

Nicaragua

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Nicaragua is considered authoritarian from 1919 until 1990. For most of the autocratic country years it is a personalist system under the Somoza family, until 1978. From 1979 until 1989 it is a single-party regime and then it becomes a presidential democracy. Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2013) code Nicaragua as a personalist regime under Somoza starting in 1937. Prior to that, “with the exception of a 9-month period in 1925-26, the United States maintained troops in Nicaragua from 1912 until 1933. Although reduced to 100 in 1913, the contingent served as a reminder of the willingness of the United States to use force and its desire to keep conservative governments in power” (US Library of Congress, 1993). Though the Correlates of War Project (2011) has coded Nicaragua independent, the United States exerted considerable control over Nicaraguan politics until 1933, overseeing a string of Conservative presidents.

Emiliano Chamorro Vargas of the Conservative Party (PC) served as president from 1917 until 1921. Chamorro’s uncle Diego Manuel Chamorro Bolaños of the National Party (PN) won elections in 1920 with “the backing of the United States and a fraudulent election” (US Library of Congress 1993). Though according to worldstatesmen.org the uncle is technically of a different political party, other sources claim the second Chamorro was also a Conservative (Greer 1954; US Library of Congress 1993). “Collaboration with the United States allowed the conservatives to remain in power until 1925” (US Library of Congress 1993). It appears, then, that the PN is another conservative party, and since his election meant “continued governmental control by one family” (Greer 1954, 447), we do not code a SOLS change in 1921. Sources suggest the influence of Chamorristas and the fraudulent elections that were rigged in favor of the Chamorro family (see Barraco 2005, 39; Staten 2010, 39), which indicate a personalist system from 1919-1923.

Diego Chamorro died in October 1923 and was succeeded by the vice president, Bartolomé Martínez Gonzalez, PC (Greer 1954, 450).¹ This is not a SOLS change since he was interim (Encyclopedia Americana 1943; Wise et al., 23). On October 5, 1924 (Greer 1954, 461) Carlos José Solórzano Gutiérrez, PC, another conservative, but moderate, won elections to become president. Following his victory, Martínez “maintained strict military rule for the ensuing two weeks, suspending all communication, permitting government traffic, only, and imprisoning many who, he believed, might express dissatisfaction with Solorzano’s election” (Greer 1954, 461). This is a SOLS change, because two sources suggest that he cannot be categorized as a pre-designated successor of Chamorro, who is the last regular leader. First, Yust (1954, 412) describes Solorzano as an anti-Chamorro conservative. Second, Baracco (2005, 39) considers the Solorzano’s winning presidency as the end of the Chamorro’s family rule. Solórzano appointed a Liberal as vice president.

¹ Cahoon (2012) lists Rosendo Chamorro Oreamuno, PN, as another acting president from October 12 to 27, 1923, prior to Martínez. However, since Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009) does not recognize the third Chamorro, neither do we.

Because of this, in 1926 Solórzano was “forced out of power...by a conservative group who proclaimed...Emiliano Chamorro...as president” (US Library of Congress 1993). Some sources refer to Chamorro as “acting” (The New York Times 1926), but other sources (e.g. Cahoon 2012; US Library of Congress 1993) do not and it is unclear that he was planning to surrender power after his coup. Thus, we code this as a SOLS change. As the leader of the coup that ousted Solorzano, he was certainly not Solorzano’s pre-designated successor. Because neither Solorzano nor Chamorro successfully consolidated power, we code no specific autocratic regime type during their rule.

After Chamorro’s coup, conflict broke out. The U.S. “mediated a peace agreement between the liberals and the conservatives” (US Library of Congress 1993) and Chamorro resigned because he could not get U.S. support (Bouvier 2002, 34). Later that year (1926), Congress elected Adolfo Díaz Recinos, PC, as president. Díaz was a U.S. favorite and he depended on the U.S. military for support (Bouvier 2002, 34). Given the strong influence of the US, we code no SOLS change for a leader transition from Chamorro Vargas to Díaz. Although there is no indication that Díaz was Chamorro’s pre-designated successor, both Chamorro Vargas and Díaz relied heavily on the US and were conservatives.

Violence resumed with a civil war between the two political camps, the conservatives and liberals. Both sides agreed to the terms of the Pact of Espino Negro peace agreement, under which both sides disarmed and the U.S. would monitor the elections. In 1929 José María Moncada Tapia of the Liberal Party (PL) became president after “one of the most honest elections ever held in Nicaragua” (US Library of Congress 1993). This is a SOLS change since his predecessor was a conservative. The PL dominated Nicaraguan politics, and Moncada’s supporters were all from the party, which might indicate a single party regime. More likely, it was not a consolidated autocratic regime of any type, which is what we code.

In 1933 Juan Bautista Sacasa, PL, became president. This is not a SOLS change since he was also a liberals and he and Moncada had cooperated in the fight against conservatives. US troops left Nicaragua in 1933 after having considerably increased the power of the military. Sacasa came increasingly under pressure from the director of the National Guard, General Anastasio Somoza García, who had been original appointed by Moncada. “Somoza García benefited from Sacasa’s diminishing power, while at the same time he brought together the National Guard and the PL in order to win the presidential elections in 1936. Somoza García also cultivated support from former presidents Moncada and Chamorro while consolidating control within the Liberal Party” (US Library of Congress 1993).

In 1936, Somoza forced Sacasa to resign. Congress appointed “a Somoza García associate” Carlos Alberto Brenes Jarquín (Krehm 1999, 111; Block and Trown 1942, 780). In November 1936, Somoza García “resigned as chief director of the National Guard, thus complying with constitutional requirements for eligibility to run for the presidency” (US Library of Congress 1993). His presidency began in 1937. Somoza was supported by the Liberal Nationalist Party (PLN)—a faction of the Liberal Party that favored Somoza-- and ran as a

civilian, but shortly after he became president, he resumed control of the National Guard. Accordingly, we list his SOLS as Mil/PLN. According to US Library of Congress (1993) Somoza García “controlled political power, directly as president or indirectly through carefully chosen puppet presidents.” GWF code a personalist regime from June 2, 1936 to July 17, 1979. Accordingly, we code a SOLS change with the entry of Brenes Jarquin in 1936 (not in 1937 when Somoza came to power), which can be considered as the start of Somoza’s personalist regime given Somoza’s influence over the appointment of Brenes Jarquín in 1936.²

In 1947, Somoza imposed Leonardo Arguello as president through election fraud. Arguello was supposed to be a puppet of Somoza, but he tried to implement his own government. As a result, Somoza committed a new coup 26 days later. His legacy lasted until 1979 (U.S. Department of State 2011). While he formally installed Benjamín Lacayo Sacasa as acting president and later appointed his uncle as president, Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009) codes Anastasio Somoza as effective ruler from 1947 through 1956. Neither the transition to Arguello nor the re-assumption of power is a SOLS change since they happened within the same personalist regime.

Anastasio Somoza was assassinated in September 1956. His son, Luis Somoza Debayle, assumed the presidency provisionally. He “legitimized” his rule through an “election,” and assumed the presidency constitutionally in May 1957. He governed until 1963, when there was an election and Schick won it, backed by Somoza in not-fair elections. Geddes (2003) codes the Somoza family’s personalist rule as continuing so this is not a SOLS change.

In the middle of the campaign for the 1967 elections, in 1966 Schick passed away. Therefore, Lorenzo Guerrero, a close friend of the Somoza’s, assumed power. This is not a SOLS change since the Somoza personalist rule is coded as continuing by Geddes (2003). The next year and with opposition leaders jailed Anastasio Somoza Debayle won elections in an unfair process, marked by electoral manipulation, intimidation, and fraud. Again, this is not a SOLS change. This period is considered the darkest authoritarian period in Nicaraguan history, but also this period was marked by great popular resistance.

After 13 years of government, Somoza was ousted by the revolution lead by Daniel Ortega on July 1979. The revolution installed a Junta de Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional (Junta of National Reconstruction) comprised of several member from the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), Unión Democrática de Liberación (UDEL), Movimiento Democrático Nicaraguense (MDN), Movimiento Popular Unido (MPU), but all of them under the leadership of Ortega. The change from Somoza to this Junta is effectively a SOLS change. Geddes (2003) codes a military regime starting in 1979 until 1990. The Junta changed his composition, but always had Ortega in charge.

² Some sources consider Brenes Jarquin an interim president (Cahoon 2012; Merrill 1993) and he seems to be a Somoza puppet (Walter 1993, 52), which indicates that the Somoza personalist regime begins with Jarquin.

Starting in 1990, Nicaragua is coded democratic and Violeta Chamorro is elected president for the Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO). This is a SOLS change since her support base was her party and those that voted for her rather than the military. After her, Alemán was elected president for the PLC in 1996 and assumed office in January 1997 until 2002. This is a SOLS change given the different party affiliation. In 2002, Vice President Enrique Bolaños Geyer (PLC) took office as elected president. In 2004, Bolaños was kicked out of the PLC. Soon after, Bolaños formed his own party – the Alliance for the Republic (APRE) (Freedom House 2008, 511). We code this as a minor SOLS change. Finally in 2006, Daniel Ortega for the FSLN won the elections and took office in January 2007. This is a SOLS change.

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