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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**COSTA RICA: A PEACEFUL NATION READY TO
FIGHT**

by

Matthew Adams

December 2018

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Christopher N. Darnton
Robert E. Looney

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COSTA RICA: A PEACEFUL NATION READY TO FIGHT

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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from the

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to assess how a small nation like Costa Rica, which is committed to peace and lacks a military, is able to safeguard national security and territorial sovereignty while responding to a series of hostile external disputes with neighboring Nicaragua. It examines how Costa Rica's actions and decisions in response to these disputes supports or impugns established tenets of international relations theory. Three case studies examine distinct periods of Costa Rican relations with Nicaragua, extending from the abolition of Costa Rica's military in 1948 to the present-day. The findings are evaluated with respect to realist, liberal and constructivist theory. Costa Rica's behavior best supports tenets of constructivist theory as it is undoubtedly influenced by socially constructed norms. These norms include a strong commitment to diplomatic dispute resolution, a general public perception that Nicaragua cannot be trusted and that some domestic capacity to employ force is an acceptable deviation from the nation's commitment to diplomacy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis examines the methods utilized by Costa Rica to respond to external disputes with neighboring Nicaragua following the abolition of its military in 1948. Costa Rica is recognized throughout the world as the quintessential model of a nation dedicated to peace. As such, it is important to evaluate the nation's ability to uphold that image in conjunction with the requirement to safeguard national security and territorial sovereignty. There are very few nations without a national military and the majority of those, including the remote island nations of Palau, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands, do not have significant external threats to defend against. However, Costa Rica is located in a relatively unstable region of the world and has endured a protracted history of violent disputes with its militarized neighbor of Nicaragua. By deviating from the commitment to respond to conflict diplomatically through multilateral institutions and choosing to employ domestic force, Costa Rica risks compromising its ability to obtain external support in the event of an invasion by Nicaragua. Additionally, a decision by Costa Rica to employ domestic force might dissuade other small nations such as Honduras, Bolivia or Ecuador from choosing to adopt a similar posture as a peaceful nation. The principal questions addressed in this thesis are as follows:

1. Why does Costa Rica, as a nation dedicated to peace, continue to train, equip, and employ specialized units of its police force and provide support to guerilla forces in multiple disputes with Nicaragua?
2. How does Costa Rica's response to disputes with Nicaragua since 1948 support or impugn established international relations theory?

While Costa Rica's response to external threats can be effectively explained using realist or liberal narratives in some instances, this thesis shows that Constructivist theory provides the most compelling explanation. Costa Rica's enduring commitment to peace and concurrent willingness to provide support to guerrilla forces and maintain a limited domestic force capable of rapidly engaging external threats from Nicaragua are best

explained by Constructivist theories. The protracted conflict between the two nations has fomented a profound and enduring negative perception and distrust of Nicaragua by Costa Ricans. These socially constructed legacies have had the greatest influence over Costa Rica's behavior in the disputes with Nicaragua examined in this thesis.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

In November 2010, armed Nicaraguan soldiers covertly established an outpost on the northern tip of Isla Calero, a small strip of land located at the mouth of the San Juan River and on the Costa Rican side of the border. After establishing the outpost, the Nicaraguan troops proceeded to dig a canal through the middle of the island in an attempt to open a new waterway connecting the San Juan River to the Caribbean Sea. Costa Rican officials declared this action an invasion of sovereign territory and responded by deploying an armed contingent of the national police force to the region.¹ The dispute was ultimately resolved without violence after Costa Rica filed proceedings against Nicaragua at the United Nations International Court of Justice. Nicaragua accepted the Court's Resolution finding it in violation, and the Nicaraguan troops departed the island.² While this dispute ended peacefully, it highlights the ongoing instability caused by the strained relationship between Costa Rica and Nicaragua that has endured for over a century. Additionally, Costa Rica's decision to deploy armed police officers is a strong indicator that it is prepared to utilize hostile force against Nicaragua in defense of national sovereignty.

Costa Rica is often referred to as the "Switzerland of the Americas" and any decision to employ the use of hostile force risks jeopardizing the peaceful image it has promoted to the world since the abolition of the national military in 1948. At an event in 2014 celebrating the 66th anniversary of this momentous decision, President Luis Guillermo Solís reaffirmed the nation's peaceful stance by declaring that "Costa Rica firmly believes and practices all aspects of international law; ...this is the only way we

¹ "Costa Rica-Nicaragua Border Row," *BBC News*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11751727>

² *Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area and Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River* (The Hague, Netherlands, 2015), <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/152/18846.pdf>.

know. Our only weapon has been and will always be international law.”³ Additionally, Costa Rica is internationally recognized for its commitment to peace and was ranked first in the 2017 Global Peace Index among the Central American and Caribbean countries and is ranked 34th in the world.⁴

In the book *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, David Mares warns of a problematic but widely held belief among regional analysts and throughout the world that Latin America is no longer at risk of inter-state military conflict.⁵ As an example, Arie Kacowicz who wrote the book *Zones of Peace in the Third World*, argued that Latin America is far less prone to conflict than other regions of the developing world.⁶ Mares noted that in the few publicized instances where conflict did occur in the region, including between Ecuador and Peru in 1995 or Colombia and Ecuador in 2008, the media reacted with utter disbelief.⁷ Mares identified the ongoing disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua as an indicator of one of several “hot spots” in Latin America where conflict is likely to occur. In fact, the number of incidents resulting in or approaching the onset of hostile conflict between the two nations is far higher than most people recognize. While many of these incidents were relatively minor in severity, Mares suggests that “all militarized incidents have the potential to escalate into war [and] the initial level of militarization offers no guide to the likely outcome.”⁸ Costa Rica has an influential role as a beacon of peace and as a model for other developing countries having witnessed the social benefits in education and healthcare in particular that Costa Rica has enjoyed through demilitarization. If Costa Rica’s security or sovereignty becomes jeopardized as a result of its reduced capacity to defend against hostile conflict by eliminating its capacity to employ

³ Manuel G. Sanz, “Costa Rica Celebrates 66th Anniversary of the Abolition of Its Army,” *The Tico Times*, December 1, 2014, <http://www.ticotimes.net/2014/12/01/costa-rica-celebrates-66th-anniversary-of-the-abolition-of-its-army>.

⁴ *Global Peace Index 2017: Measuring Peace in a Complex World* (Sydney, Australia, 2017), <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI-2017-Report-1.pdf>.

⁵ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 11.

⁶ Arie M. Kacowicz, *Zones of Peace in the Third World : South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 67.

⁷ Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 11.

⁸ Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*. 11.

force, this would not only threaten the nation's prospects for maintaining a peaceful status but would deter other developing nations from following a similar path of demilitarization.

Costa Rica strives to respond to disputes with Nicaragua diplomatically through the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), which includes provisions for collective security, or by requesting adjudication by the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) and many argue that these tools are adequate to ensure national security. A 2016 Naval Postgraduate School thesis titled *Eliminating War by Eliminating Warriors: A Case Study in Costa Rica* analyzed the impact of Costa Rica's decision to abolish its military on "maintaining a successful military-free society" and for advancing national and regional stability.⁹ The author concluded that "when Costa Rica unsaddled itself of a military, it also relieved itself of the burden of building up arms, dedicating its citizens to fighting for or against Great Power nations, and perpetuating a hostile posture against its neighbors."¹⁰ It is clear that Costa Rica's national military did not serve as a meaningful deterrent against threats from Great Power nations. However, the contention that disbanding the national military has reduced the likelihood for hostile disputes with neighboring Nicaragua or that Costa Rica concurrently relinquished its ability or willingness to employ force in the interest of national security requires further investigation.

Costa Rica has received widespread criticism for maintaining a domestic capacity for external defense by training and equipping specialized units of its police force to counter the threat posed by Nicaragua. There is evidence to support that this domestic capability to employ force is necessary to achieve immediate objectives rather than relying on diplomatic resolution which can be lengthy and complicated. The "re-militarization" of Costa Rica is a theme that has endured in national headlines since 1948 and tends to vacillate in popularity in line with Costa Rica's relationship with Nicaragua at any given period. Following the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution, Costa Rican officials announced a plan

⁹ Julian L. Benton, "Eliminating War by Eliminating Warriors: A Case Study in Costa Rica," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), v, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/48541>.

¹⁰ Benton, "Eliminating War by Eliminating Warriors: A Case Study in Costa Rica," 45.

to modernize the armament of the Civil Guard to a level equivalent of a U.S. infantryman.¹¹ Civil Guard units stationed along the Nicaraguan border were to be outfitted with advanced weaponry including M-16 automatic rifles, M-60 machine guns, mortars, and even grenade launchers.¹² This decision was met with widespread approbation in Costa Rica as Nicaragua was viewed as an imminent threat to national security at the time. However, the decision also triggered concern from those who believed it was the beginning of a slippery slope towards restoring the national military. In the latter part of the 1980s, another U.S. funded surge in specialized equipment and training funds was allocated to the police force in support of the contra war and was accompanied by an outcry of public concern that the nation was forming a “secret army.”¹³ However, Costa Rica has consistently maintained a small force in defense of national sovereignty since 1948, and it is reasonable that their equipment should be modernized as necessary to ensure readiness. This modernization alone should not be assessed as an indicator of any national desire to bolster relative military power. Additionally, the nation’s decision to equip this force is not outside the scope of police authority as Article 8 of the General Law of Police (N°7410) stipulates that one attribute of the police force is to prevent potential violations of the territorial integrity of the nation.¹⁴ Without evidence of any large-scale increase in the size of the force or significant increase in firepower beyond small arms, the accusations that Costa Rica is creating a “secret army” appear to be unfounded. However, any change in the size, organization, and equipment employed by this force are useful in the more salient objective, which is to determine why Costa Rica maintains any level of capacity to engage in hostile conflict against an external threat. The Nicaraguan occupation of Isla Calero in 2010 brought this question to the forefront most recently as Anti-Nicaraguan feelings were re-ignited and “many Costa Ricans [seemed] ready to rush to the border to defend their

¹¹ Stephen Kinzer, “In Fearful Costa Rica, the Yanquis Are Welcome,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/11/world/in-fearful-costa-rica-the-yanquis-are-welcome.html>

¹² Kinzer, “In Fearful Costa Rica, the Yanquis Are Welcome.”

¹³ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, NM: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1991), 24.

¹⁴ N°7410, La Asamblea Legislativa De La Republica De Costa Rica. (2001), http://www.vertic.org/media/National%20Legislation/Costa_Rica/CR_Ley_General_de_Policia.pdf

homeland.”¹⁵ While Article 12 of the Costa Rican Constitution authorizes the government to mobilize a national defense force to defend against an external attack, the government declared a desire to expand this ability and requested the Supreme Court (Sala IV) develop a more broad range of criteria to allow for greater flexibility.¹⁶ These developments indicate a shift towards a growing level of comfort or willingness to use hostile force against Nicaragua in future disputes.

Costa Rica has historically provided refuge, funding, armament, and transportation support to anti-Somoza and anti-Sandinista forces operating on the Costa Rican side of the border and I categorize this support as another form of employment of force in this thesis. The assistance that Costa Rica has provided to these guerilla forces is akin to the employment of its domestic force in that it presents equal risk in tarnishing the nation’s peaceful image and in compromising the promise of international support in pursuit of more immediate objectives.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

International relations theory primarily involves the pursuit of explaining the behavior of major powers or how smaller states act in relation to regional or global hegemons. Kenneth Waltz wrote that “the theory of international politics is written in terms of the great powers of an era. It would be...ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica...A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on great powers.”¹⁷ However, I believe that the analysis of the behavior of small states with one another is useful in evaluating the tenets of international relations theory and this thesis may yield new evidence to either bolster or undermine established interpretations. Additionally, the subject of conflict in international relations theory typically refers to the onset of war rather than the series of small-scale disputes that define Costa Rica and Nicaragua’s past. Rather than dismissing this case study for not conforming

¹⁵ Carol Marujo, “Threats to Peace: The Militarization of Costa Rica,” *Peace and Freedom* 71, no. 1 (2011): 3.

¹⁶ Marujo, “Threats to Peace: The Militarization of Costa Rica.”

¹⁷ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 73.

to the standard international relations comparison of great powers with one another or with smaller states, this thesis provides a new angle with which to test the established theory and further refine this diverse field of study.

Costa Rica has a Social Democratic style a government and is often regarded as the quintessential modern state supporting the tenets of liberalism. Michael Doyle classified Costa Rica as meeting his criteria for a “Liberal Regime” as early as 1919 until the civil war in 1948 and then from 1948 until the present-day.¹⁸ According to Doyle, a “Liberal Regime” maintained “market and private property economies; polities that are externally sovereign; citizens who possess juridical rights; and ‘republican’ (whether republican or monarchical), representative, government.”¹⁹ Although this is a compelling argument, it does not provide a liberal explanation for Costa Rica’s behavior in response to disputes with Nicaragua.

Immanuel Kant proposed the liberal concept of “Perpetual Peace” in 1795, which argues the existence of an “ever-widening pacification of the liberal pacific union.”²⁰ A required condition for the emergence of eternal peace was the existence of “a treaty of the nations among themselves” which “maintains itself, prevents wars, and steadily expands.”²¹ Kant argued that in a peaceful republic, “once the habit of respect for individual rights is engrained by republican government, wars would appear as the disaster to the people’s welfare.”²² The “Kantian framework” for peace was based on a nation’s “political liberalization and movement towards democracy, economic interdependence, and the influence of international law and organizations.”²³ Bruce Russett built on this framework with his interpretation of liberalism theory, which argues that the influence of the anarchic system is mitigated through the presence of “security communities” that rely

¹⁸ Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 211–212.

¹⁹ Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” 212.

²⁰ Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” 225.

²¹ Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” 226.

²² Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” 229.

²³ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 369.

on the presence of multilateral organizations, democracy, and interdependence to achieve peace.²⁴ Derivations of these ideas are distilled into the distinct theories of institutional liberalism, and democratic peace theory and this thesis evaluates these theories on whether they are supported by Costa Rica's behavior in disputes with Nicaragua.

The theory of institutional liberalism argues that the presence of "dense networks of intergovernmental organization membership" has a direct correlation with the promotion of peace.²⁵ Russett adds that "international organizations provide transparency, search for the basis of acceptable compromise or minimum common-denominator agreements, and create preferences for, and expectations of, peaceful settlement."²⁶ Both the UN and OAS have played a key role in attempting to facilitate peaceful dispute resolution between Costa Rica and Nicaragua from 1948 until the present-day. An analysis of whether the influence of these institutions was a factor in moderating Costa Rica's behavior with Nicaragua is explored in this thesis.

Democratic Peace theory is a tenet of liberalism which postulates that two democracies are unlikely to go to war but also contends that conflict is even more likely between a democracy and an authoritarian government than it is between two authoritarian governments. A predominant aspect of this theory, as in most international relations theory, involves the prediction of whether conflict will occur between two nations. To examine the degree that Costa Rica's historical relationship with Nicaragua adheres to the principle of Democratic Peace Theory would require a detailed examination of the degree of consolidation of Nicaragua's democracy and, while this is certainly an intriguing topic for research, it is not a focus of this thesis. However, I evaluate whether Costa Rica viewed Nicaragua as a state that was not committed to "peaceful conflict resolution," nor possess the "political institutions that support peaceful conflict resolution internationally" or the "normative perspectives and institutional restraints typical of democracies." If there is evidence to suggest that Costa Ricans employed force against Nicaragua because they did

²⁴ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 369.

²⁵ Adler and Barnett, *Security Communities*, 377.

²⁶ Adler and Barnett, *Security Communities*, 383.

not trust Nicaragua's commitment to Democratic norms, this conclusion would further support Democratic Peace Theory.²⁷

Although Costa Rica boasts a strong democracy and other liberal characteristics, this may not be as much of a constraint on the employment of force as some aspects of liberal theory would indicate and Costa Rica's behavior may provide a more compelling explanation for realist international relations theory which "emphasizes the enduring propensity for conflict between states."²⁸ Specific examples of Costa Rica's behavior that might support realist theory and that are examined in this thesis include the nation's sponsorship of cross-border insurgency in Nicaragua in the 1970s and 1980s and the more recent training and employment of a Special Intervention Unit. The unit trains to fight Nicaraguan troops and regularly participates in the annual U.S. Southern Command's *Fuerza Comando* competitions along with special forces units from other nations in Latin America.²⁹

Kenneth Waltz's neo-realist international relations theory is centered on the argument that the decentralized, anarchic structure of the International System influences a state's behavior and policy-makers should understand that no state is "entitled to command" or "required to obey."³⁰ Instead, International systems are decentralized and anarchic because the individual people or organizations within the system are not as concerned with establishing order within the system as they are with "fulfilling their own internally defined interests by whatever means they can muster."³¹ This theory could help explain why Costa Rica engages in the employment of domestic force against Nicaragua and sponsored cross-border insurgency of anti-Sandinista and anti-Somoza forces by arguing that while Costa Rica relies on security from multilateral institutions in most cases,

²⁷ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 372–73.

²⁸ Stephen Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 1, no. 110 (1998): 30.

²⁹ Robert Beckhusen, "Costa Rica Doesn't Have a Military? Not So Fast," *War Is Boring*, August 10, 2014, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/costa-rica-doesnt-have-a-military-not-so-fast-499b5d67e160>

³⁰ Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University, 1986), 81.

³¹ Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics*, 83.

the system is anarchic and Costa Rica understands that a guarantee of security is only possible using alternate means. The realist argument for Costa Rica's sponsorship of guerrilla forces is further supported by findings from a RAND Institute report that concluded that the majority of cases involving state sponsorship of rebel forces involve a neighboring state in pursuit of "realpolitik ambitions" including "increasing regional influence" and "destabilizing neighborhood rivals."³²

John Mearsheimer is another realist who believed that "many in the West seem to believe that 'perpetual peace'...is finally at hand."³³ He argued that following the Cold War, Western states assumed that war had become an obsolescent enterprise.³⁴ Building on Waltz's theory that states are not "required to obey," Mearsheimer's offensive realism further supports this concept and suggests that great powers including the United States, China, and Russia act in accordance with multilateral institutions, agreements, and treaties in most cases. However, are likely to deviate from this behavior to take advantage of an opportunity to gain power over each other to increase their security.³⁵ Realist theory suggests that unlike great power nations, smaller nations are far more dependent on multilateral institutions for security and are less likely to violate international agreements or act independently of multilateral institutions like the OAS.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

I begin my analysis by testing the evidence distilled from the case studies against the liberal and realist theory described in the previous section. To test this evidence against these theories, I consider the following questions:

³² Daniel Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), xiv.

³³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 1.

³⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 1.

³⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 5.

a. Liberalism

- (1) Is there evidence to suggest that the influence of multilateral institutions including the OAS and UN reduced Costa Rica's employment of force and contributed to a decision to respond diplomatically?
- (2) In instances where Costa Rica deviated from a peaceful diplomatic response, is there sufficient evidence to suggest that Costa Rica doubted Nicaragua's commitment to peace or violated other tenets of liberal democracy that would explain the employment of hostile force under Democratic Peace Theory?

b. Realism

- (1) Is there evidence to suggest that it was in Costa Rica's national interest to increase regional influence or destabilize neighborhood rivals and that this was a driving factor for the employment of force during any of the three periods evaluated?
- (2) If the pursuit of national interests did influence Costa Rica's response, what evidence indicates that Costa Rica deviated from compliance with multilateral institutions in pursuit of this national interest? A determination that Costa Rica acted in pursuit of national interest would support the basic tenets of realism theory but would contradict Mearsheimer's belief that small states are far more likely to act in accordance with multilateral institutions.

I expect the evidence distilled from the case studies to reveal that Costa Rica's behavior in disputes with Nicaragua supports aspects of realism and liberalism to varying degrees but will best support Constructivist theory instead. As John Ruggie stated, "the 'great debates' that have swept through the field of international relations over the decades typically have been posed in terms of the alleged superiority of one approach over another. But the fact that these debates recur so regularly offers proof that no approach can sustain claims of monopoly on truth."³⁶ Alexander Wendt is a constructivist who refuted the ability of liberal and realist theory to adequately explain a states' behavior by surmising that "anarchy is what states make of it."³⁷ Wendt argued that while the extent that a state is

³⁶ John Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 882.

³⁷ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 92 (1992): 424.

motivated by absolute versus relative gains varies between neorealist and neoliberal arguments, both theories use the “self-interested state” as the foundational theme.³⁸ While liberals acknowledge the existence of an anarchic structure, they argue that cooperative behavior can overcome anarchy through process.³⁹ Wendt believed that liberals and realists were too constrained by their strict adherence to process and anarchy and described a new theory which proposed that identity and interest within a state are socially constructed rather than “exogenous and given.”^{40,41}

Costa Ricans have developed a peaceful ideology beginning as far back as European colonization and into the early years of the formation of the nation that must be considered in any evaluation of the nation’s behavior in modern times. The nation’s colonization by Spanish farmers rather than soldiers, the legacy left by President Figueres when he abolished the military in 1948 and the subsequent social benefits the country enjoyed stemming from that decision, and the work of Oscar Arias in negotiating peace in the region all serve to support the argument that Costa Rica’s behavior and peaceful ideology are social constructs that have matured over the course of history. Costa Ricans are instilled with this national identity at an early age as they learn about the nation’s history in school, and this certainly affects the decision-making of those who ultimately assume positions of national leadership later in life.

Constructivist theory is also useful in explaining Costa Rica’s employment of force and sponsorship of anti-Somoza and anti-Sandinista guerrilla forces. Ongoing conflict with Nicaragua has become the norm, and Costa Ricans have developed a sense of distrust of Nicaragua reinforced by multiple invasions and hostile disputes over the decades. Costa Ricans accept limited employment of force is an acceptable deviation from their peaceful ideology and compliance with multilateral institutions as this has proven to be an effective method of ensuring national sovereignty and restraining Nicaraguan aggression.

³⁸ Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 392.

³⁹ Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 392.

⁴⁰ Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 393.

⁴¹ John Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 862.

To test the case study evidence against the constructivist theory that “ideas matter,” I considered the following questions:

- How do socially constructed legacies from Costa Rica’s early history including its peaceful ideology and willingness to employ force against Nicaragua appear to influence the nation’s actions during each period? To answer this question, I considered the following issues:
- What relevant policies, statements, and actions were enacted by the President or leading political party during each period? The PLN has dominated Costa Rican politics with 10 of the 19 post-civil war presidents having been members of the party.⁴² This includes the most famous Costa Rican Presidents, José Figueres and Oscar Arias, and the ideas and norms of this party have continued to influence Costa Rica’s external actions to the present day.
- How has public perception of the threat of Nicaraguan aggression and the opinion on the employment of force to counter that threat evolved in Costa Rica since 1948?
- Is the evidence suggesting that Costa Rica’s behavior is primarily influenced by these social constructs more compelling than that supporting liberal and realist theory?

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

An evaluation of Costa Rica’s response to a dispute or series of disputes during a short period is likely to yield findings that support a particular international relations theory, but these findings are of limited value if the previous or following dispute yield contradicting conclusions. For example, it is a matter of historical fact that Costa Rica employed domestic force or assisted anti-Nicaraguan guerilla forces in some disputes while

⁴² Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 100.

it sought diplomatic assistance through the UN and OAS or utilized a combination of all these responses in other instances. For this reason, I chose to analyze Costa Rica's behavior during three distinct periods over the 70 years following the abolition of the military in 1948 to identify lasting trends or variations of behavior and determine the ways these findings support International Relations theory. The first case study focuses on the thirty-year period beginning with the abolition of Costa Rica's military in 1948 and ends with the end of the Somoza era and beginning of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua in 1979. This period is characterized by a series of hostile conflicts precipitated by the antagonistic relationship between Costa Rica's revolutionary hero and democratically elected President Jose Figueres and the dictatorial Nicaraguan government led by the Somoza family. The second case study evaluates the period between 1979 and 1989, which is characterized by Costa Rica's involvement in the U.S.-backed contra war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The third case study, which remains relatively sparse, evaluates the period beginning in the 1990s and characterized by several disputes between the two nations that approached hostility but were ultimately adjudicated at the United Nations International Court of Justice (ICJ) and resolved peacefully.

The goal of this thesis is to further the discussion of international relations theory rather than to attempt to prove or discredit one theory over another. However, while Costa Rica's response to external threats can be effectively explained using realist or liberal narratives in some instances, this thesis shows that Constructivist theory provides the most compelling explanation. For each period, I included a historical summary of significant events and major disputes between the two countries and evaluated Costa Rica's actions throughout each dispute. I determined the extent that Costa Rica relied on diplomatic methods of dispute resolution as well as the employment and use of force. I evaluated the analysis of each period to identify trends showing whether Costa Rica's willingness to employ force in disputes against Nicaragua has increased or decreased since the abolition of its military.

It is necessary to distinguish between the capacity, employment, and engagement in hostile armed conflict of a nation's armed force. In consideration of Costa Rica's use of force, I focused on the employment of force and engagement in hostile armed conflict. The

term “militarization” is used interchangeably in literature to describe either the presence or increase in capacity of force as well as to describe incidents when the force is employed or engages in hostile conflict. The set of literature asserting the “remilitarization” of Costa Rica meaning that a “secret army” is being formed is robust but is not the focus of the research in this thesis. It is clear that Costa Rica trains and equips a contingent of its police force to counter the threat Nicaragua poses to Costa Rican sovereignty but there is little evidence to support the assumption that the scope of responsibility or size of this force has expanded significantly in recent years. As one historian noted, “Costa Rica’s claim to have abolished its armed forces is an amiable deception, or at least an exaggeration. What it has done, with notable success, is to restrict its armed forces to the minimum level necessary to maintain public order in a fairly stable country, and to demilitarize them.”⁴³ While I do examine the general size of each nation’s respective force in this paper, I focus instead on the factors that influence Costa Rica’s decision to employ hostile force as well as how that decision has evolved independent of the size or capacity of force. I also do not focus on the causes of the disputes between Nicaragua and Costa Rica except to note that they tend to arise over border disputes or differing political ideologies of the two nation’s presidents. However, I analyzed the impact of politics on the methods of dispute resolution and decision on whether to use hostile force.

F. EARLY HISTORY OF COSTA RICA

To determine whether Costa Rica’s actions in response to ongoing disputes with Nicaragua best support tenets of Constructivist theory, it is important to consider some key events in the nation’s history dating back to European Colonization in the 15th century. Constructivists would argue that the nation’s peaceful ideology along with its willingness to forego peace in some instances by employing force against Nicaragua is the result of a socially constructed identity that has matured and been reinforced by events over the course of the nation’s history. According to many historians, “Costa Rica’s colonial experience

⁴³ John Keegan, *World Armies* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1983), 129.

formed the social and political foundations of its later democracy.”⁴⁴ Unlike in colonies such as present-day Peru, Mexico, or Guatemala which were prized possessions of the Spanish Empire due to the rich natural resources including gold and silver and an abundant supply of Indigenous labor, Costa Rica lacked these attributes almost entirely and garnered minimal interest from the early Spanish conquistadors.⁴⁵ The colonials that settled in present-day Costa Rica established small subsistence-level farms with the intent to support their families. Instead of relying on indigenous slave labor, the farmers were responsible most of their labor, which resulted in a society of independent, hard-working, small-scale landowners.⁴⁶ While the Spanish military played a primary role in the development of early society and politics throughout most of Latin America, Costa Rica did not have this military influence as they only maintained a small militia to repel small-scale attacks from the few indigenous groups in the area.⁴⁷ Without the influence of a strong national military and because the class lines were not as defined as in neighboring countries established under *encomienda* systems, a more democratic social and political order emerged in Costa Rica.⁴⁸ Costa Rica gained its independence from Spain in 1821 as part of the *Capitanía General* of Guatemala but did not participate in hostilities.⁴⁹ The nation has had over sixty presidents, but only three of them ever served in the military.⁵⁰ Furthermore, between 1891 and 1948 the nation had only one period of dictatorship and one coup d’état and this can be attributed to the lack of a strong national military in the country capable of seizing control as occurred throughout most of Latin America.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Bruce M. Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 11.

⁴⁵ “Costa Rica Army,” Global Security, accessed July 28, 2018, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centam/cr-army.htm>

⁴⁶ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 24.

⁴⁷ Global Security, “Costa Rica Army.”

⁴⁸ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 3.

⁴⁹ Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 189.

⁵⁰ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 12.

⁵¹ Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America*, 189.

While events before 1948 certainly contributed to Costa Rica's pacifist identity, the first deliberate event facilitating this identity was the abolition of the national military on 1 December 1948 by José Figueres upon his victory in the nation's civil war as President of the junta. As Figueres ceremoniously smashed a sledgehammer against the stonewall of the national military headquarters and turned the building over to the Department of Education, he set the nation on a path characterized by strong democracy, internal stability, and economic prosperity without equal in Latin America.⁵² This action by Figueres made him famous around the world because of the subsequent economic and social benefits recognized by Costa Rica in the following years. Some historians argue that Figueres' decision to disband the national military was a calculated measure born out of concern that the military represented a threat to his National Liberation movement.⁵³ The military had fought against Figueres' forces during the civil war and remained mostly allegiant to Rafael Calderón's National Republican Party. Regardless of Figueres' underlying intentions for disbanding the national military, the act undoubtedly bolstered the nation's peaceful ideology that has endured until the present-day.

Just eight months before President Figueres' decision to abolish the military, Costa Rica became one of the first signatories of the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement at the Ninth International Conference of American States. This treaty, signed on 30 April 1948 and commonly referred to as the *Pact of Bogotá*, obligated members of the OAS to settle any disputes among members peacefully and provided the mechanism to do so.⁵⁴ The ratification of this treaty was a key factor in President Figueres' decision to demilitarize as it provided a means for peaceful dispute resolution in the region, which decreased the threat of armed conflict with neighboring states. This treaty included a provision for enforcement under Article VIII, which outlined the right of "collective self-defense, as provided for in

⁵² Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 293.

⁵³ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, NM: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1991), 21.

⁵⁴ "American Treaty on Pacific Settlement 'Pact of Bogota' (A-42)," Organization of American States, August 1, 2009, http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-42_pacific_settlement_pact_bogota.asp

the Charter of the United Nations.”⁵⁵ The current version of the Charter of the Organization of American States builds on this provision, and Chapter VI is dedicated entirely to Collective Security amongst its members.⁵⁶ Article 28 states that “Every act of aggression by a State against the territorial integrity or the inviolability of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of an American State shall be considered an act of aggression against the other American States.”⁵⁷

The Charter of the Organization of American States is a powerful tool for dispute resolution, but it was not intended to be the sole mechanism for this purpose. According to Article 24 of the Charter, “this provision shall not be interpreted as an impairment of the rights and obligations of the Member States under Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations.”⁵⁸ Article 34 of the UN charter states that “the [UN] Security Council may investigate any dispute or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.”⁵⁹ According to Article 35, “Any member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly.”⁶⁰ Thus, Costa Rica has powerful diplomatic tools through both the OAS and the UN International Court of Justice.

In addition to the strong legacy of peace and democracy in Costa Rica’s early years, a second theme that has had an enduring influence on the nation’s interests and identity was an ongoing series of hostile disputes with neighboring Nicaragua. These disputes even threatened to derail the nation’s burgeoning commitment to diplomacy. The first significant

⁵⁵ Organization of American States, “American Treaty on Pacific Settlement ‘Pact of Bogota’ (A-42).”

⁵⁶ “Charter of the Organization of American States (A-41).” Organization of American States, accessed August 1, 2018, http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/inter_american_treaties_A-41_charter_OAS.asp#Chapter_VI

⁵⁷ Organization of American States, “Charter of the Organization of American States (A-41).”

⁵⁸ Organization of American States, “Charter of the Organization of American States (A-41).”

⁵⁹ “Charter of the United Nations: Chapter VI,” United Nations, accessed December 1, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vi/index.html>

⁶⁰ United Nations, “Charter of the United Nations: Chapter VI.”

hostile conflict between the two nations dates back to 1836 when a group of Nicaraguans led by Manuel Quijano invaded Costa Rica during the nation's first civil war in an attempt to assist Conservatives seeking to prevent the establishment of the national capital in San Jose.⁶¹ The invasion was a failure as Costa Rican president Braulio Carillo Colina led a successful defense of San Jose and repelled the attack.⁶² A second conflict began in 1857 when a Tennessean freebooter named William Walker was elected president of Nicaragua and began an extractive regime with assistance from his band of "filibusters" from the United States who sought to establish a new slave state to serve their interests.⁶³ The President of Costa Rica, Juan Rafael Mora, declared war against William Walker's Nicaragua and classified the group as "a gang of foreigners, the scum of all the earth, condemned by the justice of the American Union."⁶⁴ Costa Rica, with assistance from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, defeated William Walker's army in the Battle of Rivas on April 11, 1856, but the victory came at a relatively high cost for Costa Rica with 260 wounded and 110 dead including several renowned military officers.⁶⁵ This battle instilled a powerful sense of nationalism among Costa Ricans and created the first military establishment for the nation, which lasted until President Guardia's death in 1882.⁶⁶ From these early cases of hostile conflict, Costa Ricans became willing to accept the limited employment of domestic force against Nicaragua because as it was proven to be an effective method of defending national sovereignty and restraining Nicaraguan aggression. This singular exception to the nation's commitment to diplomatic dispute resolution is undoubtedly a socially constructed norm for Costa Ricans that has emerged in response to this troubled early history and has endured to the present day.

⁶¹ Bruce M. Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 20.

⁶² Bruce M. Wilson, *Costa Rica: Politics, Economics, and Democracy*, 20.

⁶³ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 8.

⁶⁴ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 8.

⁶⁵ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 34.

⁶⁶ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 8.

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II. CASE STUDY #1 (1948–1979): THIRTY YEARS OF WAR BETWEEN COSTA RICA AND NICARAGUA

A. SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The first case study evaluates the period beginning at the culmination of Costa Rica's civil war in 1948 and ending with the expulsion of the Somoza dynasty and their National Liberation Party by the Sandinistas in 1979. Costa Rica's actions throughout this case study are best explained by principles of Constructivist theory as the hostile personal relationship between President Figueres and President Somoza as well as the distrust many Costa Ricans had for Nicaragua as a result of the long history of conflict are both socially constructed norms the heavily influenced Costa Rica's behavior. This was a critical period in Costa Rica's development as the newly demilitarized nation would be tested for the first time and would have to prove that it had the resolve to rely on support from multilateral institutions to respond to hostile disputes with Nicaragua. President Figueres abolished the military on December 1, 1948, and three days later Costa Rica became the 14th signatory of the Rio Treaty which declared that

an armed attack by any State against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States and, consequently, each one of the said Contracting Parties undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.⁶⁷

Figueres elected not to run for President in the 1948 election but instead to support Otilio Ulate Blanco who won by a wide margin to the dismay of the members of Calderon's National Republican Party, many of whom had fled to Nicaragua after losing the civil war.⁶⁸ Following the election and just eight days after signing the Rio Treaty, on 11 December, Costa Rica became the first nation to invoke the new treaty after the Costa Rican ambassador sent a letter to the Argentine Ambassador Enrique V. Carominas, chairman of the Council of the OAS, which stated that the "Costa Rican territory had been

⁶⁷ "Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance," Organization of American States, accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>.

⁶⁸ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 104–6.

invaded by an armed force proceeding from Nicaragua.”⁶⁹ By Costa Rica invoking the Rio Treaty, the dispute now had great significance throughout America as the decision by the OAS would set a precedent for future cases and the success or failure of the proceedings would determine the effectiveness of the Rio treaty as a regional-security agreement.⁷⁰ The OAS moved rapidly by calling a meeting on 12 December where “Costa Rica charged Nicaragua with tolerating, encouraging and aiding a conspiracy concocted in Nicaragua to overthrow the Costa Rican government by force of arms and making available the territory and material means to cross the border and invade Costa Rica.”⁷¹ As Nicaraguan newspapers reported a growing strength of rebel forces converging in Managua, Costa Ricans reported that the *calderonistas* were already invading from the north-west border and a group of 800 had reportedly attacked the small Costa Rican town of La Cruz and seized the local airfield.⁷² At the same time, the Costa Rican military headquarters building that Figueres had converted into a museum ten days prior was now being utilized as an assembly point for 600 armed men preparing to counter the invasion.⁷³ On December 14, the OAS assigned an investigation Commission who interviewed four captured Nicaraguan soldiers captured along with 35 *calderonistas*.⁷⁴ The Commission reported that there was “no doubt that the revolutionary movement was organized and prepared in Nicaraguan and that the Nicaraguan government had failed to take adequate measures to prevent the frontier being crossed.”⁷⁵ The Commission also found evidence that the Nicaraguan government had provided direct aid to the rebel forces at least before 10 December.⁷⁶ Following the release of the Commission’s report and after substantial negotiation by the OAS, a Pact of

⁶⁹ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 393.

⁷⁰ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 393.

⁷¹ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 110.

⁷² Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 107–10.

⁷³ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 111.

⁷⁴ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 114–15.

⁷⁵ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 115.

⁷⁶ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 115.

Amity was drafted and signed by both nations on February 21, 1949, bringing a cessation of hostilities.⁷⁷

While the OAS succeeded in facilitating the end of this initial conflict between the two nations while simultaneously garnering some valuable credibility for the newly established Rio treaty, their efforts only provided a temporary refrain from hostilities between the two countries. The animosity between Presidents Figueres and Somoza continued to compound problems between the two nations, and in April 1954 a group of Nicaraguan exiles crossed into the country from Costa Rica armed with Costa Rican weapons and attempted to assassinate Somoza.⁷⁸ While the plot failed after all the exiles were killed or captured, Somoza personally interrogated some of the men who then confessed that Figueres was behind the plan.⁷⁹ President Somoza also joined Venezuelan President Pérez Jiménez and the Dominican Republic President Trujillo in condemning President Figueres' aggressive promotion of democracy in Latin America.⁸⁰ The Nicaraguan government soon renewed their aggressive behavior towards Costa Rica in response to the perceived threat of Figueres' incendiary political views regarding democratization and socio-economic reform. They enacted several measures including massing military troops and vehicles along the Costa Rican border, prohibiting Costa Rican navigation of the San Juan River, and purchasing military aircraft and large quantities of armaments.⁸¹ However, the most egregious act was "the granting of facilities in Nicaragua to the enemies of the Costa Rican government for the organizing of plots against the peace and security of that nation."⁸² Somoza was quoted as saying, "if Figueres wants war, he

⁷⁷ J. Lloyd Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 403.

⁷⁸ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 139.

⁷⁹ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 139.

⁸⁰ Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*., 403.

⁸¹ Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*., 403.

⁸² Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*., 403.

can have it” by the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa*.⁸³ Somoza continued to train and equip Calderon’s forces and developed a plan for the guerrillas to secretly invade Costa Rica and attack government officials and Costa Rican forces. The attack was designed to appear as a domestic conflict within Costa Rica to avoid triggering OAS intervention.⁸⁴

Costa Rica recognized the imminent threat of another invasion from Nicaragua and appealed to the OAS on April 21, 1954, to request that the Commission of Investigation and Conciliation investigate Nicaragua’s actions.⁸⁵ Additionally, Costa Rica prepared to counter the invasion by equipping its forces with “3,500 M-1 rifles, 500 Thompson submachine guns, several machine guns, rocket launchers, mortars, and ammunition from American sources.”⁸⁶ Following a six-month period without significant progress by the OAS and with conditions continuing to deteriorate along the border, Costa Rica requested a meeting of the Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to discuss escalating the response in accordance with Article 6 of the Rio Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.⁸⁷ However, just two days after submitting this request, Costa Rica reported that an invasion from Nicaragua had begun “by military forces proceeding from abroad, which have already occupied various points in the north boundary zone, among them the important town of Villa Quesada.”⁸⁸ The invasion consisted primarily of supporters of exiled Costa Rican President Rafael Calderón Guardia and was led by his son, Teodoro Picado, Jr., a West Point graduate.⁸⁹ The Costa Rican civil guard was joined by a volunteer “minuteman” army

⁸³ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 142.

⁸⁴ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 142.

⁸⁵ J. Lloyd Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 403.

⁸⁶ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 143.

⁸⁷ Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960.*, 403.

⁸⁸ Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960.*, 403.

⁸⁹ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 237.

that moved north out of San Jose to engage the Picado's men.⁹⁰ As police officers and other civilians joined the Costa Rican soldiers marching north, there was no shortage of volunteers to fill the vacated jobs of those who went to fight which included the local Boy Scouts who assumed the responsibility of directing traffic in the capital.⁹¹

The OAS Council recognized the growing severity of the situation and likelihood of further escalation, and immediately formed an Investigating Committee as well as issuing a declaration that every American government should take all necessary action to prevent their territory from being used to plan or execute hostile action against another American government.⁹² While Nicaragua agreed to this declaration, Costa Rica reported on January 12 that not only had the invasion continued, but also that it had escalated further and several cities including the capital of San Jose had been strafed and bombed by aircraft originating in Nicaragua.⁹³ Once again, the OAS attempted to respond peacefully by instituting the first utilization of peaceful overflights by unarmed aircraft to monitor the situation.⁹⁴ While these aircraft had no means to forcefully repel armed aircraft coming from Nicaragua, they were able to confirm the veracity of these claims to the international community.

With little indication that the limited peaceful intervention by the OAS would halt further hostile action from Nicaragua, Figueres sent an urgent request to the United States to purchase four state-of-the-art P-51 fighter aircraft to be flown by Costa Rican pilots.⁹⁵ The OAS voted unanimously in approval of this purchase, and the aircraft were soon delivered from Texas to Costa Rica.⁹⁶ Pilots from the United States gave the Costa Rican

⁹⁰ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 144.

⁹¹ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 144.

⁹² J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 404.

⁹³ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 404.

⁹⁴ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 404.

⁹⁵ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 404.

⁹⁶ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 404.

pilots a “crash-course in handling the aircraft,” and the Costa Ricans launched their first sortie the day after their training.⁹⁷ Within one week of the commencement of Costa Rican sorties, the aircraft flown by the revolutionaries returned to Nicaragua along with approximately 250 guerillas and turned themselves into Nicaraguan authorities thus putting an end to hostilities.⁹⁸ President Somoza denied having provided any support to the Calderonista revolutionaries operating out of his country but emphasized his disdain both for President Figueres and for the decision by the United States to sell fighter aircraft to Costa Rica.⁹⁹

The third significant conflict during this period began in June 1959. Unlike in the initial conflicts where Costa Rica was the victim, in this case, it was Nicaragua that reported an invasion of guerrilla forces originating from Costa Rica. The invasion began on June 1 and included over 400 fighters who were flown into Nicaragua from Costa Rica in several waves.¹⁰⁰ Individuals from several nationalities reportedly participated, but the force consisted predominantly of Nicaraguans exiled by the Somoza administration including many students and Army Officers.¹⁰¹ The attack was preceded by a massive protest in Nicaragua by those seeking an end to the dictatorial rule of President Somoza who they considered to be just as oppressive as his father Anastasio before his assassination.¹⁰² Upon discovering the attack, Nicaraguan officials immediately appealed to the OAS and warned that if hostilities continued then attacks on Costa Rican ships and aircraft by the Nicaraguan military would be authorized.¹⁰³ The OAS members were reportedly quite reluctant to provide any assistance to Nicaragua because of its dictatorial government. However, out of concern that the conflict would intensify and because there was not sufficient evidence

⁹⁷ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 146.

⁹⁸ J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 404.

⁹⁹ J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 405.

¹⁰⁰ J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413.

¹⁰¹ J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413.

¹⁰² J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413.

¹⁰³ J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413.

to conclude that this was a domestic conflict because the forces were reported to have originated from Costa Rica, the members voted seventeen to two in favor of intervening in accordance with the Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.¹⁰⁴ A Special Committee was established to investigate the dispute and, although the Committee determined that the attacks had originated from Costa Rica, hostilities subsided following the initial invasion, and the OAS took no further action.¹⁰⁵

B. REALISM

This period of Costa Rica's history was far more violent than many recognize considering the peaceful image the nation has maintained since abolishing its military in 1948. Realists would argue that although Costa Rica undoubtedly had a strong commitment to multilateral institutions including the OAS which played a key role in resolving the disputes during this period, diplomacy alone was insufficient to prevent the onset of armed conflict between Costa Rican and Nicaragua during the 1948, 1954 and 1959 invasions. This argument corresponds with Walt's realist theory, which "emphasizes the enduring propensity for conflict between states" but does not attempt to specify the frequency or level of hostility of this conflict.¹⁰⁶ Subscribers to Walt's realist theory enjoy somewhat of an advantage because they argue that the burden of proof rests with the liberals. Realists only need to be "right" once in predicting conflict while liberals must prove an enduring condition of peace.¹⁰⁷ Edward Carr is a Classical Realist who explained that "the realist should not, however, linger over the infliction of these pin-pricks through chinks in the utopian defences. His task is to bring down the whole cardboard structure of post-War utopian thought by exposing the hollowness of the material out of which it is built."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 414.

¹⁰⁵ J. Lloyd Meham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 415.

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 1, no. 110 (1998): 30.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," 30.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1940), 96.

A possible explanation for the alleged support that Costa Rica provided to guerrilla forces during the 1959 invasion of Nicaragua involves a realist assertion by Daniel Byman of the RAND Institute who found that the majority of cases involving state sponsorship of rebel forces involve a neighboring state in pursuit of “realpolitik ambitions.”¹⁰⁹ Byman’s research concluded that the driving motivations for state support include increasing regional influence, destabilizing neighborhood rivals, regime change, and payback.¹¹⁰

The Costa Rican OAS representatives argued that “since the revolutionaries were Nicaraguan, this was not a ‘foreign’ invasion but an internal affair.”¹¹¹ However, the U.S. representative to the OAS Ambassador John C. Dreier countered this assessment by arguing instead that the nationality of the combatants was inconsequential and “the fact that the invading force had come from abroad, had been armed abroad, and was being supported by airplane flights from abroad was sufficient to remove all doubt that action of the OAS was justified and was in fact called for under the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro.”¹¹² Ambassador Dreier’s statement certainly implied that the Costa Rican government was at least complicit and may well have provided direct support to the guerrilla forces. It is also important to consider that just one day before the invasion, the Costa Rican Congress had publicly declared solidarity with the Nicaraguan guerrillas in their effort to remove Somoza.¹¹³

C. LIBERALISM

Liberal theorists argue that principles of realism are unable to adequately explain the general “pacification of the liberal world.”¹¹⁴ Michael Doyle is a liberal theorist who

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 23.

¹¹⁰ Daniel Byman, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 23–34.

¹¹¹ J. Lloyd Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*. (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1961), 415.

¹¹² J. Lloyd Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413–14.

¹¹³ J. Lloyd Mechem, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960*, 413.

¹¹⁴ Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 218.

wrote that “even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with nonliberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another.”¹¹⁵ Bruce Russett reinforces this theory by adding that “critics have yet to seriously dent the ‘democratic peace’ proposition.”¹¹⁶ According to Russett, “democracies rarely fight each other” as a result of “particular normative perspectives on the rightness of fighting others who share a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, and on the absence of the need to fight those who have political institutions that support peaceful conflict resolution internationally.”¹¹⁷ This theory also holds that because liberal states are less trusting of non-liberal states, the non-liberal states are incorrectly perceived as more dangerous which can lead to increased likelihood of conflict. Thus, liberals do not view the world necessarily as more peaceful than pure anarchy but that there are more powerful influences at play. This first case study appears to support this theory as Nicaragua was a dictatorship throughout this period under Somoza and Costa Rica was a democracy.

This period serves as an excellent case study to evaluate Bruce Russett’s belief that the anarchic system is mitigated by the presence of “security communities” that rely on the presence of multilateral organizations and interdependence to achieve peace.¹¹⁸ Russett acknowledges that some parts of the world are “hot spots” but believes that Latin America’s security communities are in a rapidly ascending stage of maturity. Arie Kacowicz reinforced that notion in his book *Zones of Peace in the Third World*, by stating that Latin America is far less prone to conflict than other regions of the developing world.¹¹⁹ The peaceful outcome of the first *calderonista* invasion on February 21, 1949, through a Pact of Unity facilitated by the OAS appears to support this theory as it strengthened both Costa Rica’s dedication to diplomatic dispute resolution and the capacity

¹¹⁵ Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 213.

¹¹⁶ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 372.

¹¹⁷ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 372.

¹¹⁸ Adler and Barnett, *Security Communities*, 369.

¹¹⁹ Arie M. Kacowicz, *Zones of Peace in the Third World : South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), insert page 67.

of the OAS to facilitate future diplomatic resolution.¹²⁰ An excerpt from a New York Times article on the events stated that “the peace machinery of the Western Hemisphere emerges with honour from its first test...a precedent has been established...all accomplished within 15 days, a remarkable record for any international agency.”¹²¹ The Pact of Unity established a significant precedent as this form of diplomatic success in conflict resolution was heavily advocated in theory by the United Nations in the 1940’s but was not yet widely supported by real-world events.¹²²

However, David Mares counters this prediction of relative peace in Latin America and warns that instances of hostile conflict are actually quite likely to occur. Mares specifically identified the ongoing disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua in his book *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* as an indicator of one of several “hot spots” in Latin America where conflict is likely to occur. He also pointed out that while many of these incidents were relatively minor in severity, “all militarized incidents have the potential to escalate into war [and] the initial level of militarization offers no guide to the likely outcome.”¹²³ While liberals would argue that the significant role of the OAS in resolving the disputes of this period indicate that security communities are effective in achieving peace between nations, the fact that Costa Rica engaged in hostile conflict against Nicaragua only days after their momentous decision to sign the Rio Treaty certainly casts some date about the degree that a strong network of multilateral institutions alone can inhibit occurrences of armed conflict.

D. CONSTRUCTIVISM

Costa Rica’s willingness to disband its military and rely primarily on security assistance from multilateral institutions including the Organization of American States is best explained as a socially constructed artifact of the tremendous support for Figueres and his PLN Party as a result of his charismatic leadership leading up to, during, and after

¹²⁰ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 115.

¹²¹ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 115.

¹²² Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 116.

¹²³ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 11.

the nation's 1948 Civil War. In the 1948 election, Calderon's defeated National Republican party received only 668 of the 82,148 votes cast in the election which is evidence of the national sentiment following the Civil War.¹²⁴ After nationalizing the banking system and disbanding the army, Figueres proclaimed, "We want to uphold the idea of a new world" in the Americas.¹²⁵ The PLN sought to advance the middle class of the country through modernization and industrialization and these priorities resulted in a new and successful era for the nation as foreign investors and multinational companies were encouraged to invest, and the standard of living for Costa Ricans increased significantly.¹²⁶ As Wendt stated regarding the shortcomings associated with liberal and realist theory in explaining states' actions, the interests and identity of a state are socially constructed instead of "exogenously given."¹²⁷

Realist and Liberal arguments fail to consider the highly antagonistic relationship of Figueres and Somoza as a causal factor in the onset of armed conflict during this period. It is hard to imagine that this degree of enmity between the two national leaders was not a significant factor leading up to the invasion. As an example, during the conflict President Somoza challenged Figueres to a duel as a means to end the conflict.¹²⁸ Figueres responded by characterizing Somoza as being as "crazy as a goat in the summer sun" and by accepting the duel on the condition that it takes place on board a Soviet Submarine that he alleged Nicaragua of seizing.¹²⁹ The duel never took place, but CIA Director Allen Dulles took notice of the escalating rancor between the two men which he used as justification for the United States and OAS to redouble efforts to assist in resolving the dispute.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy*, 107.

¹²⁵ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 124.

¹²⁶ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 123.

¹²⁷ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 92 (1992): 410.

¹²⁸ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 145.

¹²⁹ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 145.

¹³⁰ Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and The United States During the Rise of Jose Figueres*, 145.

The long history of conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua compounded by the personal hostility between Somoza and Figueres, which began before the Costa Rican civil war, also fomented a profound and enduring negative perception and distrust of Nicaragua by Costa Ricans. Costa Rican President Ricardo Oreamuno, who served three terms as president between 1910 and 1932, once commented that “In Costa Rica there are three seasons: winter, summer, and war with Nicaragua.”¹³¹ This distrust toward Nicaragua proved to be justified during this period as the Somoza sponsored *calderonistas*, who had mostly fled Costa Rica following the civil war, invaded the country from Nicaragua in 1949 and again in 1955 in repeated attempts to overthrow Figueres.¹³² The invasion, although unsuccessful, only strengthened the degree of distrust that Costa Ricans had for Nicaragua and bolstered the necessity to maintain a domestic force capable of defending against the threat of repeated attempts at invasion. The onset of fighting between Costa Rica’s Civil Guard and the *calderonistas* supports realist theory of enduring conflict between nations. However, the resounding success of the Civil Guard in defeating the foreign invasion swelled nationalist sentiment in Costa Rica and further bolstered the idea that Costa Rica must continue to maintain a domestic force capable of defending against future invasion.¹³³ Leonard Bird highlights the fact that “Costa Ricans do not claim to be, and are not, pacifists. They have simply learned how to exist without the burden of modern arms.”¹³⁴ John Keegan classifies Costa Rica’s claim of abolishing their military “an amiable deception,” when they have actually just demilitarized their armed force and shaped it to the minimum size necessary to provide a capable defense against Nicaragua.¹³⁵ Abolishing the national military while maintaining a force proven capable of defending against Nicaraguan invasion is consistent with the nation’s socially constructed belief in its commitment to multilateral institutions while maintaining a domestic force capability out of distrust for Nicaragua.

¹³¹ Echeverria Brealey and Juan Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada* (EUNED, 2006), 4-7

¹³² Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 124.

¹³³ John Keegan, *World Armies* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1983), 129.

¹³⁴ Leonard Bird, *Costa Rica The Unarmed Democracy* (London: Sheppard Press, 1984), 114.

¹³⁵ John Keegan, *World Armies*, 129.

III. CASE STUDY #2 (1979–1989): THE CONTRA WAR

A. SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The second case study is an examination of the period beginning in 1979 with the Nicaraguan Revolution and assumption of power of Daniel Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The period is characterized by Costa Rica's support of the Sandinistas in defeating Somoza's dictatorship in 1979, and Costa Rica's subsequent support for the U.S. backed anti-Sandinistas during the contra war beginning in 1980. Rodrigo Carazo Odio served as the President of Costa Rica during the early part of this period from May 1978 until May 1982. President Carazo described the nation's policy towards Nicaragua during his administration as shifting from neutrality to acquiescence and finally to support for the Sandinistas.¹³⁶ He added that each stage of progression towards providing support to the Sandinista rebels occurred in response to Nicaraguan aggression by the Somoza administration.¹³⁷ While Costa Rica's official position in the Nicaraguan conflict was neutrality, this was not true of many Costa Rican citizens who chose to actively support revolutionary movements in Nicaragua in the late 1970s.¹³⁸ Several incidents occurred during the previous Daniel Oduber Administration (1974–1978) that caused many Costa Ricans to detest the Somoza administration. There were unresolved disputes over the nations' maritime border, which led to multiple instances of fishermen being arrested and detained on both sides.¹³⁹ However, the incident that embroiled Costa Ricans the most was an attack by Nicaraguan National Guard aircraft that attempted to bomb a small boat on the Rio Frio carrying the Costa Rican Minister of Security along with several journalists. President Oduber failed to respond harshly to Nicaragua after the attack

¹³⁶ Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 125.

¹³⁷ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua*, 125.

¹³⁸ Echeverria Brealey and Juan Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada* (EUNED, 2006), 7.

¹³⁹ Echeverria and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 4.

in an effort to reduce tensions and many Costa Ricans perceived this as a sign of weakness.¹⁴⁰

Rodrigo Carazo's successful presidential campaign followed soon after the attack on the Costa Rican Minister of Security and his party notably avoided any communication with the Nicaraguan National Guard as doing so would have come at the expense of many Costa Rican votes.¹⁴¹ After Carazo was elected, officials from his administration met discretely with some of the top Generals of the Nicaraguan National Guard and proposed an agreement to hire civilian companies to survey the exact location of the common border.¹⁴² The Costa Ricans offered this idea both to avoid future instances of border patrol forces inadvertently crossing the border and because the civilian workers positioned along the border would likely deter guerrilla forces from crossing back and forth as they conducted operations into Nicaragua.¹⁴³ However, the Nicaraguan Guard forces turned down this request to the dismay of the Costa Rican officials.¹⁴⁴ In 1978, ex-President Figueres was providing independent support to the Sandinistas in Costa Rica, but the government continued its official stance of neutrality and even expended a minor effort in curbing Sandinista operations in the country by making some arrests.¹⁴⁵ However, on 12 September 1978, seven Nicaraguan National Guard aircraft flew into Costa Rica and dropped several bombs targeting a pickup truck that was carrying students and professors travelling to Cartago to attend a traditional celebration of liberty and independence called the "Antorcha de la Libertad."¹⁴⁶ One professor was injured and required medical treatment at a local hospital.¹⁴⁷ In response to this attack, the Costa Rican government increasingly permitted Sandinista forces to shelter in Costa Rica and also facilitated the delivery of food

¹⁴⁰ Echeverria and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 4–6.

¹⁴¹ Echeverria Brealey and Juan Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada* (EUNED, 2006), 6.

¹⁴² Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 13–15.

¹⁴³ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 13–15.

¹⁴⁴ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 125.

¹⁴⁶ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 19–20.

¹⁴⁷ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 20.

and medical supplies to their camps.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, Fuerza Publica forces were concentrated along the border and many had their vacation and other leave requests cancelled as they were ordered back on duty.¹⁴⁹ Finally, President Carazo publicly announced his decision to expropriate an estate and several farms that President Somoza owned in Costa Rica.¹⁵⁰ One Costa Rican official commented that as a result of this attack and other provocations, it became evident that it was going to be almost impossible to avoid becoming involved in the Nicaraguan Civil War.¹⁵¹

In December, the Nicaraguan government conducted a second air attack on Costa Rican soil, and this attack resulted in several Costa Rican casualties.¹⁵² In response, President Carazo broke official ties with Somoza's administration and began a "diplomatic offensive" by requesting that both the OAS and UN denounce Nicaragua's behavior and establish observer teams to investigate the attacks along the border. However, Nicaraguan aircraft conducted a second attack in December which induced President Carazo to declare that "Somoza was a national security threat to Costa Rica" and his administration began providing robust support to the Sandinistas.¹⁵³ According to a 1981 report released by the Costa Rican Congress, the nation was directly responsible for delivering around one million pounds of arms and munitions to the Sandinistas throughout the revolution.¹⁵⁴ Humberto Ortega, Daniel Ortega's brother and Nicaraguan Minister of Defense following the revolution, summarized the support from Costa Rica as providing the "excellent rearguard network that made it possible to...end the war quickly."¹⁵⁵

Public sentiments towards the Sandinistas were high in Costa Rica by the end of the Nicaraguan Revolution as most were relieved to see the end of the repressive Somoza

¹⁴⁸ Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 125.

¹⁴⁹ Echeverria Brealey and Juan Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada* (EUNED, 2006), 23.

¹⁵⁰ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 24.

¹⁵¹ Brealey and Jose, *La Guerra No Declarada*, 21.

¹⁵² Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua*, 125.

¹⁵³ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua*, 125.

¹⁵⁴ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua*, 125.

¹⁵⁵ Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua*, 125.

dictatorship in Nicaragua. However, these positive sentiments did not last long into the 1980s as instability returned to Nicaragua in the form of a counter-revolution organized against the FSLN by guerrilla forces commonly referred to as “contras.” The contras were heavily supported by the United States as part of President Reagan’s Central American policy objective to “excise the cancer of communism” in the region.¹⁵⁶ Costa Rica officially declared its neutrality in the Nicaraguan crisis but struggled to abide by this declaration as increased regional instability caused by the conflict created a significant threat to Costa Rican security and amidst unrelenting pressure from the United States to support the contras. While Costa Rica never publicly declared its involvement in the war, it did provide significant assistance to contra rebels and took measured steps to bolster their domestic force in preparation to defend national sovereignty. It is important to consider that Costa Rica was significantly affected by the Latin American Debt Crisis in 1981 and became the first nation in the region to become delinquent on its international loans, which was unexpected as it had a strong reputation as having a stable economy.¹⁵⁷ The United States seized the opportunity and offered to provide substantial economic assistance to Costa Rica in return for a commitment to support the contras.¹⁵⁸ Costa Rica soon reluctantly allowed its border to serve as the southern front for the contras and local media engaged in anti-Sandinista propaganda campaigns.¹⁵⁹ The assistance provided to Costa Rica by the United States was not purely economic, but much of it consisted of direct military aid classified as “security assistance” which began in 1981.¹⁶⁰ This military aid exceeded \$30 million between 1981 and 1988 and included another \$1 million to provide training for the Rural and Civil Guards.¹⁶¹ U.S. Mobile Training Teams (MTT) trained 1,200 security forces members within Costa Rica and an additional 300 in Panama and at Fort Benning,

¹⁵⁶ Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas : The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 22.

¹⁵⁷ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 187.

¹⁵⁸ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, NM: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1991), 78.

¹⁵⁹ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide*, 78.

¹⁶⁰ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide*, 88.

¹⁶¹ Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide*, 88.

Georgia.¹⁶² Throughout this period, both U.S. and Costa Rican officials made concerted efforts to publicly convey the message that these “security assistance” funds would not undermine Costa Rica’s strong commitment to demilitarization.¹⁶³ However, the nation’s police force doubled in size during the 1980s along with a steady rise in human rights violations, which raised public concern over the possibility that Costa Rica was developing a “secret army.”¹⁶⁴

By 1981, there was a substantial presence of up to 300 contra guerillas along the northern border of Costa Rica who were engaged in small-scale raids into Nicaragua.¹⁶⁵ These forces were led by a man named Eden Pastora, a former Sandinista guerilla commander, who was quite popular in Costa Rica both for his leadership during the Nicaraguan Revolution and later for issuing a declaration that the Sandinista *comandantes* had betrayed the promises they made during the revolution causing him to join the contras.¹⁶⁶ Pastora’s forces became known as the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) and formed the “southern front” for the contras along the northern border of Costa Rica.¹⁶⁷ Luis Alberto Monge was inaugurated as President of Costa Rica in February 1982 and immediately had to confront the tension with Nicaragua incited by contra forces camped out on the northern border of Costa Rica. While Monge sought to maintain Costa Rica’s stance of “perpetual, unarmed neutrality,” he did not want to jeopardize critical economic assistance from the United States considering the dire financial situation the country was facing and he also did not want to alienate right-wing contra sympathizers within the Costa Rican government.¹⁶⁸ President Monge maintained his public stance of

¹⁶² Tom Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide* (Albuquerque, NM: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1991), 88.

¹⁶³ Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide*, 88.

¹⁶⁴ Barry, *Costa Rica : A Country Guide*, 23–24.

¹⁶⁵ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 270.

¹⁶⁶ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 270.

¹⁶⁷ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 271.

¹⁶⁸ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 271.

neutrality but essentially “turned a blind eye to most armed *contra* activities.”¹⁶⁹ However, during Monge’s second term in office, Nicaragua began launching counterattacks against Costa Rican Rural Guard forces on the Costa Rican side of the border in response to the *contra* raids into Nicaragua.¹⁷⁰ On 28 September 1983, shooting erupted throughout the day with three Nicaraguan border officials killed in the crossfire. There were no Costa Rican casualties in the attack, but it was determined that Sandinista forces had crossed into Costa Rican territory and initiated the engagement.¹⁷¹ The Costa Rican newspaper *La Nación* ran a headline that read “Civil Guard Attacked by Nicaraguan Army” with a follow-up narrative proclaiming that Costa Rica,

which is practically disarmed, cannot tolerate aggression from a nation in which the nine *comandantes* are naturally dogmatic and expansionist...Wednesday’s events should make President Monge reconsider the appropriateness of proclaiming a Statute of Neutrality...Now more than ever Costa Rica needs support from its traditional allies.¹⁷²

On 18 February 1984, Nicaraguan military forces retaliated to a previous *contra* attack on Nicaraguan forces in the town of Coventillos by engaging in machine-gun fire with Costa Rican Rural Guard forces in the area.¹⁷³ Intelligence reports indicated that it was unlikely that the Nicaraguan forces confused the Costa Rican Rural Guard for *contra* guerrillas before launching their attack.¹⁷⁴ On April 15, Government of Costa Rica (GOCR) forces were attacked again by the Nicaraguan military in San Juan del Norte.¹⁷⁵ On April 29, the Nicaraguan military responded to a *contra* attack on a Nicaraguan military garrison at El Castillo by strafing and launching rockets at two Costa Rican towns along

¹⁶⁹ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 271.

¹⁷⁰ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 272.

¹⁷¹ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 305.

¹⁷² Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 306.

¹⁷³ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 282.

¹⁷⁴ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 282.

¹⁷⁵ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 282.

the border.¹⁷⁶ On May 3, 1984, Nicaraguan forces attacked Costa Rican border checkpoints at Peñas Blancas and Costa Rican Civil Guard soldiers returned fire with their rifles.¹⁷⁷ Finally, on May 31, 1985, two Civil Guards soldiers were killed and ten more injured in the small border town of Las Crucitas which was immediately blamed on the Sandinistas. President Monge “accused the Sandinista army of launching a ‘premeditated attack’ against Costa Rica and announced he was downgrading the nation’s diplomatic relations with Nicaragua.”¹⁷⁸ In further response to this significant escalation in violence by Nicaraguan government forces, Monge’s administration sent an emergency appeal to the United States requesting \$7 million in small arms to defend against further attacks from Nicaragua.¹⁷⁹ The request included 4,000 M-16 rifles with ammunition, 200 M-79 Grenade Launchers, 120 M-60 machine guns with ammunition, and 24 81MM mortars.¹⁸⁰ A secret U.S. State Department memorandum included a political assessment of events in 1984 and noted that Monge had privately expressed his belief that Costa Rica’s security was in jeopardy as long as the Sandinista government was in power.¹⁸¹

In addition to the arms request to the United States, Costa Rica also moved away from its neutral stance in the conflict by authorizing a radio station called Voice of America (VOA) to construct an AM transmitter in Costa Rica along with a repeater station near the northern border in Ciudad Quesada that began broadcasting in January 1985.¹⁸² VOA was operated by the U.S. Information Agency and was part of a broader “radio war” in the region along with stations in Honduras and the Caribbean that broadcast radio and television propaganda transmissions into Nicaragua to erode public support for the

¹⁷⁶ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 283.

¹⁷⁷ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 283.

¹⁷⁸ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 312.

¹⁷⁹ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 279.

¹⁸⁰ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 280.

¹⁸¹ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 285.

¹⁸² Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 139.

Sandinistas.¹⁸³ Members of the Costa Rican Congress argued that VOA was a clear violation to neutrality but the agreement authorizing the operations was signed by President Monge at his home, and the station continued to operate.¹⁸⁴

The election of Oscar Arias as President of Costa Rica in May 1986 represented the unraveling of efforts to militarize Costa Rica and to support the contras along the northern border.¹⁸⁵ The outcome of the election came as a surprise to many because Rafael Angel Calderón was widely expected to win and Arias only triumphed by a narrow margin.¹⁸⁶ Calderón was the preferred candidate of the United States and conservative groups within Costa Rica because of his anti-Sandinista stance and his promise to commit Costa Rican Civil guardsmen to Honduras to fight against the Sandinistas if they attempted an invasion.¹⁸⁷ Oscar Arias, on the other hand, argued that the situation in Nicaragua could be resolved peacefully on the condition that the Sandinistas agreed to abide by the commitments they made during the Nicaragua Revolution which included a “pluralistic society, mixed economy, and nonalignment.”¹⁸⁸ He added that after supporting the Sandinistas and celebrating when they overthrew Somoza’s dictatorship, Costa Ricans “feel they have been betrayed” because the Sandinista government did not follow through on the promises they made causing the Costa Ricans to lose trust in them and providing a partial explanation for their support of the contras.¹⁸⁹ However, Arias was successful in disrupting the approval of a \$100 million contra aid package by the Reagan administration and stated that “If I were Mr. Reagan, I would give the money to Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica for economic aid, and not military aid to the contras.”¹⁹⁰ His

¹⁸³ Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas : The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*, 141.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas : The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 139.

¹⁸⁵ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 457.

¹⁸⁶ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 457.

¹⁸⁷ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 458.

¹⁸⁸ Roy Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy : The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 343.

¹⁸⁹ Gutman, *Banana Diplomacy : The Making of American Policy in Nicaragua, 1981-1987*, 343.

¹⁹⁰ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 460.

strategy to address the conflict in Nicaragua in a peaceful manner resonated not only with Costa Ricans but with many Congressmen in the United States as well. However, soon after President Arias made these statements to the media, a scheduled \$15 million deposit of U.S. economic assistance to Costa Rica failed to arrive, and this was interpreted as “a direct punishment” and the beginning of political warfare with Washington.¹⁹¹ However, Reagan’s administration lost support for its Central America policy in 1987 after the fallout from the Iran-contra scandal which allowed President Arias to propose his Peace Plan to bring a culmination to the contra war.¹⁹² While the U.S. backed contras had failed in their objective, the Arias Peace Plan ultimately defeated the Sandinistas not by force but through political pluralism as Violeta Chamorro of the National Opposition Party defeated Daniel Ortega’s FSLN party in the 1990 presidential election.¹⁹³

B. REALISM

In the two years following the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Costa Rican government under President Carazo had a warm relationship with the FSLN.¹⁹⁴ The Costa Rican administration participated in several high-level meetings with the Sandinistas seeking to work together to advance trade, aid, and to enhance border security.¹⁹⁵ The Reagan administration’s Costa Rican “security assistance” program struggled in the early 1980s as it sought to bolster the nation’s police force to support the contra war against the Sandinistas.¹⁹⁶ President Carazo rejected many of the offers and ideas from the United States including one by U.S. UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick who advised Costa Rica to establish an army.¹⁹⁷ While the formation of a Costa Rican army never came to fruition,

¹⁹¹ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 460–61.

¹⁹² Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 269.

¹⁹³ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 504.

¹⁹⁴ Mary B. Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 227.

¹⁹⁵ Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in Nicaragua*, 227.

¹⁹⁶ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 291.

¹⁹⁷ Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in Nicaragua*, 227.

the nation's security force doubled in size in the 1980s, which represented an abrupt reversal to previous commitments to demilitarization. The military-style training of some police units, the unification of the police force and the creation of the national police academy were clear signs that Costa Rica was changing course towards remilitarization.¹⁹⁸ Public support for this remilitarization increased as the traditional pacifist narrative did not provide much reassurance when the country was on the brink of war with Nicaragua.

There is compelling evidence supporting the notion that the reason Costa Rica supported the contras during this period was primarily as a means to receive vital U.S. economic aid necessary to escape the debilitating debt crisis the nation endured in the early 1980s. However, although Costa Rica provided limited support early on to ensure the continued flow of money from the U.S., President Monge maintained the nation's stance of "perpetual, unarmed neutrality" and the support to the contras included little more to turning "a blind eye to most armed *contra* activities" during his first term in office.¹⁹⁹ However, by the middle of the decade, Costa Rica's national interest shifted after Nicaraguan military forces violated Costa Rican sovereignty on multiple occasions by crossing the border into Costa Rica, engaging with uniformed Costa Rican security forces, and even killing two Civil Guard troops on one occasion. These actions represented a significant escalation in threat by Nicaragua, and while Costa Rica's support to the contras was limited before these events, it became far more robust as Nicaragua became increasingly more volatile and aggressive. When Costa Rica's support of the contras during this period is considered along with its support of Sandinista guerrillas in the first case study, a trend of behavior appears that provides an increasingly legitimate argument supporting principles of realism. As Waltz argued, the actions of a nation "are directed not toward creating order but rather toward fulfilling their own internally defined interests by whatever means they can muster."²⁰⁰ President Monge had a great deal to risk by

¹⁹⁸ Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 221.

¹⁹⁹ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 271.

²⁰⁰ Keohane, Robert O. *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 83.

supporting the contras including public support for his party as well as international support for Costa Rica for its reputation as a “neutral” actor and beacon of peace.

C. LIBERALISM

While the first case study supports principles of democratic peace theory quite well as President Somoza’s government was undoubtedly a dictatorship, and Costa Rica was a democracy, this case study mostly serves to undermine this theory. Daniel Ortega was democratically elected as president of Nicaragua in November 1984, and the nation transitioned to become a liberal regime. While some may argue that Ortega’s government was nonliberal or that it was not a “true” democracy, independent international observers of the 1984 election from the United States and other countries assessed the election as “free, fair, and hotly contested.”²⁰¹ Costa Rica’s decision to support to the contras during this period detracts from Russett’s “democratic peace” proposition.²⁰² If the Costa Rican government did not view Nicaragua as a liberal regime, the rationale for their belief can’t be adequately explained as a misinterpretation of the unbiased evidence released by observers of the presidential election which classified Nicaragua as a liberal state. Lacking this evidence, another explanation is required to explain Costa Rica’s assessment of Nicaragua and subsequent decision to employ hostile force against its northern neighbor.

D. CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist theory provides an explanation for Costa Rica’s continued willingness to employ force against Nicaragua as it transitioned from dictatorship under Somoza to democracy under Ortega which principles of liberal theory cannot adequately explain. Costa Ricans supported the Sandinistas by a wide margin during the Nicaraguan Revolution as the fall of Somoza not only ended the repressive era of dictatorship to the north but also marked the defeat of the beloved Figueres’ longstanding adversary. However, “Costa Ricans tend to be smug about their democratic institutions and

²⁰¹ “Nicaraguan Vote: Free, Fair, Hotly Contested,” *The New York Times*, November 16, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/16/opinion/1-nicaraguan-vote-free-fair-hotly-contested-089345.html>

²⁰² Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 372.

condescending and not infrequently racist about the dictatorships that have ruled the Indian and mestizo populations in Nicaragua” and it did not take long for these enduring sentiments to return and shift Costa Rican public opinion against the new Sandinista government and the people of Nicaragua.²⁰³ Costa Rican distrust of Nicaragua has become part of its socially constructed identity that seems to heavily influence Costa Rica’s decisionmaking during this period. This was particularly evident in 1985 when the Government of Costa Rica submitted a robust arms request to the United States to deter Nicaraguan attacks across the border. While the attacks from Nicaragua were in response to raids by contra guerillas originating in Costa Rica, the Nicaraguan military engaged uniformed Costa Rican security forces personnel on several occasions leading to a public outcry within Costa Rica. When two Costa Rican Civil Guard members were killed by Nicaraguan Army soldiers in the border town of Las Crucitas in 1985, the negative sentiments towards Nicaraguans boiled over as protestors demanded the expulsion of all Nicaraguans from Costa Rica independent of their support for the Sandinistas.²⁰⁴ This request for the expulsion of an entire nationality from Costa Rica cannot be explained only as an emotional response to the death of the guard members but is better explained as a response to an event that fit the pre-existing narrative that Nicaraguans cannot be trusted which has evolved into a characteristic of Costa Rican identity.²⁰⁵ Conservative Costa Rican television stations leveraged this distrust by heavily broadcasting the message that “Costa Rica needed to take precautions to protect itself from Nicaraguan-sponsored subversion or invasion.”²⁰⁶ The long history of Nicaraguan invasions into Costa Rica made this a convincing message for many Costa Ricans who accepted the use of force to protect Costa Rican sovereignty.

²⁰³ Robert A. Pastor, *Condemned to Repetition : The United States and Nicaragua* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 124.

²⁰⁴ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 312.

²⁰⁵ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 311.

²⁰⁶ Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas : The Undeclared War on Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 48.

This period also presents an interesting case study to evaluate some of Tom Long's constructivist theory regarding the behavior of small states. Long argued that academics focused excessively on the "smallness" of a state rather than evaluating the influence and asymmetrical relationship that a state commanded within a region or international system.²⁰⁷ He contends that over the past decades "small states" have been underestimated as they have played influential roles in "propagating norms, shaping global climate negotiations, executing creative diplomacy and influencing alliances."²⁰⁸ Long does not specifically discuss Costa Rica's role in the contra war in his research, but his argument concerning the independent nature of a nation's influence and its "smallness" is certainly evident in Costa Rica during the 1980s. While the United States was the hegemon in Central America, Costa Rica was not readily willing to align with U.S. interests, and although Costa Rica commanded far less military power than the U.S., it was not directly subordinated to the U.S. either. While the fallout from the Iran-contra scandal heavily influenced the culmination of U.S. funding for the contras in Nicaragua, the small nation of Costa Rica under President Arias dealt an equally powerful blow.²⁰⁹ The Arias campaign promise of peace with Nicaragua was initially assumed to be nothing more than a strategy for election, but the Reagan administration soon recognized that "peace, neutrality, and negotiations would become central themes of his presidency" which was in complete opposition to U.S. desires for Costa Rica to take a more offensive approach against the Sandinistas.²¹⁰ Arias later explained his conviction for peace by arguing that far too many people were "living by the stupidity of an old Roman adage that says if you want peace, prepare for war" when instead "you must prepare for peace, plan for peace, work for it, and comply with its dictates. Lasting peace will never be achieved with the instruments of war."²¹¹ Long highlights that neorealist arguments all contend that small states will

²⁰⁷ Tom Long, "It's Not The Size, It's The Relationship: From 'Small States' To Asymmetry," *International Politics* 54, no. 2 (2017): 144.

²⁰⁸ Long, "It's Not The Size, It's The Relationship: From 'Small States' To Asymmetry," 145.

²⁰⁹ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 457–504.

²¹⁰ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 459.

²¹¹ "Oscar Arias Sánchez." *Guernica*, May 1, 2005, https://www.guernicamag.com/oscar_arias_snchez/

prioritize security and survival, but these “Waltzian” arguments do not advise whether small states that act independently of these expected behaviors will “survive or wither.”²¹² In the case of Costa Rica’s involvement in the contra war, President Arias’ decision to adhere to the socially constructed values of a peaceful existence not only prevented Costa Rica from becoming heavily entangled in the contra war, but facilitated an end to hostilities and the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.²¹³ This accomplishment further substantiated Costa Rica’s national identity as a nation dedicated to peace in Central America.²¹⁴ President Arias did not view himself as anti-U.S. but maintained that “a well-founded friendship between two brotherly peoples allows us to agree at times but also to differ; that when the small one always does what the big one wants, that is not friendship, but slavery.”²¹⁵ He went on to say that he intended to “show the world that, small and poor as [his] Costa Rica may be, [it] can have [its] own ideas, independent judgement, autonomy, and dignity.”²¹⁶

²¹² Tom Long, “It’s Not The Size, It’s The Relationship: From ‘Small States’ To Asymmetry,” *International Politics* 54, no. 2 (2017): 150.

²¹³ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 509.

²¹⁴ Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 269.

²¹⁵ Stephen Kinzer, “Officials Assert U.S. Is Trying to Weaken Costa Rica Chief,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1988. <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/07/world/officials-assert-us-is-trying-to-weaken-costa-rica-chief.html>

²¹⁶ Kinzer, “Officials Assert U.S. Is Trying to Weaken Costa Rica Chief,”

IV. CASE STUDY #3 (1990–PRESENT DAY): BORDER DISPUTES AND THE ICJ

A. SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The third case study evaluates the period, beginning in 1990, at the culmination of the contra war and extending to the present-day. Costa Rica's behavior in disputes with Nicaragua throughout this period best supports Constructivist theory. The social norms described in the first two case studies including the nation's commitment to diplomatic dispute resolution and concurrent willingness to employ limited domestic force out of distrust for Nicaragua appear to continue to significantly influence Costa Rica's decision-making. Several border related disputes occurred between Costa Rica and Nicaragua during this period but I focus primarily on one dispute that was far more ominous than the rest. The dispute ignited in 2010 in response to Costa Rica and Nicaragua asserting alternate interpretations of the delineation of their eastern border along a small strip of land called Isla Calero located at the mouth of the San Juan River. To understand the background of this dispute, it is necessary to first consider the relevant historical events pertaining to the formation of the border which spawned the divergent interpretations of its exact location. In 1824, Costa Rica annexed the present-day province of Guanacaste from Nicaragua, but Nicaragua did not relinquish its claim to this land.²¹⁷ Then, in 1858, there was an upwelling of international interest in the construction of a transisthmian canal connecting the Pacific to the Atlantic and one of the most promising routes identified was through Nicaragua along the San Juan River.²¹⁸ To facilitate construction of the canal, Nicaragua agreed to relinquish its claim to the land Costa Rica annexed in 1824 in exchange for Nicaraguan sovereignty of the San Juan River by delineating the nation's border along the southern bank of the river while maintaining Costa Rica's ability to utilize the river for commerce.²¹⁹ This agreement was signed as the Cañas-Jerez Treaty and it is

²¹⁷ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 108.

²¹⁸ Thomas Leonard, *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cañas-Jerez Treaty, 1858* (Washington: CQ Press, 2012), 130-131.

²¹⁹ Leonard, *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cañas-Jerez Treaty, 1858*, 130-131.

still in place today.²²⁰ However, Nicaragua's plans to build a transisthmian canal lost support following the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914.²²¹

In 2006, Nicaragua appealed to the United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ) with allegations that Costa Rican civil guards were conducting armed patrols along the San Juan River in violation of the terms of the Canas-Jerez Treaty which only authorized Costa Rica to utilize the river for commercial operations.²²² In 2009, the ICJ ruled that Costa Rica could no longer transport arms on the river, but reaffirmed that it was permitted to operate vessels for commercial or recreational purposes.²²³ Only a year after the 2009 ICJ ruling, the former Sandinista guerrilla commander Eden Pastora, who was previously highlighted in the second case study, led a group of soldiers in constructing an outpost on a small strip of land located at the mouth of the San Juan River on the Costa Rican side of the border called Isla Calero.²²⁴ After establishing the outpost, the Nicaraguan troops began to dig a canal through the middle of the island to open a new waterway connecting the San Juan River to the Caribbean Sea.

Costa Rican officials declared the action an invasion of sovereign territory and responded by deploying an armed contingent of 70 members of the Unidad Especial de Intervención (UEI) to the region.²²⁵ The UEI is part of the Department of Intelligence and Security (DIS). The unit was formed in 1982 and has a strength of approximately 70 members.²²⁶ The DIS is not associated with the National Police but is funded and controlled

²²⁰ Thomas Leonard, *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cañas-Jerez Treaty, 1858* (Washington: CQ Press, 2012), 130-131.

²²¹ Thomas Leonard, *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cañas-Jerez Treaty, 1858, 130-131.*

²²² Thomas Leonard, *Encyclopedia of U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cañas-Jerez Treaty, 1858, 130-131.*

²²³ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 108.

²²⁴ "COSTA RICA/NICARAGUA: Border Dispute Set to Endure," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*, November 19, 2010, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/807429941/abstract/6581CF9733F74771PQ/1>

²²⁵ "Costa Rica-Nicaragua Border Row," *BBC News*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11751727>

²²⁶ Sarah Blaskey, "Costa Rican Special Operations Unit Participates in Regional 'War Games.'" *The Tico Times Costa Rica* (blog), August 9, 2014. <http://www.ticotimes.net/2014/08/09/costa-rican-special-operations-unit-participates-in-regional-war-games>

directly by the President of Costa Rica. According to Mariano Figueres, the DIS Director, “the UEI is an intervention unit for police and not military purposes. It participates in narcotics and other organized crime stings when risk levels are high, to accompany and protect police and/or judicial units.”²²⁷ While the official purpose of the UEI is to “perform high-risk operations against terrorism and drug trafficking” according to Article 19 of the General Law of Police, the unit also trains to fight Nicaraguan soldiers, and this is the subject of great controversy in Costa Rica.²²⁸ The UEI is also criticized for participating in the U.S. Southern Command’s *Fuerzas Comando* where they compete in sniper and assault courses along with military special operations units from 17 American nations.²²⁹

On 18 November 2010, Costa Rica submitted the dispute to the ICJ in a case titled *Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)*.²³⁰ Costa Rica alleged that Nicaragua was in violation of “the obligation to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Costa Rica, within the boundaries delimited by the 1858 Treaty of Limits and further defined by the Demarcation Commission established by the Pacheco-Matus Convention, in particular by the first and second Alexander Awards”²³¹ Nicaragua countered these allegations by arguing that it “enjoys full sovereignty over the *caño* (canal) joining Harbor Head Lagoon with the San Juan River proper (as shown in Figure 1), the right bank of which constitutes the land boundary as established by the 1858 Treaty as interpreted by the Cleveland and Alexander Awards.”²³² In other words, Nicaragua was claiming that the San Juan River has altered

²²⁷ Sarah Blaskey, “Costa Rican Special Operations Unit Participates in Regional ‘War Games.’” *The Tico Times Costa Rica* (blog), August 9, 2014. <http://www.ticotimes.net/2014/08/09/costa-rican-special-operations-unit-participates-in-regional-war-games>.

²²⁸ Blaskey, “Costa Rican Special Operations Unit Participates in Regional ‘War Games.’”

²²⁹ Blaskey, “Costa Rican Special Operations Unit Participates in Regional ‘War Games.’”

²³⁰ “Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica),” 12. <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/152/18846.pdf>.

²³¹ “Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica),” 35. <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/152/18846.pdf>.

²³² “Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica),” 35. <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/152/18846.pdf>.

course over the years and used to flow along the path of the canal making the land in the disputed area Nicaraguan Territory in accordance with the 1858 Treaty which defined Costa Rican territory as beginning on the southern border of the San Juan River.

Approximately five years after Costa Rica initially submitted the case to the International Court of Justice, the Court reached a final judgment on 16 December 2015. The Court found that Costa Rica had sovereignty over the entire disputed area in a vote of fourteen to two. Additionally, Nicaragua's military presence in the disputed area and construction of three canals by its troops was a violation of the territorial sovereignty of Costa Rica. Finally, the Court found that Nicaragua would be responsible for compensating Costa Rica for the "unlawful activities" that occurred on Costa Rican territory. Nicaragua accepted the Court's Resolution finding it in violation, and the Nicaraguan troops departed the island.²³³

B. REALISM

While this dispute ended peacefully, it highlights the ongoing instability caused by the strained relationship between Costa Rica and Nicaragua that has endured for over a century. Additionally, Costa Rica's decision to deploy armed police officers is a strong indicator that it is prepared to utilize hostile force against Nicaragua in defense of national sovereignty. The dispute over Isla Calero was unique for this period because it was the only conflict between the two nations that escalated to the point that Costa Rica responded by employing an armed domestic force along border. Nicaragua's dredging operations were not an activity that required a military escort so Nicaragua clearly used militarization as a strategic tactic to gain more time to dredge the mouth of the San Juan River.²³⁴ If Nicaragua had sent civilian workers to dredge the canal, it is highly likely the Costa Rican police force would have arrested them immediately.²³⁵ However, by deploying troops to do the work, Nicaragua escalated the situation likely believing that Costa Rica would not

²³³ "Certain Activities Carried Out by Nicaragua in the Border Area (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua) and Construction of a Road in Costa Rica along the San Juan River (Nicaragua v. Costa Rica)," 12. <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/152/18846.pdf>

²³⁴ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 110.

²³⁵ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 110.

be willing or able to forcefully detain armed Nicaraguan soldiers. Also, the presence of the Nicaraguan soldiers allowed Nicaraguan officials to justify their contention that the dispute was beyond the scope of the OAS and should be adjudicated by the ICJ.²³⁶ Ultimately, the ICJ resolution process took six months to complete which allowed Nicaragua to continue to dredge the river for five additional months following the OAS declaration to halt activities at the river by both sides.²³⁷

By the 1990s the possibility of any dispute between these nations escalating to the level of war became unlikely as Nicaragua undoubtedly recognized the global condemnation it would endure as a militarized nation engaging in hostile action against the demilitarized nation of Costa Rica.²³⁸ However, Nicaraguan officials were cognizant of their opportunity to employ force in limited capacity along the border under the guise of counter-drug operations or another seemingly acceptable rationale to rapidly accomplish national objectives by leveraging the time allotted by the lengthy investigation process of the OAS and UN.²³⁹ Nicaragua has historically utilized these small-scale militarization events both in attempts to seize control of land along the border and as a tool utilized by President Ortega to bolster support for his party before an election.

Costa Rica's decision to train, equip, and employ the UEI to counter Nicaraguan aggression supports early Realist principles outlined by Hobbes in the seventeenth century.²⁴⁰ Hobbes argued that "the existence of international anarchy, the very independence of states, best accounts for the competition, the fear, and the temptation toward preventive war that characterize international relations."²⁴¹ Part of this fear is associated with a concept referred to as the "security dilemma." The security dilemma stipulates that although states want to minimize the cost associated with maintaining an

²³⁶ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 110.

²³⁷ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 110.

²³⁸ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 111.

²³⁹ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 111.

²⁴⁰ Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 218.

²⁴¹ Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I," 218.

armed force, they also recognize that, “having no global guarantee of security, being caught unarmed by a surprise attack is worse than bearing the costs of armament. Each therefore arms; all are worse off.”²⁴² While this force is relatively small in size especially in relation to Nicaragua’s military, Realist principles offer an explanation as to why Costa Rica maintains a force but does not seek to significantly increase the size or capability of the force. Mearsheimer argues that “wealthy states sometimes do not build additional military forces-even though they could in principle afford them-because they recognize that doing so would not give them a strategic advantage over their rivals.”²⁴³ Nicaragua has recognized the greatest benefit from small militarizations of no more than a few platoons of soldiers and is unlikely to utilize air or naval assets as it would be viewed as “overkill” by the international community.²⁴⁴ Costa Rica’s small but specialized UEI and border patrol force is sufficient to deter or repel these small militarizations and there is no requirement to maintain a larger domestic force. However, while Costa Rica’s employment of domestic force during this period does track with tenets of realism, it’s decision against removing the Nicaraguan soldiers from Costa Rican soil at Isla Calero as the ICJ adjudicated the case detracts from the realist argument.

C. LIBERALISM

While Nicaragua maintains overwhelming military superiority over Costa Rica, the roles are reversed in the diplomatic arena.²⁴⁵ Costa Rica maintained its commitment diplomacy throughout this period by refraining from hostile escalation of disputes between the two nations and seeking adjudication through multilateral organizations and this has further solidified the nation’s peaceful reputation. Nicaragua, on the other hand, proved far less accommodating of diplomatic resolution after repulsing efforts by Costa Rica for bilateral resolution of the dispute as well as repudiating earnest mediation attempts by

²⁴² Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part I,” 218.

²⁴³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 76.

²⁴⁴ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 114.

²⁴⁵ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 112.

Guatemala and Mexico.²⁴⁶ Costa Rica's commitment to multilateral institutions provides an important measure of security as the international community is highly likely to intervene in response to instances of hostility by Nicaragua. Several countries in Latin America have specifically stated "that they would use their military forces to deter an aggressor from attacking Costa Rica."²⁴⁷ This commitment to multilateralism supports the "Kantian framework" for peace based on "the influence of international law and organizations" in mitigating hostile behavior between nations.²⁴⁸ Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis reaffirmed this commitment at a United Nations General Assembly meeting in 2014, where he stated that "Costa Rica firmly believes and practices all aspects of international law; ...this is the only way we know. Our only weapon has been and will always be international law."²⁴⁹

Nicaragua initially acted unilaterally by tasking its soldiers to dig a canal across Isla Calero throughout the ICJ's six-month deliberation period.²⁵⁰ The invasion of Nicaraguan soldiers into sovereign Costa Rican territory was undoubtedly perceived in Costa Rica as a serious threat to national security. The Costa Rican Foreign Minister Rene Castro declared that "the armed invasion is a challenge to our way of life and the defense of our national sovereignty, which is based exclusively in multilateralism. Costa Rica is a civilized and peaceful country, but sometimes those ideals are challenged by reality and our principles are put to the test."²⁵¹ Costa Rica's decision not to escalate this dispute through the use of hostile force is only partly explained by the liberal principle of "security communities" where Costa Rica's commitment to multilateral organizations ensures

²⁴⁶ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 112.

²⁴⁷ Oya Dursun-Özkanca, "Pitfalls of Police Reform in Costa Rica: Insights into Security Sector Reform in Non-Military Countries," *Peacebuilding* 5, no. 3 (2017): 331.

²⁴⁸ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1998), 369.

²⁴⁹ Manuel Gonzalez Sanz, "Costa Rica Celebrates 66th Anniversary of the Abolition of Its Army," *The Tico Times Costa Rica* (blog), December 1, 2014, <http://www.ticotimes.net/2014/12/01/costa-rica-celebrates-66th-anniversary-of-the-abolition-of-its-army>

²⁵⁰ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 112.

²⁵¹ Tim Rogers, "Border Dispute with Nicaragua Has Costa Rica Rethinking Its Lack of Army," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1.

external security from international partners. While Nicaragua has hesitated in compliance with ICJ findings, it is also true that “in the modern era, there have been no cases of outright defiance where [Nicaragua] has deliberately, openly, and continuously taken action contrary to a judgement.” Costa Rica certainly considered Nicaragua’s past record of compliance with ICJ findings and determined that it was likely to comply with the findings of the current dispute as well. Costa Rica had a very strong case and likelihood for a favorable judgement and only had to wait for the lengthy process of adjudication. An article by Heather Jones evaluated nation’s compliance with ICJ judgements since 1986 and found that while in some cases states deviated slightly from full and immediate compliance, “pressure from the international community, involvement in international organizations, and reputation costs associated with defiant behavior, [ultimately] fosters compliance with ICJ judgements.”²⁵²

D. CONSTRUCTIVISM

The socially constructed norm of Costa Ricans distrusting Nicaraguans was further entrenched as a result of the dispute over Isla Calero compounded by a multitude of less significant border disputes with Nicaragua throughout this period. A CID-Gallup poll conducted in Costa Rica in 2011 which found that “73% of Costa Ricans believed that Nicaragua wished to invade it.”²⁵³ This is a surprisingly high figure considering how unlikely it is that Nicaragua would outright invade Costa Rica and the small platoon of Nicaraguan soldiers sent to Isla Calero hardly merits this level of concern. It is likely that Costa Rican’s sense of national identity is a factor that must be considered as Costa Ricans largely identify themselves as members of a “prosperous middle class and stable democracy” and the Nicaraguan “other” commonly “associated with a turbulent political

²⁵² Heather Jones, “Why Comply? An Analysis of Trends in Compliance with Judgments of the International Court of Justice Since Nicaragua,” *Chicago-Kent Journal of International and Comparative Law* 12, no. 2 (2012), 60, <https://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=http://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1042&context=ckjicl>

²⁵³ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 115.

past, dark skin, poverty, and nondemocratic forms of government.”²⁵⁴ This socially constructed national identity is centered on the narrative of Costa Ricans having “an idyllic past that goes back to the colonial period, racialized representations that consider Costa Rica to be a nation inhabited by ‘white’ people, and widespread notions of uniqueness based on cultural differences.”²⁵⁵ As a result of these narratives within Costa Rica, Nicaraguans are commonly associated with the onset of problems including disease and crime. Carlos Sandoval-García argues that there is an “imagined community” among Costa Ricans “made to conform through various ways of belonging but also, and perhaps more important, by means of exclusion and projection of undesired images onto outsiders.”²⁵⁶

Although the threat of invasion diminished following Nicaragua’s compliance with the ICJ judgement regarding the Isla Calero dispute, Costa Ricans recognize that Nicaragua is likely to continue this pattern of small instances of militarization. Costa Rica’s UEI and border patrol forces are able to quickly respond to these small-scale militarization’s by Nicaragua and provide immediate security until the multilateral organizations are able to step in and resolve the dispute through diplomacy. While Costa Rica is committed to peace, it accepts the establishment of these specialized security forces teams to defend against the perceived risk of invasion by Nicaragua.

The long history of border disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua coincides with what constructivist author Ron Hassner describes as “the intractability of prolonged territorial disputes.”²⁵⁷ He notes that nations involved in these prolonged disputes “seem increasingly reluctant to compromise, or even negotiate, over disputed territories as these disputes mature.”²⁵⁸ In contrast, many “young” territorial disputes are often resolved quickly even when the disputed land holds significant material value to the concerned

²⁵⁴ Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), xiii.

²⁵⁵ Carlos Sandoval García, *Threatening Others Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), xv.

²⁵⁶ Sandoval García, *Threatening Others Nicaraguans and the Formation of National Identities in Costa Rica*, xvii.

²⁵⁷ Ron E. Hassner, “The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes,” *International Security* 31, no. 3 (2007): 108.

²⁵⁸ Hassner, “The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes,” 108.

parties such as the dispute of the coal and iron rich Saar region disputed but quickly resolved between France and Germany following World War II.²⁵⁹ In the case of Isla Calero, the island holds relatively little material value to Costa Rica or Nicaragua as Nicaragua is no longer planning to construct a trans-isthmian canal along the San Juan River. Additionally, the surrounding territory on both sides of the border is largely undeveloped aside from a small number of fishing camps as the land consists mostly of wetlands unsuitable for significant development. Hassner warns that these “intractable” disputes are not only prolonged in nature but are also associated with an elevated risk of armed conflict.²⁶⁰ Costa Rica’s reluctance to quickly settle the Isla Calero dispute and to employ domestic force demonstrates the tremendous influence of socially constructed norms on its decision-making process which further enforces Constructivist theory.

²⁵⁹ Hassner, “The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes,” 108.

²⁶⁰ Ron E. Hassner, “The Path to Intractability: Time and the Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes,” *International Security* 31, no. 3 (2007): 109.

V. CONCLUSION

Costa Rica's decision to abolish its military in 1948 makes it a relatively unique case study through which to examine International Relations theory. Although Costa Rica no longer has a military, it has continued to employ force in several instances in ongoing disputes with neighboring Nicaragua. Costa Rica's enduring commitment to peace and concurrent willingness to provide support to guerrilla forces and maintain a limited domestic force capable of rapidly engaging external threats from Nicaragua are best explained by Constructivist theories. As Wendt stated regarding the shortcomings associated with liberal and realist theories in explaining states' actions, the interests and identity of a state are socially constructed instead of "exogenously given."²⁶¹ These socially constructed legacies have emerged from Costa Rica's early history and have deeply influenced the nation's actions in each period examined in this thesis. Much of this legacy is attributed to support for José Figueres and his PLN Party as a result of his charismatic leadership leading up to, during, and after the nation's 1948 Civil War. The PLN continued to dominate Costa Rican politics with 10 of the 19 post-civil war presidents having been members of the party including Oscar Arias who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.²⁶² The ideas and norms of this party have continued to influence Costa Rica's external actions to the present-day.

The long history of conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua also fomented a profound and enduring negative perception and distrust of Nicaragua by Costa Ricans. The trend of Nicaraguan hostility towards Costa Rica includes the Somoza sponsored invasions by *calderonistas* into Costa Rica in 1949 and again in 1955 in repeated attempts to overthrow Figueres.²⁶³ It became further entrenched in the 1980s after two Costa Rican Civil Guard members were killed by Nicaraguan Army soldiers in the Costa Rican border

²⁶¹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 92 (1992): 410.

²⁶² Marc Edelman and Joanne Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), 100.

²⁶³ Edelman and Kenen, *The Costa Rica Reader*, 124.

town of Las Crucitas. This attack prompted Costa Rican protestors to demand the expulsion of all Nicaraguans residing in Costa Rica.²⁶⁴ A survey conducted in 2011 following the invasion of Nicaraguan soldiers into the Costa Rica-owned Isla Calera found that “73% of Costa Ricans believed that Nicaragua wished to invade it.”²⁶⁵ This is a surprisingly high figure considering how unlikely it is that Nicaragua would outright invade Costa Rica and the small platoon of Nicaraguan soldiers sent to Isla Calero hardly merits this level of concern. This emotional response by Costa Ricans to small-scale instances of aggression by Nicaragua is best explained as a response to a pre-existing narrative in Costa Rica that Nicaraguans cannot be trusted. This narrative has endured across all periods examined in this thesis and has evolved to become a characteristic of Costa Rican identity.²⁶⁶

There is some debate over whether Costa Rica has become increasingly militarized in response to the persistent threat that Nicaragua poses to Costa Rica’s sovereignty but historical evidence has shown that Costa Rica has actually become less likely to use force to resolve disputes. The nation relied primarily on assistance from the OAS in response to external threats and this assistance partly justified the abolition of its military in the first place, the period of significant armed conflict and invasion that occurred in the early years following the abolition of the military show that the nation’s security was not guaranteed by these multilateral institutions and a significant domestic force capacity remained essential. The Nicaraguan invasion of Costa Rica’s Isla Calero in 2010 and armed response by members of the Costa Rican police force examined in the third case study show that the employment of force is still an available and palatable option for Costa Rica. However, while Costa Rica did employ a domestic force against the Nicaraguan soldiers, both sides refrained from engaging in armed conflict. Further, the resolution of this dispute through the UN International Court of Justice and restraint shown by the Costa Ricans by not removing the Nicaraguan soldiers forcefully from Costa Rican soil show that the capacity for diplomatic dispute resolution has increased.

²⁶⁴ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1994), 312.

²⁶⁵ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 115.

²⁶⁶ Martha Honey, *Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s*, 311.

These conclusions are useful beyond the scope of Costa Rica and Nicaragua as other developing nations in the region including Honduras, Bolivia, and Ecuador may consider Costa Rica's model of demilitarization or interpret Costa Rica's employment of force against Nicaragua as a warning to reevaluate their own security posture in relation to regional threats. The disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua only represent one of many "hot spots" in Latin America.²⁶⁷ Mares also warns of similar tensions between countries like Columbia and Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as Argentina and Great Britain.²⁶⁸ These countries undoubtedly recognize that Costa Rica has garnered substantial credibility through its commitment to diplomatic dispute resolution and reliance on organizations including the OAS and UN. Although Costa Rica had varying levels of responsibility in its disputes with Nicaragua, it was generally perceived as the aggrieved party in each dispute both because it did not have a military and because it actively enforced the narrative that it was committed to peace. However, Costa Rica has required the employment of a limited domestic force in response to several disputes with Nicaragua which is significant because it detracts from this peaceful narrative and other countries may perceive this as evidence against demilitarization.

This thesis provides valuable insight for the United States. U.S. Analysts often discount small and seemingly liberal nations like Costa Rica but they might be overlooking some of the evidence presented in this thesis which indicates that these nations are not necessarily predictable and may deviate from compliance with the International norms in pursuit of national interests. In the case of Costa Rica, this deviation from compliance with multilateral organizations is attributed to the inadequacy of these organizations to rapidly respond to Nicaraguan aggression. Furthermore, while Nicaragua continues to engage in small-scale instances of militarization, these aggressions can be countered by utilizing a small but specialized defense force rather than relying on diplomatic resolution methods. The United States should consider whether small nations like Costa Rica exert far more

²⁶⁷ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 14–15.

²⁶⁸ David Mares, *Latin America and the Illusion of Peace*, 14–15.

influence in the region than is generally assumed. This could be advantageous for the U.S. as Costa Rica and Panama are both strong allies with many strategic objectives in common and may be capable of shouldering more of the diplomatic burden in the region. Providing these countries with the resources to take the lead on some of these mutual strategic objectives could facilitate greater success as initiatives spearheaded by the U.S. are often received with some level of distrust or negative perception.

While this thesis is narrowly focused on evaluating Costa Rica's behavior towards Nicaragua with an International Relations lens, there are several related questions that are outside the scope of this thesis but merit further research. A CIP-Gallup survey was conducted in Costa Rica following the Isla Calero dispute which found that 73% of Costa Ricans believed that Nicaragua wished to invade Costa Rica, it would be interesting to conduct another survey to gauge the degree that Costa Ricans accept the use of force as valid means to deter future aggression by Nicaragua? Additionally, while this thesis is somewhat narrowly focused on evaluating Costa Rica's actions and decision-making with Nicaragua, the United States exuded a great deal of influence on Costa Rica, especially during the Contra War, and it would be interesting to examine the degree that this influence affected Costa Rica's decision to employ domestic force and support guerrillas against Nicaragua.

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