nicaragua drove changes elsewhere, or whether they were essentially independent discoveries that were repeated across the globe.” He suggests that events in Nicaragua seem “totally consonant with changes occurring elsewhere.”

Snyder, meanwhile, devotes the most time to discussing how Lee or other scholars might further develop the questions he is asking. For instance, Lee could have offered more on the Sandinistas' internal development policy besides the group's application to the Miskito and more on Sandinista relations with the Socialist International. Equally, more could be done on peasants, workers, and the Miskito. “How did AID shape everyday people's lives,” she asks, “and how did they contest or leverage the role of AID money in their organizations?” Perhaps the most fertile ground for further research, as her critique indicates, is the field of development studies. “How does the changing nature of development ideologies shape our understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

the insurrection years, and the trajectory of the Sandinista revolution and attendant counterrevolution?" she further asks. "Does development, revolution, and counterrevolution begin and end with land?"

One of the markers of a good book is how it prompts its readers toward greater curiosity by asking more searching questions. Lee's book certainly has succeeded at that task.

### Participants:

**David J. Lee** (Ph.D., Temple University, 2015) teaches history in Philadelphia. He is author of *The Ends of Modernization: Nicaragua and the United States in the Cold War Era* (Cornell, 2021). He is currently working on projects on democracy in the Caribbean and on indigenous movements and US foreign policy.

**Alan McPherson** earned his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2001. He is currently Professor of History and Director of the Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy at Temple University. He has written or edited eleven books and dozens of peer-reviewed articles and chapters. His latest book is *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice* (North Carolina, 2019), and he is working on a history of the Iran-Contra scandal.

**Patrick Iber** is an associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He earned his Ph.D. in 2011 from the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America*, which was published by Harvard University Press in 2015. He is currently working on a history of the Ford Foundation and the social science of poverty. He writes regularly for *Dissent* and *The New Republic*.

**Stephen G. Rabe** is the Ashbel Smith Chair in History (*emeritus*) at the University of Texas at Dallas, where he served for forty years. He has subsequently been an affiliated faculty member at the Clark Honors College of the University of Oregon. Rabe received his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in 1976, under the direction of Dr. Thomas G. Paterson. Dr. Rabe has taught or lectured in twenty countries and held the Mary Ball Washington Chair in American History at University College, Dublin and the Fulbright Bicentennial Chair in American Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has edited or written thirteen scholarly books. Cambridge University Press will release in mid-2022 his newest book, "The Lost Paratroopers of Normandy: A Story of Resistance, Courage, and Solidarity in a French Village."

**William Michael Schmidli** teaches in the Institute for History at Leiden University. Schmidli's research focuses on the evolving significance of human rights, democracy promotion, and transnational advocacy networks from the Cold War to the present. He is the author of *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and US Cold War Policy toward Argentina* (Cornell, 2013), the co-editor of *The Reagan Administration, the Cold War, and the Transition to Democracy Promotion* (Palgrave Macmillan 2019), and has published articles in *Diplomatic History*, *Cold War History*, and *Diplomacy and Statecraft*. His book *Freedom on the Offensive: Human Rights, Democracy Promotion, and US Interventionism in the Late Cold War* will be published in 2022.

**Emily Snyder** is the Mellon Research Fellow in American History at Cambridge University. She earned her Ph.D. in Latin American and Caribbean History from Yale University in 2021. Her research examines the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary relationships between Cuba, Nicaragua, and the United States in the 1980s. Her articles can be found in *The Americas*, *Radical History Review*, and *Cuban Studies*.

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 Review by Patrick Iber, University of Wisconsin, Madison
 

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David Johnson Lee's *The End of Modernization* is an erudite and insightful work of history that should rank among the year's best. It uses the lens of modernization to examine Nicaragua in the years from the Alliance for Progress to the present. In doing so, it brings together elements of political and diplomatic history with disaster studies and the history of the social sciences. It is seasoned with excursions to literature and the arts. Reading *The Ends of Modernization*, I could not shake the sense that the book could be considered as a kind of spiritual and chronological successor to Michel Gobat's *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under US Imperial Rule*.<sup>2</sup> Reading the two in parallel, in my view, provides an opportunity to think through some of the historiographical shifts of the last years.

Like *The Ends of Modernization*, Gobat's book also examines the complex dynamics between Nicaragua's elite Conservatives and the power of the United States. Gobat, of course, wrote about a different era: that of gunboat and dollar diplomacy, and the long US occupation that ended in 1933. Using archives in the traditional Conservative stronghold of Granada, he showed that that Nicaragua's experience diverged in significant ways from that of other occupations, such as those of Cuba or the Dominican Republic. Gobat's analytical lens—reflecting current debates at the time of the book's writing and publication in the early 2000s—was not modernization per se but Americanization. Of course, part of what was at stake in that earlier literature was whether there was a meaningful distinction to be drawn between those two concepts.<sup>3</sup>

In Gobat's account, elite Nicaraguans responded to the shock of the William Walker filibuster of 1856 and 1857 by committing to a path of growth that would provide protection from future foreign incursions. While the power of the United States was not yet what it would be, updating economic practices would still involve adopting techniques of the wealthy and proximate country. But when the first US occupation began in 1912, it was selective in the ways that it imposed US institutions. Wall Street banks were put in charge of the country's finances, but they focused on debt-payment rather than infrastructural development. As a result, and probably counterintuitively, elite producers suffered while the middle-ranking peasantry seemed to gain. This was interpreted as a crisis of elite masculinity that was heightened, for Conservative Catholics, by the prominence of Protestant churches and education. As the US went about building and empowering the Guardia Nacional to dismantle patronage networks—in order to achieve its interpretation of democratization and prepare for an exit—it further alienated Nicaraguan Conservatives. In 1928, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Zelaya was the first member of the elite class to lose an election in rural Nicaragua. The United States took it as evidence that its democratization campaign was working. But Gobat uses it to explain how the anti-US rebel Augusto Sandino could be viewed with sympathy by some Conservatives, who had their own reasons to oppose the US presence. After US withdrawal, the head of the US-trained Guardia Nacional, Anastasio Somoza (who was associated with the Liberal party), seized dictatorial power. Somoza designed his government to serve the interests of the middle sectors of the peasantry, strengthened, however inadvertently, by US rule. For Gobat, writing in 2005, shortly after the US invasion of Iraq, there were warnings to heed about the “illiberal effects of liberal imperialism.”<sup>4</sup>

If Gobat explores the ways that US ideas about economic development and political modernization interacted with Nicaraguan political structures in the early twentieth century, Lee carries out that task for the second half. In the years after World War II, a school of scholarship known as “modernization” emerged, hoping to manage the transition of “underdeveloped” and colonial countries towards liberal democracy and away from

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Much of the literature on Americanization was focused on Europe: Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, 280.

Communism. Modernization became, in other words, not just a process of economic transformation but also an “ideology,” and a body of literature exists to describe it.<sup>5</sup> Lee’s book begins in this Cold War period. “The idea of modernization at the center of Nicaragua’s Cold War history,” Lee writes, “inspired an acute form of narrative contestation, as both opponents and proponents recognized modernization’s catastrophic character.” (2) What works particularly well about the book, in my view, is its effort to track changes in ideas of development over time, while also attending to the multiple actors that had a stake in how development was implemented and understood.

Consider, for example, the first chapter on the Alliance for Progress. President John Kennedy’s signature initiative for the region, a promise of justice through economic growth and political democracy, was the height of “modernization theory” in action. It was intended to provide an alternative modernity to the revolutionary path of Cuba. Other scholars have emphasized the ways that Alliance for Progress and development aid tended to reinforce authoritarianism.<sup>6</sup> In Nicaragua, Lee shows, different parts of the Alliance promise were emphasized, and others abandoned. The pro-democracy constituency, consisting of the social-democratic networks of ex-president José Figueres in Costa Rica, New Dealer Adolf Berle in the Kennedy administration, and the political activist Fernando Agüero from Nicaragua’s Conservative Party, were not given strong backing. Instead, economic modernization was tasked with producing the conditions for change. Luis Anastasio Somoza, the son of the first Somoza dictator and president from 1956-63, embraced a technocratic developmentalist agenda and declared that his government offered a “transition to democracy.” But many US aid projects (such as an agricultural road on an island half owned by the Somoza family) seemed to be helping cement the family’s power. At the same time, the US also funded institutions like the Instituto Nicaragüense de Desarrollo, which functioned as intermediary organization in the dictatorship and prefigured the support for civil society organizations that would increasingly be part of the US diplomatic toolkit under various rubrics in the years to come. Nevertheless, the defeat of the Conservative candidates in 1963 and 1967, and the killing of Agüero supporters in that latter year, marked an end to hopes of alternation. As it had during the military occupation of the early twentieth century, the US had a nominal commitment to democracy, while the practical effects of its actions were to create the conditions for authoritarianism. “The Alliance for Progress succeeded as counterinsurgency in defusing the threat of insurrection from Nicaragua’s traditional elites,” writes Lee, “but in transforming Nicaragua’s internal power struggles into Cold War struggles, the Alliance would make leftist insurrection the only viable option for political change.” (40) After 1967 some prominent Conservatives, like Ernesto Cardenal, embraced radical fusions of Christianity and Marxism.

The subsequent chapters track changes in enthusiasms for development: urban planning after the earthquake in 1972, a shift towards anti-poverty measures rather than infrastructure development in the later 1970s, and a shift away from poverty alleviation and towards entrepreneurship during the Reagan years. These ideas, however, are hardly the exclusive focus of the text. At least as much attention is given to the shifting coalitions in Nicaragua’s political structures, and their relationship to outside actors. The permutations of the Conservative Party might have provided an equally good thread to orient the reader to the material. Even the Chamorro family itself could have provided a good deal of the framing: from Emiliano Chamorro launching failed uprisings, to the journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, who was assassinated in 1978, and his widow, Violeta Chamorro de Barrios, who was elected president in 1990. (And even to Carlos Fernando Chamorro today, who is not mentioned in the book but is a journalist like his murdered father and a prominent opponent of the current government of Daniel Ortega.)

One of the great virtues of the *The Ends of Modernization* is to show the texture of international activity within Nicaragua. US plans are never absent, of course, in overt, covert, and forms that fall between. But they are not

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<sup>5</sup> Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Thomas C. Field, *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014).

alone. There are the forces of Central American neighbors, of labor unions, the Catholic Church, of the Socialist International, of the Canadian, Dutch, and Scandinavian organizations that supported publications during the Sandinista years and beyond. The various interests and enthusiasms of these groups, and their connections to factions within Nicaragua, do an excellent job of presenting the complex alliances that marked the country's politics.

In a book that I found well-reasoned, well-researched, and well-written, there is little need to go looking for trouble where it does not exist. But one thing that the book does not do is establish whether the US experiences with development in Nicaragua drove changes elsewhere, or whether they were essentially independent discoveries that were repeated across the globe. The shifting judgments regarding what would be prudent or effective policy within communities of US policy planners and social scientists, after all, are totally consonant with changes occurring elsewhere. Dawning awareness of the problems of development via large infrastructure projects, for example, was not simply a feature of those working in Nicaragua.<sup>7</sup> There were, of course, national particularities, given the nature of the dictatorship and its opposition, among other things, but the patterns followed in Nicaragua were not unusual. It seems to me quite unlikely that it was Nicaragua that informed those changes. With the exception of the Revolutionary years, it would be hard to make the case that the country was the focus of significant attention from the rest of the globe. But perhaps it is for the best that the book does not overreach with its conclusions.

Both Gobat's book in 2005 and Lee's in 2021 are concerned with the ways that empire attempts to produce changes in the politics and economy of a less powerful country, and the ways that people in that country tried to manage those efforts. If Gobat wrote of the "illiberal effects of liberal imperialism," Lee writes that the "instability at the heart of US policy toward Nicaragua is a direct consequence of the paradoxes of an empire run by democracy" (3). Reading the two together reinforces an argument of Michael Latham: that modernization theory sounded similar notes to U.S. occupations of the first half of the twentieth century, from the Philippines to the Caribbean Basin.<sup>8</sup> With all of the similarities between the books, it is noteworthy that the military nature of US occupation means that for Gobat that there is a single primary institution to examine, while Lee must reckon with a wider variety of agencies and actors. Perhaps that is one reason that the questions of Americanization that seemed urgent to an earlier historiographical cycle now seem more diffuse. Or maybe it is that capitalism now no longer seems identified with US victory in the Cold War, as it did emerging from the 1990s. Now, perhaps, capitalism is identified with a system that is larger and more powerful than a nation-state, even an imperial one, can control or contain. As the book brings the reader to the present, with a government headed by Daniel Ortega that many critics compare to that of Somoza, it is a reminder that the country's politics will continue to be shaped by the ways that the possibilities for economic development can be made to be compatible with the interests of complex coalitions of national and international actors.

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<sup>7</sup> For a recent examination that ties developmentalist thinking to "neoliberalism" in the Colombian context, see Amy C Offner, *Sorting out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 13–16.

Reading and reviewing David Johnson Lee's book on Cold War relations between Nicaragua and the United States, *The Ends of Modernization*, proved a challenging task. I say this within the context of my experience of serving as a reviewer and referee. My first review appeared in the *American Historical Review* in 1979, and, since then, I have submitted countless book reviews and referee reports to university presses, history journals, and book prize committees. Usually, I think I know what to say about a piece of scholarship. But this book left me uncertain, because there is so much that is outstanding in it as well as assertions and approaches that I found problematic.

The author conducted world-class research and worked in archives in the United States, Europe, and Central America. His published sources are in both Spanish and English. Lee also incorporated Nicaraguan novels into his analyses. It must have taken years to carry out this research. This hard work left Lee with an acute understanding of the key philosophical and political issues in Nicaragua from the 1960s to the present. Much of the debate within Nicaragua during the Cold War was less about international issues and more about defining and defending a distinct Nicaraguan identity. To use a word favored by young people, the author's research is 'awesome.' Based on his research effort alone, Lee deserves a book prize for *The Ends of Modernization*.

Lee especially puts his research to good use in my favorite chapters "De-Centering Managua" and "Dis-integrating Rural Development." I once noted, in an article on the historiography of inter-American relations, that the field needed more studies on the sociocultural and environmental effects of US investment, trade and, foreign aid in Latin America.<sup>9</sup> In terms of the Alliance for Progress, Jeffrey Taffet answered that call with his analysis of the impact of Alliance money in the 1960s in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic.<sup>10</sup> Lee has taken us a step further with his brilliant dissection of urban planning and foreign aid in Nicaragua. In the aftermath of the catastrophic earthquake that destroyed the capital city, Managua, on 23 December 1972, international aid agencies, including the US Agency for International Development, rushed to Nicaragua with money and copious advice. The core of old Managua was small, congested, and unsafe. But it was also vibrant and home to small entrepreneurs who managed to keep themselves apart from the Somoza family tyranny (1937-1979). Without consulting with displaced Nicaraguans, US and international aid agencies decided to decentralize the city by building roads to surrounding areas and bypassing the old downtown. The plan was perfect for President Anastasio Somoza Debayle (1967-1979), the last and greediest of the clan. His political opponents were dispersed, and Somoza and his sycophants gained inside information on where roads would run and new housing and shopping centers would be built. They bought up the land, enhancing their personal wealth and power.

President Somoza and his *Guardia Nacional's* (National Guard's) rapacious and murderous conduct in the countryside is better known, but Lee adds substantial detail to the story. The Alliance for Progress foreign-aid program seemingly had a rare achievement in Somoza's Nicaragua. The nation's economy averaged 4 percent a year growth in the 1960s, the highest in Latin America. Nicaragua, a very small country both in size and population, became the world's eleventh largest producer of cotton, and cattle production grew by 46 percent during the 1960s. US development officers saw in this commercial development an opportunity for Nicaragua to increase its export income and develop new products for the growing Central American Common Market. Intraregional trade grew by over 700 percent in the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> As Lee demonstrated, the commercialization of agriculture left Nicaraguan *campesinos* demonstrably poorer. Banks controlled by the Somoza financial empire denied credit to *campesinos* as a way of forcing them off the land and opening new regions to cattle

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, "Marching Ahead (Slowly): The Historiography of Inter-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 13 (Summer 1989): 315-16.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 158-59.

grazing or industrial agriculture, like a new Nestlé milk factory. The Somoza government then proposed colonization, moving the landless to eastern parts of Nicaragua. When rural folk opposed such schemes and tried to seize land, they faced the awful tyranny of the *Guardia Nacional*. Wholesale massacres of *campesinos* ensued. Under the rubric of ‘modernization,’ the Alliance for Progress promised to foster economic growth, socioeconomic reform, and democracy. In Nicaragua, Alliance officials settled on focusing on economic growth, with a misplaced hope, however unconscious, in the nineteenth-century philosophy of August Comte and Positivism that democracy and social justice would evolve from national prosperity. In fact, as Lee concluded, this new version of modernization created revolutionary ferment in the countryside.

The author thankfully avoided using the dreadful word ‘agency’ in analyzing Nicaragua’s relationship with the United States. But Nicaraguan elites knew how to manipulate the United States. Somoza had in his back pocket US legislators like John M. Murphy (D-NY) and Charles N. Wilson (D-Texas). The dictator’s relationship with Ambassador Turner Shelton (1970-1975) was such that Somoza commissioned a new currency, a twenty-peso note that had the images of Somoza and Shelton on it. To be sure, Somoza hardly had to go to such lengths to curry US favor. President Richard Nixon professed that Latin America required ‘strong leadership’ and hosted Somoza and his wife at a grand dinner in Washington in June 1971. Nixon’s national security adviser and future secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, responded to an inquiry from the Department of Defense on whether \$100,000 in a residual fund should be transferred to Nicaragua with a rhetorical question. Kissinger asked: “Why shouldn’t it be considered—because it’s a dictatorship?”<sup>12</sup> But manipulation of the United States was not limited to dictators. President Violetta Chamorro (1990-1997) welcomed US influence in her country in the post-Sandinista era and acceded to some US demands, such as dropping the World Court financial judgment on US aggression against Nicaragua in the 1980s. On the other hand, she successfully resisted US calls to abolish all Sandinista reforms like land redistribution.

Lee diminishes the scholarly contributions of his book with his prose and by some of his historical judgments. Getting through *The Ends of Modernization* was tough sledding. Sentences like the following abounded. “Alongside the inert phraseology of development, however, was another rhetoric that summarized the telluric energies that animated past revolutions, as when Teodoro Moscoso, charged by the Kennedy administration with coordinating the Alliance for Progress, called the Alliance a ‘peaceful revolution on a Hemisphere scale’ while equating it with military enterprises such as the American Revolution and the D-Day landing in Normandy.” The previous sentence speaks of “the anodyne rhetoric of bureaucratic revolution” (8). The lessons of *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White and their admonitions to compose with simple, declarative sentences and to “omit needless words” are not detectable in the book’s prose.<sup>13</sup>

To his credit, Lee aims to analyze the bilateral relationship through a Nicaraguan perception. The subtitle is “Nicaragua and the United States.” But the discussion of US policy toward Latin America is marred by more than a few errors. President John Kennedy did not attend the 1961 meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay to plan the Alliance for Progress (7). Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon led the US delegation to the conclave. Kennedy’s enthusiasm for democracy promotion in Latin America did not wane after the assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo on 30 May 1961 (9). The Kennedy administration aided the assassins and then used ‘gunboat diplomacy’ to force Trujillo’s son out of the Dominican Republic and pave the way for the election of Juan Bosch in late 1962. The US inability to restore democracy in Peru after a military seizure of power in mid-1962 and the *golpe de estado* against Bosch in September 1963 led Kennedy to recognize the limitations of US power in Latin America.<sup>14</sup> Lee’s analysis of the Alliance for Progress represented the first scholarly endeavor that I have ever read that does not mention Assistant Secretary of State Thomas C. Mann, ‘Mr. Latin America,’ of the Lyndon Johnson administration. Scholars have assigned responsibility to Mann for transforming the Alliance for Progress and thereby redefining ‘modernization,’ the very theme of Lee’s

<sup>12</sup> Nixon and Kissinger quoted in Rabe, *Kissinger and Latin America: Intervention, Human Rights, and Diplomacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 164-65.

<sup>13</sup> William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 23.

<sup>14</sup> Rabe, *Most Dangerous Area*, 34-48, 116-23.



study.<sup>15</sup> Kissinger fares better than Mann, as he is mentioned once (46). An exploration of Kissinger's attitudes toward Nicaragua would have demonstrated that Department of State officers in Washington and Managua opposed Kissinger's embrace of the Somoza regime and prophetically predicted that revolution would erupt in the countryside.<sup>16</sup> Lee presents US policy between 1969 and 1976 as more unified and straightforward than it actually was.

The choice of Nicaragua as the prism through which to explore development ideas created an 'if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail' problem for the book. Without doubt, between 1978 and 1990, turmoil in Central America captured US and international attention. Development ideas evolved, as the United States sought to impose stability on the region. But the search for stability involved not just Nicaragua but also El Salvador and Guatemala. Lee does not discuss how US ideas about Nicaragua mirrored or differed from those applied to other Central American nations. The book also exaggerates Nicaragua's importance to the genesis and evolution of the Alliance for Progress. Saving Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela from 'Castro-Communism' motivated US policymakers. The new Jimmy Carter administration worried about the *Guardia Nacional's* repression and violence in the Nicaraguan countryside (86). But concern about extensive murder and the practice of "disappearing" citizens in southern South America—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay—underlay President Jimmy Carter's human rights policies and congressional hearings led by Donald Fraser (D-MN) and Ed Koch (D-NY).<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the book abandons scholarly balance in the 'Epilogue,' which takes the reader to April 2018. Sandinista Daniel Ortega returned to power in 2007. With his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, he has established a family dictatorship and a rein of repression that reminds many of the Somoza years. Ortega predictably held another fraudulent presidential election in November 2021.<sup>18</sup> The United States assuredly bears historic responsibility for contemporary corruption and poverty in Central America (188). But the author declines to discuss what is obvious about dictator Ortega. He is motivated by a lust for power, the trappings of power, and wealth. He states only that "accusations" existed "that Ortega was recapitulating the country's history of authoritarianism and subjection" (174). Leftist politicians receives a pass. In explaining why Nicaragua lost in 2017 its oil subsidies from Venezuela, Lee notes that "the government of Nicolás Maduro faced economic and social calamity" (187). The more appropriate verb is not 'faced' but 'created' to explain why Venezuela, with a president who fosters the international narcotics trade, is a failed state with 95 percent of the population living in poverty.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Tunstall Allcock, *Thomas C. Mann: President Johnson, the Cold War, and the Restructuring of Latin American Foreign Policy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Rabe, *Kissinger and Latin America*, 162-70.

<sup>17</sup> Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Yubelka Mendoza and Natalie Kitroeff, "'This Isn't an Election, This Is a Farce': Ortega Wields Fear in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, 8 November 2021, A10.

<sup>19</sup> Julie Turkewitz, "Venezuelan Opposition Leader Returns From Exile to Run for Governor," *New York Times*, 20 November 2021, A7.

The Nicaraguan Revolution (1979-1990) was a signal development of the late Cold War. The costs of overthrowing the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle were horrific: in a nation of 3 million, the conflict cost an estimated 50,000 lives, left one-fifth of the population homeless, and another 40,000 orphaned.<sup>20</sup> Neighborhoods had been flattened and the national treasury was empty. But the revolutionaries had won, sending the last of the Somoza family dynasty—which had been backed by the United States since the 1930s—into a miserable exile.<sup>21</sup> As the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (the Sandinista National Liberation Front [FSLN]) filled the power-vacuum left by Somoza, the revolution opened up the possibility that one of the hemisphere's poorest and most unequal nations could undergo a socio-economic transformation. Nicaragua emerged as a cause célèbre for activists across the Americas and on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Watching thousands of Nicaraguans celebrating the triumph in July 1979, the intellectual Régis Debray captured the mood, "Nicaragua in the year zero restores an air of youth ... to ideas that were thought to be worn out, as if the end of our century had suddenly lost its wrinkles here."<sup>22</sup>

It was not to be. In January 1981, President Ronald Reagan entered the White House certain that US national security required rolling back the leftist revolutionary movements that threatened to sweep across the Central American isthmus. The Reaganites perceived socialist Cuba as controlling events on the ground. "Give me the word and I'll make that island a fucking parking lot," Secretary of State Alexander Haig asserted with characteristic swagger at a White House meeting in 1981.<sup>23</sup> Reagan and his top advisers demurred; instead the administration threw its support behind a ragtag band of counter-revolutionaries operating along Nicaragua's borders. US aid transformed the Contras into a lethal force of some 15,000 fighters who used terror tactics against civilian targets to weaken popular support for the FSLN. By the end of the decade, the Contra War, combined with intense US economic pressure and the Sandinistas' own policy blunders, led to the FSLN's defeat in the 1990 national elections.

Given its significance for the late Cold War, scholarship on the Nicaraguan Revolution has been surprisingly limited. During the 1980s, activists, journalists, and scholars produced a torrent of publications on Reagan's undeclared war on Nicaragua and US involvement in the bloody conflicts in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala.<sup>24</sup> In the 1990s, the first wave of historical scholarship emerged, albeit mostly written by former policymakers or activists opposed to the US intervention.<sup>25</sup> In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Central America remained something of a historiographical backwater; with a few exceptions, the region was passed over by the 'international turn' among US foreign relations historians, whose multilingual and multi-archival research and broadening of the analytical lens to include previously overlooked state- and

<sup>20</sup> Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Somoza was assassinated in Asunción, Paraguay in September 1980. Cynthia Gorney, "Somoza is Assassinated in Ambush in Paraguay," September 18, 1980, *Washington Post*.

<sup>22</sup> Régis Debray, "Nicaragua: Radical 'Moderation,'" *Contemporary Marxism*, No. 1 (Spring 1980), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 164.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, George Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (Westport, CT: Zed Books, 1982); Holly Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua* (Boston: South End Press, 1988); Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy: The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Cynthia J. Arnson, *Crossroads: Congress, the President, and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Robert Kagan, *A Twilight Struggle: American Power in Nicaragua, 1977-1990* (New York: Free Press, 1996); William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Robert A. Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002). Walter LaFeber's *Inevitable Revolutions* also fits loosely in this category. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983).

non-state actors significantly deepened our understanding of the US engagement with many other peoples, places, and nations.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the paucity of scholarship on US foreign relations with Nicaragua, David Johnson Lee's *The Ends of Modernization: Nicaragua and the United States in the Cold War* is a welcome addition. The book makes three inter-related contributions to the existing scholarship. First, drawing on archival research in the United States and Central America, and utilizing extensive Spanish-language materials, Lee offers a corrective to the US-centric perspective that defines much of the existing scholarship and that tends to shoehorn Nicaragua into an ill-fitting binary. "While much of the literature on Latin America's Cold War centers on collaboration and resistance to US power," Lee writes, "Nicaraguan intellectual life was shaped by an autochthonous tradition that structured Nicaragua's internal and international conflicts from the Cold War through the twenty-first century." By integrating the political activity of Nicaragua's intellectual elite into the broader pattern of US-Nicaraguan relations, Lee succeeds in illuminating how the "independent imperatives of these actors shaped the contours of the Cold War" (11-12).

In his analysis of the 1960s, for example, Lee provides a nuanced account of internal Nicaraguan political struggles and their interaction with US Cold War policy. During the heyday of the Alliance for Progress, US policymakers envisioned Nicaragua as a test case of successful democratization. Lee convincingly demonstrates that the complexity of the Nicaraguan political landscape, however, combined with the exigencies of the global Cold War, ultimately led to a very different outcome. In the mid-Cold War era, the primary threat to Nicaraguan political stability was *not* leftist revolutionaries; rather, it was insurrections led by elite members of the Conservative Party against the dictatorship of Luis Somoza Debayle and his Liberal Party. Lee cites more than 60 attempted Conservative-led uprisings between 1956 and 1960 alone (27). "Insurrection, or even its threat, served as a means of gaining access to power in the absence of free elections under the Somoza regime," he writes (28).

By the end of the decade, US policymakers had responded to the Conservatives' continuous struggle for power in Nicaragua by shifting away from the Alliance for Progress's original emphasis on democracy building. Instead, Lee argues that the Alliance defused the threat of Conservative insurrection by evolving into a "program of elite consensus-building" that benefited Conservatives and Liberals alike. At the same time, US officials turned a blind eye to rampant corruption and election rigging, and ultimately supported Anastasio Somoza Debayle's ascension to power in 1967. "The Alliance for Progress succeeded as counterinsurgency in defusing the threat of insurrection from Nicaragua's traditional elites," Lee concludes. "But in transforming Nicaragua's internal power struggles into Cold War struggles, the Alliance would make leftist insurrection the only viable option for political change" (40).

Second, Lee offers an important critique of US Cold War programs for development. Echoing Andrew Friedman's call for an "increasing awareness of how US power ... exerts its goals and records its effects through structure, landscape, and everyday life," *The Ends of Modernization* includes a fascinating chapter on the rebuilding of Managua after the immense destruction caused by the 1972 earthquake.<sup>27</sup> Lee contends that US planners believed that creating a spacious new capital out of the rubble of the congested old city could "overcome the central tensions manifest during the previous decade of development and counterinsurgency in Asia, Latin America, and US cities: the tensions between wealth and poverty, the rural and urban, and dictatorship and democracy" (43). Touting the perceived benefits of segregating commercial and residential

<sup>26</sup> Exceptions to this trend include, Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under US Imperial Rule* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Jason M. Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and US Expansion in Central America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Roger Peace, *A Call to Conscience: The Anti-Contra War Campaign* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012); Alan McPherson, *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and Their Allies Fought and Ended US Occupations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Theresa Keeley, *Reagan's Gun-Toting Nuns: The Catholic Conflict over Cold War Human Rights Policy in Central America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Friedman, "US Power in a Material World," in *A Companion to US Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present*, ed. Christopher R. W. Dietrich, vol. II (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2020), 682.

areas as well as rich and poor neighborhoods, and following a decentralization model that assumed widespread automobile access, planners imagined that the new Managua would dilute Somoza's political power through decentralization and spark new forms of community-level development. In practice, Lee's fine-grain research reveals that US policymakers and planners often recognized that the rebuilding schemes—funded by US taxpayers—facilitated an expansion of Somoza's power while creating unsustainable conditions for lower-class Nicaraguans who were crammed into new neighborhoods that lacked basic services and opportunities for employment. The result was exactly the opposite of what US planners and policymakers had hoped for: "the collective rejection of this new city would create an unlikely alliance of the Nicaraguan conservative elite, the radical left, and Managua's poor against the Somoza dynasty and its US backers" (43).

Third, Lee uses Nicaragua as a case study to illuminate changing international development paradigms. During the 1970s, the rising visibility of human rights as a US policy priority led to congressional efforts to channel US aid directly to impoverished people overseas. As with the rebuilding of Managua, however, Lee shows how the Somoza regime co-opted such efforts. "Rather than undermining the power of the regime, a program that collected information about the 'basic needs' of the people of the countryside and created a class of peasants beholden to the government for land and credit would prove invaluable to a regime that wished to discourage peasants from assisting a growing insurgency" (75). In the 1980s, ideas about development continued to shape US policy toward Nicaragua. President Ronald Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), Lee argues, sought to cultivate elite entrepreneurs who would serve as a bulwark against socialism without the earlier commitment to reducing poverty and inequality. Combined with Reagan's Democracy Project, the neoliberalism of the CBI laid the groundwork for US policy in the aftermath of the FSLN's 1990 electoral defeat. In the early post-Cold War era, "the United States held ultimate veto power over whatever government was in power in Managua by the threat to withhold all international aid," Lee concludes. "The country could maintain the unpredictable processes of democratic negotiation, while the United States maintained its status as final arbiter over Nicaragua's precarious territory" (171).

The chronological sweep of *The Ends of Modernization* is impressive given that the slim book includes less than 200 pages of main text. But Lee's brevity comes at a cost, particularly regarding his analysis of the revolutionary decade of the 1980s. Although Lee's chapter on Miskito activism provides a fresh interpretation of an understudied aspect of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the reader gets little sense of Cuban's outsized influence in FSLN policymaking or the FSLN's relationship to the Non-Aligned Movement, or the widespread hope for socio-economic transformation that the successful overthrow of Somoza created for ordinary Nicaraguans. As the journalist Alma Guillermoprieto wrote, in 1979 the revolutionaries "embodied the best of everything that three and a half million people who were used to seeing their nation treated as a fourth-rate banana republic could dream of."<sup>28</sup>

Second, with the focus squarely on development ideals, Lee insightfully presents the Reagan administration's policy toward Nicaragua as part of a broader shift from modernization to neoliberalism. Yet Lee's analysis of CBI and the Democracy Project makes Reagan's approach to Nicaragua seem fairly mainstream in comparison to his White House predecessors, and does not fully account for the extreme radicalism of the Reaganites' anti-Communism, which fueled their willingness to orchestrate immense human and material destruction in Nicaragua—and violate US law—in the effort to destabilize the FSLN political project. Likewise, the sheer savagery of the Contras is largely missing from *The Ends of Modernization*, a litany of atrocities that were directly aided and abetted by the White House.

Taken as a whole, *The Ends of Modernization* has much to offer students and scholars of US foreign relations history. Lee's positioning of the Sandinista Revolution within a broader trajectory beginning in the early 1960s and ending in the late 2010s illuminates longstanding continuities in US-Nicaraguan relations, without overlooking ruptures such as the 1972 earthquake. Lee also brings under-studied Nicaraguan actors to the foreground, such as Liberals and Conservatives as well as indigenous activists on the Atlantic coast. Finally,

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<sup>28</sup> Alma Guillermoprieto, *The Heart That Bleeds: Latin America Now* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 25.

*The Ends of Modernization* makes an important contribution to the thriving field of development history by analyzing evolving and often competing visions of development and their impact on US-Nicaraguan relations.

David J. Lee's *The Ends of Modernization* shows that development ideologies in Nicaragua were integral to revolution and counterrevolution in the latter half of the twentieth century, and that the United States shaped its foreign aid programs in response to Nicaragua. Lee's work offers a 'big-picture' account of how ideas about development unfolded from the 1960s to the 1990s in Nicaragua (with the epilogue bringing the narrative to present day). He convincingly demonstrates that Nicaragua occupied a position at the heart of the United States' aid machine. Through six concise, chronological chapters, Lee traces how development policy reconstituted itself according to evolving imperatives: 'modernization' as examined through the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s; 'decentralization' in Managua's reconstruction after the earthquake of 1972; 'human rights' through United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) shifting focus to rural development and Nicaraguan peasants in the 1970s; 'pluralism' which was leveraged by both the Sandinista and US governments to build international alliances; 'Indigenous rights' and the links between development and the political demands of the Miskito on the Caribbean Coast; and 'sustainable development' as a means to create a stable political climate for investment and neoliberalism in the 1990s. Lee's work is a welcome addition to a growing historiographical interest in late twentieth-century Nicaragua and revisions of former interpretations of the Sandinista Revolution. *The Ends of Modernization* makes contributions to several intersecting fields. First, it contributes to histories of ideologies of development and modernization by bringing Nicaragua more fully into the conversation and arguing that how development unfolded in Nicaragua shaped broader US development policy (though how it was translated elsewhere is unexplored).<sup>29</sup> Similar to Thomas Field's *From Development to Dictatorship*, Lee shows that the Alliance for Progress's modernizing project in Nicaragua reinforced authoritarianism and bolstered Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza Debayle's armed forces, the Guardia Nacional.<sup>30</sup> But development in Nicaragua did not end with the end of modernization; it continued to morph according to other imperatives and in dialogue with Nicaragua's Conservative elites.

Lee could have engaged more fully with Josie Saldaña-Portillo's argument about how discourses of development "captured the imagination" of the Sandinista revolutionary movement, "often to the detriment of the constituencies" they sought to liberate.<sup>31</sup> Lee acknowledges that the Sandinistas' "new development programs borrowed heavily from the planning apparatus put together by the Somoza regime, the US government, and international development organizations in decades past" (129). Crucially, the revolution in eastern Nicaragua, along the Mosquito Coast, "began as a top-down affair, much like the Alliance it echoed" (129). A discussion of how Sandinista development policy unfolded in-country during the 1980s, and how the Sandinistas' recapitulation of modernization ideologies affected constituencies beyond the Miskito would have strengthened the book.

Second, Lee's discussion of the USAID planners who rebuilt Managua after the 1972 earthquake intersects with new work on experts, expertise, and 'border crossings' in Latin America's Cold War.<sup>32</sup> The second chapter on Managua's reconstruction is arguably the richest, given the archival gems Lee found in the USAID archive. But the internationalization of Managua's reconstruction could have been further explored. How did US planners and their Nicaraguan counterparts collaborate? Lee introduces a couple of US planners from UC Berkley and Harvard who

<sup>29</sup> Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Field, *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014)

<sup>31</sup> María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 5.

<sup>32</sup> Andra Chastain and Timothy Lorek, eds., *Itineraries of Expertise: Science, Technology, and the Environment in Latin America* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020); Gilbert Joseph, "Border Crossings and the Remaking of Latin American Cold War Studies," *Cold War History*, 19:1 (March 2019): 141-170; Marcelo Casals, "Which Borders Have Not Yet Been Crossed? A Supplement to Gilbert Joseph's Historiographical Balance of the Latin American Cold War," *Cold War History* (2020).

were tasked to work with the technocratic elite at the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE), but does not identify the planners at INCAE. Mexican urban planners who had already been studying the downtown before the earthquake, for reasons that are not discussed here, were also part of the mix. What were the broader international stakes of Managua's reconstruction?

Third, Lee's examination of how the Sandinistas' successful internationalist alliance-building prompted the Reagan administration to reshape developmental policy according to 'entrepreneurial internationalism' connects development with new work on the internationalization of the Sandinista Revolution.<sup>33</sup> In his examination of the Sandinistas' 'successful' international alliances, Lee focuses on Nicaraguan solidarity with Europe and the Socialist International, rather than with other Latin American and Caribbean states. He leverages the archives of the Socialist International to demonstrate how the Sandinistas used alliances to build a pluralistic profile, win economic support, and stave off US intervention. But how did alliances with the Socialist International relate to the Sandinistas' courting of other Western European governments? I also wondered how Sandinista relationships with neighboring Central American and Caribbean countries conditioned relations with Europeans; that is, the alliance with the Socialist International was not one revolutionary partner, but one of many, and the book does not explain how these alliances interacted.

Lee can be commended for charting the evolution of development ideologies in Nicaragua and demonstrating how these ideologies conditioned the politics of Nicaraguan Conservative elite as they strove to harness US power to their own ends. Understanding how Nicaraguans elites influenced US development policy is a more difficult task, but Lee offers some clues. He examines how the US had to co-opt the Conservative faction to gain support for the Alliance for Progress and stave off Conservative insurrection, which it accomplished by placing it at the center of aid distribution, via nationwide committees for social development and scholarship programs brokered through organizations like the Instituto Nicaraguense de Desarrollo (INDE) (33). In the 1970s, the United States responded to anti-Somoza Conservatives (led by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro) who protested 'human rights' abuses committed by the National Guard by channeling aid to private organizations.

The Reagan administration then changed the game of aid in the 1980s, channeling it to private businesses that would integrate with US markets, rather than to the government or non-government organizations focused on alleviating poverty. Lee argues that this was in response to the Sandinistas' successful courting of international allies. Reagan's Project Democracy turned to open support for political development, which in Nicaragua's case meant cultivating Sandinista defectors as propaganda machines for the Contra cause. Sandinista Commander Eden Pastora's defection to the Contras allowed the administration to reshape the contours of internationalist support. It rebranded converts to the Contras as the 'Nicaraguan Resistance'—the true revolutionary and harbingers of "political pluralism, a free, mixed economy, and true non-alignment" (120). Defections meant that the Reconstruction Junta became less ideologically diverse. As the Sandinista's political pluralism came into question, their alliances with European governments fractured. Ultimately, the "Reagan administration took networks, individuals, and ideas that Nicaraguans and their allies had used to make the revolution acceptable to international audiences and turned them to very different ends" (122).

Furthermore, considering the Atlantic coast in relation to revolution and counterrevolution is a tricky endeavor. In the fifth chapter, Lee examines conflict on Nicaragua's eastern coast by looking at the effects of socialist and capitalist development on Indigenous peoples, and how the Miskito linked their political struggles to issues of development such as biodiversity and sustainability. I agree with Lee that development ideology stoked conflict between the Miskito and the Sandinistas, which centered on land. However, the specific processes by which development initiatives unfolded on the coast in the 1970s under Somoza and then how the Sandinistas used developmentalist ideology in their approach to the Coast in the 1980s remains unclear. I was also looking for more discussion of the key connection between development and the Moravian Church during the 1960s and 70s. Lee

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<sup>33</sup> Mateo Jarquín, "A Latin American Revolution: The Sandinistas, the Cold War, and Political Change in the Region, 1977-1990," PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2019; Eline Van Ommen, "Isolating Nicaragua's Somoza: Sandinista Diplomacy in Western Europe, 1977-1979," in *Latin America and the Global Cold War*, Thomas C. Field Jr., Stella Krepp, Vanni Pettinà, eds. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2020): 367-393; Gerardo Sánchez Nateras, "The Sandinista Revolution and the Limits of the Cold War in Latin America: The Dilemma of Non-Intervention during the Nicaraguan Crisis, 1977-78," *Cold War History* (2018).

writes that under the Alliance for Progress for Miskito and Sumo (ALPROMISU) during the Somoza regime, “Indigenous intellectuals contacted an international community of like-minded activists, who encouraged the intellectuals to think broadly about self-determination and autonomy” (127). It is not clear who were these intellectuals were and how this process unfolded.

Along these lines, Lee focuses on how US anthropologist Bernard Nietschmann attempted to connect ecology to armed struggle to win continued US support for the Miskito cause in the 1980s. That is, Nietschmann openly advocated for violence as a solution to Indigenous autonomy and to preserve the land, arguing that the semi-subsistence ecology of Indigenous people was better for the environment than the state-led programs of the Somoza’s and Sandinistas (139). While Nietschmann worked as an advisor to MISURASATA (Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas, and Sandinistas *Aslatakanta*) and Miskito groups allied with the Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática (ARDE, Pastora’s Contra group based in Costa Rica), and served as a ‘PR man’ for some factions of the insurgency, it is unclear how widespread his ideas of ecology and armed resistance were. I know firsthand that Nietschmann is a prominent figure in the archive, and it is necessary to parse his complicated position within the Indigenous movement, and specifically with Brooklyn Rivera—the leader of Honduras-based MISURASATA who favored a political solution to the Miskito’s conflict with the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN). Yet, I was left wondering about Miskito leaders and actors beyond Rivera: how did they leverage ideas about development and self-defense?

Lee explicitly focuses on Nicaraguan elites and developmental ideologies, but the popular classes, along with the Miskito, haunt the edges of his work. For instance, he shows that the outcome of US post-earthquake aid that was poured into road construction was the domination of a Managua by roads, boulevards, automobiles, and class segregation, as evidenced by ‘Las Américas’ shantytowns. Lee argues that the shape of the city played a key role in forging new revolutionary consciousness as Managua’s urban poor begin to organize (61). Yet, I would have liked to know more about this urban poor and how they developed alliances with the elite and radical left which opposed the Somoza regime in the 1970s. Essentially, further work might examine how other Nicaraguans and Indigenous people responded to US development projects. That is, how did AID shape everyday people’s lives, and how did they contest or leverage the role of AID money in their organizations? Lee shows us how elites used US money for their own personal political and economic enrichment, but I imagine others leveraged AID projects and used the imperatives Lee traces to their own ends, challenging the meaning and outcomes of ‘human rights’ or ‘pluralism’ that the US desired.

Lee leaves the reader to draw her own conclusions. One assumes that attempts by AID planners and US strategists to divert development money away from Somoza, through imperatives of ‘decentralization’ and ‘human rights,’ reinforced his power; that development projects and AID’s evolving relationship with Nicaraguan elites conditioned revolution; and that US aid projects generally failed to achieve desired outcomes. Lee’s work also raises other, unresolved questions. How does the changing nature of development ideologies shape our understanding of the insurrection years, and the trajectory of the Sandinista revolution and attendant counterrevolution? Does development, revolution, and counterrevolution begin and end with land? Issues of land use, access to land, land claims, sustainability, and private property cut across chapters. But it is not until page 148 that Lee tells us that, “The distribution of property, most importantly land itself, was at the center of Nicaragua’s conflicts in the age of development...” I wonder if privileging the centrality of land in the argument about development and the importance of Nicaragua to US developmental practices might have revealed other ways Nicaraguans contested US empire. And finally, how did the contestation over development ideologies in Nicaragua shape US policy at home, and elsewhere in Latin America?

Development as a tool of US empire was flexible and responsive to the demands and challenges of Nicaraguan elites, revolution, counterrevolution, and neoliberalism. *The Ends of Modernization* illustrates how ideologies of development functioned as one terrain on which US-Nicaraguan relations unfolded, and one that cut across decades and regimes. This work goes beyond US involvement in either the Somoza regime or Contra war, but joins the United States’ relationship to both through the lens of development. As such, this work furthers our understanding of the shifting and ever-adaptable forms of empire, as well as how it is negotiated by its theoretical subjects.





I would like to begin by thanking the reviewers, Patrick Iber, Stephen Rabe, William Michael Schmidli, and Emily Snyder, the editors at H-Diplo, and Alan McPherson for taking the time to consider my book and put together this roundtable. It is rewarding after years of research and writing to have my work reach such accomplished readers, and I hope it contributes to the rich scholarship that inspired its creation.

*The Ends of Modernization* focuses on practices and concepts of international development as a key site of interaction between Nicaragua and the United States during the Cold War and after. It intersects with a growing scholarship that emphasizes the ways in which contestation and collaboration around development ideas has had profound effects on countries on all sides of the process.<sup>34</sup> Each chapter examines the changing ideas and practices that shaped the relationship between Nicaragua and the United States in the period leading to and following Nicaragua's revolution. These ideas, which were central to post-World War II US efforts toward global hegemony, drew their power from Nicaraguan aspirations for political and social transformation. In the context of US empire, however, they became sources of conflict and contestation that in turn caused the developmental premises and the power relations they undergirded to transform. Nicaragua was of course far from the only country where this contestation took place, but I argue that the long history of US-Nicaraguan relations, and especially the Nicaraguan political culture that this relationship created, made Nicaragua a key site of transformations at the heart of development as ideology and practice during the Cold War and after.

I hope my work lives up to the praise these readers have offered. Patrick Iber is right to perceive the influence of the scholarship of Michel Gobat on my own.<sup>35</sup> Scholars of US foreign relations have much to learn from Gobat's careful attention to the complex and unstable interactions between US policies and Nicaraguan political culture. Gobat's social and intellectual history of Nicaragua's Conservatives set off my own interest in understanding the legacy of this elite's complex form of defiance and engagement with the United States that played such a pivotal role in creating Nicaragua's revolution. In confronting the American dream in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these elites took ideas from the United States and repurposed them to build their own nationalist and anti-American ethos that later helped make Sandinista movement a global cause. Gobat's description of this north-south exchange made possible my discovery of a converse movement of influence, especially in the 1960s and the 1980s, as both the Kennedy and Reagan administrations took the regionalist, nationalist, and even revolutionary ideas of Latin American thinkers and turned them into tools of empire. This dynamic of exchange and transformation is at the heart of my book, and at the heart of US global power.

Emily Snyder raises important questions in her review, some of which I attempt to answer within my research while others await new approaches that Snyder adumbrates here. I agree with Snyder that the popular classes "haunt the edges" of the book. A different book, or ideally many different books, would discuss the myriad ways non-elite Nicaraguans turned development aid to their own ends and shaped politics in ways that ramified far beyond the North-South relation my book studies. The decision to focus on relatively powerful individuals with the expertise and connections to navigate between Nicaragua and the world is a product of their outsized influence over the international contours of development. This influence is in turn a product of a system which granted overwhelming power to outside 'experts' who often did not reflect the aspirations of the people for whom they often claimed to speak. The same issue arises in relation to relative absence of consideration given to aspects of the story such as the "broader international stakes of Managua's reconstruction" and the interaction of alliances besides that of the Socialist International during the revolutionary period. One effect of US money and power was the foreclosure of the effectiveness of

<sup>34</sup> Tore C. Olsson, *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University, 2017); Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2019); Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

alternative relationships between Nicaragua and the world and the drawing back of even counter-hegemonic struggles into the US orbit. The driving force of the book (and of the dynamic of historical change it documents) is the continual efforts of Nicaraguans to seek new forms of resistance as old ones get subsumed by an ever-transforming imperial power.

Some of the reviewers wonder how to tie Nicaragua's influence on US policies to broader trends in Latin America and the world. The evidence is clear that the ideologies and practices of counterrevolutionary development stimulated revolutionary ferment, while also changing in reaction to the successes of movements like that in Nicaragua which threatened to make revolution into a globally popular cause. It was the fact that some Nicaraguan actors were so eager to work with the United States for their own locally-conditioned reasons, and the fact that this generated an outsized anti-American backlash among both Conservatives and leftists, that led me to understand Nicaragua as a key site for innovation and experimentation in policies that were implemented far beyond the Central American isthmus. I hope my book contributes to other work that gives similar attention to the local transformations of the premises and practices of development and their reverberations worldwide.

William Michael Schmidli highlights the key issue of continuity and change between US administrations that drew on and departed from past development practice, making possible the dynamic of repetition and innovation that impelled the changes the book documents. Schmidli argues that the book's attention to continuity could make "Reagan's approach to Nicaragua seem fairly mainstream" in relation to prior approaches to development and anti-communism. My goal was not to downplay the radicalism, nor certainly the violence, of the Reagan administration's response to revolution. As with prior US attempts at counter-revolutionary development, the Reagan administration's own claims to originality must be weighed against the ways it drew from conventional US development practice while also coopting important aspects of the revolutionary movements it opposed. Unfortunately, the Reagan administration's "willingness to orchestrate immense human and material destruction in Nicaragua" was not an aberration from previous US practice. It can only be understood as part of a longer trajectory of the counterrevolutionary violence that characterizes US intervention in the hemisphere.

I appreciate Stephen Rabe's praise for my research despite his reservations about aspects of the book. Whereas Snyder seeks greater voice for popular classes, Rabe laments the relative absence of high-level US policymakers such as State Department officials Thomas Mann and Henry Kissinger. These figures obviously played a role in shaping the broad contours of US policy in Latin America. A key contention of the book is that historians have overlooked consequential policies concerning issues like regional and urban planning or aid allocation among competing local political groups because those policies can be hard to see in relation to the high-level planners in Washington who typically receive top billing in diplomatic histories. Rabe praises the book's attention to Nicaraguan actors, but to focus on Mann or Kissinger would be to erase the actions and desires of the myriad individuals shaping US policy who I argue played the largest role in bringing about the events that made Nicaragua a place of epochal consequence in the Cold War. Attention to local actors makes possible the aspects of the book Rabe appreciates, such as the detailed analysis of urban and rural planning and local political struggles in creating the circumstances that brought about Nicaragua's revolution.

Some of Rabe's critiques concern matters of taste or interpretation, and readers can decide whether my sentences offer "tough sledding." I find his final criticism that "the book abandons scholarly balance" in discussing the current Ortega regime, alarming. It is my practice throughout the book to let the historical record speak for itself, and I believe anyone reading carefully can make their own judgements. Rabe is correct that in that section, as elsewhere in the book, I leave overt condemnations to the participants, highlighting critiques of current President Daniel Ortega by his former allies in the liberation struggle such as former Vice-President Sergio Ramírez and the local political opposition. If readers are unable to discern the moral valences in the litany of misdeeds enumerated there – using the canal project to stifle dissent, constructing a personal power base, betraying former allies, jailing and murdering political opponents, and recreating a dictatorship echoing the very one Ortega and his comrades overthrew – interjecting my own opinions would be unlikely to help matters and would certainly not contribute to "scholarly balance." Our own judgments

should not overshadow those of the Nicaraguans who have risked their lives and livelihoods to do battle against dictatorships of the left and right.

Finally, as I think about the place of this decade-long project within the larger trajectory of contemporary historical scholarship, I hope that readers of my book and this roundtable give thought to the conditions under which our work is produced and the ever-increasing difficulty faced by scholars without institutional funding. All of my post-graduate research and writing was done without institutional support and under the burdens faced by scholars outside the tenure track. The increasing prevalence of such obstacles and the near non-existence of research or writing grants for scholars in this situation threatens to impoverish the study of history and to stifle the necessary conversations our work produces, limiting access to the privileged few who win an academic lottery with ever-lengthening odds. As I hope we all can agree, our work is too important to be left up to chance.