In early 2020, the official stance of the Nicaraguan government was that the Covid-19 pandemic was a problem for other countries and Nicaragua had nothing to worry about. A few early cases were dismissed as results of patients’ travel abroad. Even as cases mounted in bordering countries, local doctors and international health officials raised concerns about rising respiratory illness reports, and Cuban officials identified Covid-19 cases originating in Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega’s administration retained its unwavering optimism—or willful delusions. Nicaragua was alone in the Americas in the depth of official inaction, even once the government finally acknowledged Covid-19’s foothold in the country (Thaler 2020; Salazar Mather et al. 2020). What laid the groundwork for this denialism? And what does the subsequent toll of the pandemic and the government’s lax response tell us about the state of Nicaragua’s political, social, and economic institutions?

I argue that the Covid-19 pandemic and the Nicaraguan government response reveal the depths of the authoritarian control held by Ortega, First Lady-turned-Vice President Rosario Murillo and their family: they possess institutional reach from the national to local level and throughout government and civil society, even if popular legitimacy has eroded. The crisis and response have also made lethally clear the ruling family’s prioritization of self-interest over all else—even their most loyal supporters’ health and lives. Since Ortega took office in 2007, his and Murillo’s ruling Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) trumpeted poverty reduction and free healthcare for the Nicaraguan people as priorities, but the Covid-19 crisis has revealed the toxic mix of a low-income, largely informal economy and a still-weak, highly unequal healthcare system.

After two years of violent repression following 2018 mass protests and the internal collapse of Nicaragua’s closest ally, Venezuela, international isolation has made it difficult for outside actors to pressure Ortega and Murillo, or to effectively aid the population from abroad. Meanwhile, despite over a decade of harassment and
repression, civil society, has proven resilient, promoting and coordinating popular, autonomous responses to Covid-19. Ultimately, the pandemic has rendered more starkly the costs of the Ortega-Murillo family’s continued control of Nicaragua, after years of suggestions Ortega was a guarantor of stability.

Nicaraguan government’s lagging pandemic response

As Covid-19 began its march around the globe, most Central American governments scrambled to make sense of scientific information about the new coronavirus and shifting international health guidelines. The region’s first known Covid-19 death occurred March 15 in Guatemala. Nicaragua’s neighbors closed their borders, prepared quarantine facilities, and ramped up public health measures and restrictions on large gatherings, but the Nicaraguan government took the opposite approach. Borders remained open for travelers, the government denied quarantine facilities were necessary, and Murillo promoted large government-sponsored events and sports leagues (Robinson 2020; Thaler 2020). Most infamously, Ortega and Murillo organized the March 14 ‘Amor en Tiempos del Covid-19’ (Love in the Time of Covid-19) rally and parade in Managua, which drew thousands of people—but not the ruling couple.

Despite doctors, businesspeople, foreign officials, and Catholic Church leaders raising alarms and organizing their own prevention measures, the government painted Covid-19 as no problem for the country, saying the health system was prepared and that God would protect Nicaragua. Beginning around March 10, doctors reported suspected Covid-19 cases, submitted samples for testing, but received no response from MINSA, the Ministry of Health (Miranda Aburto 2020a). Once Nicaragua’s first official Covid-19 case was identified on March 18, the government continued denying the need for more preparation. This denial was maintained when community spread began and doctors reported rising cases of ‘atypical pneumonia’, the designation given to suspected Covid-19 patients, who went untested due to the government’s failure to organize large-scale testing, and government efforts to obscure Covid-19 data. After April 2, Nicaragua was Latin America’s only country with open borders (Bow 2020a).

This pattern continued for months, with the government downplaying the pandemic, lacking transparency around testing and distribution of international health aid, promoting public events and tourism, keeping schools open, and undermining civil society actors’ and doctors’ autonomous public health responses (Luna 2020a; Miranda Aburto 2020b; Romero 2020). Ortega himself was absent throughout much of the spring and summer—normal by his standards, but particularly jarring during a public health crisis (Thaler 2020).

Despite their public indifference to the pandemic, Ortega and Murillo acted to protect themselves, their family, and the backbone of the regime—the security forces. Reporters uncovered orders from mid-March for disinfectant and gloves for Ortega and Murillo’s residence (Silva 2020) and police began wearing masks in late March (Baltodano 2020). That same month, the government dispatched public
employees and FSLN cadres door-to-door to provide health information, but these ‘brigades’ were not given personal protective equipment, making them potential vectors (Miranda Aburto 2020c).

In mid-May, as cases mounted, the government quietly made some preparations, officially redirecting international loan funds toward the Covid-19 response, but still limiting testing and keeping data secret, releasing implausibly low case numbers, and promoting untested treatments (Navas 2020). The government also failed to secure missing components for 26,000 donated Covid-19 test kits, even as cases were growing, hospitals became overwhelmed, and nighttime ‘express burials’ became common (Bow 2020c; Miranda Aburto 2020d; López Ocampo and Sheridan 2020).

Officially, as of October 17, 2020, there have been 5,353 confirmed Covid-19 cases (805 per million people) and 154 deaths in Nicaragua (23 per million people), a country of about 6.6 million people, with case and death spikes in late May and late June. Testing data are unavailable, the only Central American country for which this is the case. Due to the government’s lack of transparency and obscuring and undermining of accurate health data, civil society groups and dissident doctors in mid-March started the Observatorio Ciudadano (Citizens’ Observatory) to collect data about confirmed and likely Covid-19 cases. As of October 17, the Observatorio identified 10,733 total Covid-19 cases (1,615 per million) and 2,780 deaths (418 per million).

These Observatorio data are still likely an undercount, but based on Worldometer data, they suggest Nicaragua’s death rate is around the 20th worst in the world, only surpassed by Panama in Central America (see Table 18.1, data as of October 17, 2020), despite a case rate around 131st globally. Nicaragua has approximately the same population as El Salvador, but based on Observatorio data, Nicaragua has had one-third as many cases per million compared to its more densely populated neighbor (1,615 versus 4,842), but a per capita death rate three times higher (418 per million versus 141). Based on Observatorio data, Nicaragua’s Covid-19 death rate has been more than twice that of Guatemala and over 1.5 times that of Honduras.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Covid-19 cases</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Cases per million</th>
<th>Deaths per million</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>8,712</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5,353</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6,647,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua (Observatorio)</td>
<td>10,733</td>
<td>2,780</td>
<td>1,615</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>6,647,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>123,498</td>
<td>2,557</td>
<td>28,492</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>4,334,467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and Costa Rica, despite far fewer cases per million. Ortega and Murillo’s allies in Venezuela, amid state collapse but strong official lockdown and public health policies, had twice as many cases per million (3,018), but only 26 deaths per million (one-sixteenth Nicaragua’s rate).

While underlying health system weakness is partially to blame, Nicaragua’s lack of preparation and widespread testing led to underprepared hospitals, patients seeking care too late, and, ultimately more deaths. The government response and lethal Covid-19 outcomes are rooted in Nicaragua’s institutional environment.

**Authoritarian consolidation and Ortega-Murillo family dominance**

Daniel Ortega was elected to the presidency 2006, returning to Nicaragua’s highest office after being head of state in the FSLN’s revolutionary government from 1979–1990. After the 1990 turn to full electoral democracy, Ortega consolidated control of the FSLN party apparatus, gradually purging rivals. The FSLN was previously a leftist party, ideologically rooted in Marxism–Leninism, Catholic liberation theology, and anti-imperialist nationalism. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, Ortega remade the FSLN along Christian democratic lines, allying with the Catholic Church hierarchy, capitalist business elites, and rightwing President Arnoldo Alemán (Close 2016; Peraza C. 2016; Spalding 2017; Thaler 2017). Parts of the FSLN’s historic mass base remained behind Ortega, and once in office, he used targeted social programs, patronage jobs, and partisan distribution of public aid to shore up support among the poor, a crucial, but relatively inexpensive task in the second-poorest country in the Americas.

During his first decade in office, Ortega steadily centralized power, eroding state institutions’ independence and giving them partisan branding (the FSLN won legislative control in 2011), cracking down on independent civil society organizations, and using redirected state money from Venezuelan oil deals to build business empires for the Ortega-Murillo family and their allies Close 2016; Jarquín 2016; (Thaler 2017; Martí i Puig and Serra 2020). Murillo grew in influence during this period, tightly controlling official government communications and viewed by many Nicaraguans as the ‘power behind the throne’. Murillo ascended to the Vice Presidency in the blatantly fraudulent 2016 elections, making her power official and explicitly opening the possibility of a political dynasty—four decades after the FSLN-spearheaded 1979 revolution toppled the longstanding Somoza family dictatorship.

Ortega and Murillo’s power seemed secure, bolstered by a growing economy, firm FSLN control of the state, new alliances with Nicaragua’s growing Evangelical Christian population, and increasing family control of Nicaraguan media. Meanwhile civil society organizations were corporatized or persecuted and the opposition was divided (Jarquí 2016; Steigenga, Coleman, and Marenco 2017; Thaler 2017). In late 2017, according to Latinbarómetro (2017) surveys, Ortega was Latin America’s most popular president, and despite democratic erosion, Nicaraguans reported optimism about the future.
This picture of stability shattered in April 2018. Elderly pensioners and student allies took to the streets in response to planned social security cuts for retirees and workers—and were beaten by pro-government thugs. The protests expanded, and after police and pro-government paramilitaries killed several young protesters, demonstrations grew into a nationwide civil uprising against Ortega and Murillo’s regime. Ortega and Murillo’s governing bargain crumbled, as the Catholic Church and business leaders joined protesters, calling for dialogue and new elections. Many longtime FSLN supporters turned on Ortega and Murillo.

It briefly looked like the ruling couple might fall, but in June and July 2018, they struck back with a vengeance, purging opposition supporters from public institutions and sending police and paramilitaries to violently reclaim the streets, while the military stayed in its barracks. Pro-government forces killed over 300 people, wounded and imprisoned thousands, and sent tens of thousands more into exile (Grupo Interdisciplinario de Expertos Independientes 2018; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2018). By mid-2018, Ortega and Murillo had lost most of their public support (Latinobarómetro 2018) and international legitimacy.

By early 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic emerged, Ortega and Murillo faced even fewer accountability mechanisms than before April 2018. The FSLN and its paramilitaries, centered around the Sandinista Youth, have national reach, and there is no real political opposition in the government, down to the local level. Independent media outlets operate but face harassment and censorship, while Ortega-Murillo family-controlled outlets and social media let the government shape their supporters’ media narrative.

Ortega and Murillo became even more insular and defensive after 2018, prioritizing officials’ loyalty and willingness to tow the government line. In early April, for instance, mid-pandemic, Health Minister Carolina Dávila Murillo was replaced with Dr. Martha Reyes Álvarez, the latter having proved her loyalty by attacking Cuban reports of Covid-19 cases emerging from Nicaragua (Luna 2020b). Government officials have provided and parroted absurd justifications for the lack of early Covid-19 control measures. A white paper released in late May, two months into Nicaragua’s outbreak, claimed the country was following the failed ‘Swedish strategy’ of avoiding lockdowns to protect the economy (Secretaría Privada para Políticas Nacionales 2020)—despite Nicaragua’s far lower testing capacity, healthcare and economic resources, and data transparency.

This personalization and centralization of power meant Ortega and Murillo’s inner circle lacked dissenting voices. Thorough political control foreclosed the possibility of regional or local leaders independently enacting public health measures, something that enabled more effective subnational pandemic responses in federalized Brazil, Mexico, and the US, despite national leaders’ denialist stances.

The Covid-19 crisis revealed that Ortega and Murillo no longer have accountability mechanisms constraining their actions, or any remaining sense of obligation beyond their family. Already in 2016, Close (2016: 138) argued that Ortega had
constructed a political system that was ‘verticalist (power is structured and exercised hierarchically), hyperpresidential, personalist with a touch of … “amoral familism”, and increasingly hegemonic’.\(^1\) After April 2018, these features were heightened, but Ortega and Murillo still appeared to value and feel accountable to their supporters, organizing public events and giving resources and opportunities to loyalists.

The Covid-19 response demonstrated a complete transition to amoral familism: Ortega and Murillo showed no concern for the common good beyond their family’s material interests. They remained indifferent to Covid-19’s toll even as it hit their staunchest supporters hard, killing top FSLN officials, Evangelical ministers, and sports figures. Outcry from independent media, medical leaders, the opposition, the Catholic Church, and business associations all fell on deaf ears. Having weathered the 2018 protests, Ortega and Murillo feel free to pursue whatever policies they choose, and no one remains domestically to dissuade or stop them.

**Economic precarity and an unequal, hollowed-out healthcare system**

Beyond Ortega and Murillo’s claims of divine protection, their stated reasoning for not implementing border closures, lockdowns, and other Covid-19 control measures was that it would be too harmful economically. In Ortega’s (2020) first major speech after the pandemic hit Nicaragua in April, he stated lockdowns were not an option, because ‘if this country stops working, it dies, and if the country dies, the people die’.

The Covid-19 crisis placed lower-income countries like Nicaragua in a tough spot: with the majority of workers in the informal sector and living on limited resources, not working could quickly mean starving. Yet this situation could have been avoided through government assistance for poor Nicaraguans, as other countries in Central America and around the world provided during the pandemic. Ortega and Murillo’s failure to offer similar assistance and their claims the country would starve under a lockdown make clear the government’s failures to sustainably reduce poverty and to create an economy benefiting all Nicaraguans.

Ortega and Murillo changed the FSLN’s slogan to ‘Christian, socialist, in solidarity’, yet rather than developing a truly socialist coordinated market economy, once in office, Ortega chose extraction: he continued the neoliberal macroeconomic policies of his post-1990 predecessors and built up family members’ and FSLN cronies’ wealth. The economy grew from 2007–2017, continuing preexisting trends, but this was accompanied by rising inequality and stagnant real wages, with around three-quarters of the population still informally employed (Sáenz 2016; Thaler 2017; Banco Central de Nicaragua 2020). The 2018 protests and crackdown stopped growth, with prior declines in Venezuelan economic support combining with economic disruptions and plummeting tourism to push Nicaragua into recession. Coordination on labor policy between the government, business associations, and FSLN-linked labor unions also stopped in 2018, leaving Ortega, Murillo, and remaining allies in full control of economic policy.
The recession was projected to continue in 2020 even before the Covid-19 pandemic, but Ortega and Murillo managed to avoid the full economic collapse many predicted in 2018. Economic stability was clearly a priority in the Covid-19 response, though to protect Ortega-Murillo family wealth, not the public. The failure to provide increased economic aid to the population, like 2018’s announcement of social security cuts, reveals Ortega and Murillo’s unwillingness to sacrifice any of their own hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in ill-gotten riches (Nicaragua Investiga 2019) to help out the Nicaraguan people. None of this wealth was put into action to dampen the recession’s effects on the masses, or to make it feasible for Nicaragua’s poor workers to stay home to slow Covid-19.

Half-filled economic promises were mirrored in the health sector. Nicaragua’s government is constitutionally bound to meet citizens’ healthcare needs, and there were hopes Ortega would fulfill this mandate, given his socialist rhetoric and the revolution’s 1980s expansion and improvement of healthcare access. Funding remained limited, however, with highly unequal healthcare accessibility and quality. Areas outside major cities are underserved and undersupplied, with Nicaraguans who can going to private providers or abroad for care (Pizarro 2011; Sequeira et al. 2011; Sotelo Vargas and Vargas-Palacios 2020). The health sector also became increasingly politicized, with the FSLN seeking to control medical unions and pressing workers to publicly demonstrate support for the government. Politicization deepened in 2018–2019, as the government purged medical professionals who participated in protests or simply treated wounded protesters (Huete-Pérez 2018; Vargas-Palacios, Pineda, and Galán-Rodas 2018; Sotelo Vargas and Vargas-Palacios 2020).

When Covid-19 struck, Nicaragua’s health system had already lost hundreds of workers to firings and emigration, while government policing of hospitals in 2018 diminished public trust. The government’s promotion of mass events and rejection of pleas and aid from the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) showed political control, not public health, remained Ortega and Murillo’s primary concern, alarming doctors and experts (M. C. Jarquín, Prado, and Gallo Marin 2020; Huete-Pérez and Hildebrand 2020; Salazar Mather et al. 2020). In May, over 700 Nicaraguan doctors warned the health system might collapse without preventive action, due to limited resources and supply shortages (Luna 2020e). The government ignored this advice, instead seeking to silence healthcare workers, firing those who challenged policies or leaked accurate information (Amnesty International 2020; De Cordoba 2020; Kincaid 2020). Even public health centers have high charges for Covid-19 tests, US$150 or about half the average monthly income of formal sector workers, and the government has continued taxing essential medical equipment (Luna 2020f; Today Nicaragua 2020).

Ortega and Murillo continue prioritizing personal power and wealth over public welfare, even when their own supporters are suffering. The government’s willful disregard for and insulation from pleas and warnings by Nicaraguan experts has been mirrored internationally.
The Ortega-Murillo regime’s international isolation

A strength of Ortega and Murillo’s government before 2018 was balancing stable relations with both the US, the regional hegemon, and Latin America’s Venezuelan-led leftist bloc. Rhetorically, Ortega embraced anti-imperialism and adopted late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez’s internationalist language of ‘Bolivarianism’, joining his Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). Yet Nicaragua retained good US relations, remaining a Central American Free Trade Agreement member, pursuing neoliberal macroeconomic policies, and cooperating on anti-narcotrafficking efforts and restricting migration (Martí i Puig 2016; Thaler 2017). The US and European Union gave weak rebukes for election fraud in 2016, but Ortega and Murillo weathered them without any trouble.

Ortega and Murillo’s foreign standing quickly eroded once the government began massacring protesters in 2018. Other Latin American leaders condemned the government crackdown, calling for dialogue. The long-dormant Nicaragua Investment Conditionality Act (NICA Act) finally passed the US Congress, restricting international financial institutions’ loans to Nicaragua, and the US, EU, Canada, and Switzerland sanctioned top government officials, updating sanctions into 2020. International human rights organizations and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet have consistently condemned the Ortega-Murillo regime’s abuses, continuing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 crisis has deepened Ortega and Murillo’s isolation. Latin America’s leftist bloc has disintegrated following electoral losses, leaders’ contentious removal from office in Brazil and Bolivia, and Venezuela’s political and economic collapse. Ortega and Murillo managed to alienate their closest remaining stable ally, Cuba, with their Covid-19 denialism, while their failure to cooperate with PAHO and to take reasonable Covid-19 prevention measures created new feuds with Nicaragua’s neighbors. PAHO officials repeatedly offered assistance and called on the Nicaraguan government to let their advisers visit and to openly provide Covid-19 data, only to be rebuffed (Cruz 2020; Luna 2020c; Lister 2020; Munguía 2020a; 2020b). The leaders of Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Honduras all decried Nicaragua’s lax official Covid-19 response, and a serious dispute erupted with Costa Rica, which unilaterally closed its border with Nicaragua and filed complaints with PAHO (Álvarez 2020b; Leiva 2020; 100% Noticias 2020).

The Nicaraguan government’s Covid-19 response has undone any efforts to stabilize the country’s reputation after the 2018 political crisis. This global pariah status may make it difficult to attract foreign investment to reboot the economy after Covid-19, especially if there are (reasonable) doubts about the government implementing an effective vaccination program. At a time when global cooperation is key to combating Covid-19 and avoid economic disaster, the Ortega-Murillo regime has chosen isolationism and antagonism, harming the Nicaraguan public.
Civil society’s resilience in the face of repression

Even before 2018, independent civil society groups, media outlets, and opposition political parties were restricted and repressed, but continued organizing and speaking out against erosion of democracy, corruption, and human rights violations (Jarquín 2016; Cortés Ramos, López Baltodano, and Moncada Bellorin 2020). One ray of hope in Nicaragua’s Covid-19 crisis has been civil society groups promoting responsible public health practices, countering government disinformation with independent data, and drawing global attention to government malfeasance.

Beginning in March 2020, civil society groups promoted self-isolation (#QuedateEnCasa, ‘stay home’, trended on social media), business restrictions, and mask-wearing, despite harassment from the government and its supporters. The Catholic Church restricted services and sought to provide medical advice and care, despite harassment and even terrorist attacks from government supporters. Journalists and independent citizens worked to counter false information spread by government supporters on social media. These efforts sought to mobilize a communal spirit of responsibility, recalling the collective public health campaigns of the revolution.

Doctors organized calls to follow scientific guidelines and the advice of the World Health Organization and PAHO, growing frustrated as the government continued to ignore their pleas (Álvarez 2020a; Bow 2020b; Delgado 2020; Medrano 2020). Doctors registered their concerns with Nicaragua’s remaining independent media organizations, leaking information from hospitals, while journalists sought to provide scientific guidance from abroad (Confidencial 2020). Most vitally, beginning March 14, the Observatorio Ciudadano collected data on suspected and confirmed Covid-19 cases and deaths, providing independent, reliable information, while the health ministry obscured the truth.

These civil society efforts may not have been able to shift government policy, which only changed when Covid-19 cases grew too prevalent to ignore, but they have offered vital independent voices in the face of government inaction and disinformation and helped mobilize a spirit of communal responsibility. Civil society action also helped spark decentralized personal and community measures to slow the pandemic, easing the potential burden on the health system and likely reducing the overall toll of Covid-19. Nicaraguan civil society’s resilience provides a source of optimism for the post-pandemic future and the difficult task of rebuilding the stressed economy, health system, and social fabric.

Conclusion

Have other factors been at play in the Nicaraguan government’s Covid-19 response? Ortega argued international sanctions hamstrung the government’s response, but, as mentioned above, sanctions have been targeted, not general, and Ortega and Murillo have vast resources they could use for public interests. Sanctions also did
not prevent Nicaragua from receiving international donations to aid the Covid-19 response (Luna 2020d; Romero and Munguía 2020).

Given Nicaragua’s lower-income status, labor informality, and weak healthcare system, was the country destined to face a high Covid-19 toll, and thus better off minimizing the short-term economic costs? Nicaragua’s death rate suggests otherwise, and a July 2020 survey found over 50 percent of Nicaraguans saying Covid-19 was the country’s most urgent problem, compared to 15 percent prioritizing the economy (Orozco 2020). Restrictions and public health measures early on help slow epidemics, reduce the likelihood of health system collapse, and can protect the economy in the long term (Correia, Luck, and Verner 2020). Further, the Ortega-Murillo government’s denigration of preventive measures, promotion of mass events, and hiding data did not help ‘manage’ the pandemic’s impacts—they actively worsened them.

The rate of increase in Covid-19 cases and deaths has slowed from July to the time of writing in October 2020. The virus may have hit the most vulnerable populations first, with individuals’ health precautions and the Nicaraguan population’s relative youth reducing impacts going forward (young populations have been suggested as key in low Covid-19 death tolls in sub-Saharan Africa). As rising case numbers Europe in September and October 2020 show, however, Covid-19 can return with a vengeance.

From 2007–2018, Ortega and Murillo’s political bargain with the Nicaraguan people was premised on providing stability and economic growth, even if political and social freedoms were narrowing. The 2018 protests and repression broke this bargain, but Covid-19 deepened the degree to which Ortega and Murillo’s rule has become destabilizing and detrimental to Nicaragua. The ruling couple have proven unwilling to sacrifice any of their power and family riches, even if it means thousands more Nicaraguans will die from Covid-19 than if economic aid and effective public health measures were implemented.

Opposition disorganization and fragmentation make political challenges to Ortega and Murillo difficult, even if the scheduled 2021 elections are already unlikely to be free and fair. Ortega and Murillo’s personalization of state institutions was complete after 2018, and the Covid-19 crisis reinforced that a post-Ortega-Murillo Nicaragua needs a wholesale reconstruction of political and economic institutions (Cortés Ramos, López Baltodano, and Moncada Bellorin 2020), on a scale unseen since the 1979–1990 revolutionary period. This project will require vision, commitment, and leadership from Nicaraguans from across the political spectrum; the strength and resilience Nicaraguan civil society has displayed throughout the Covid-19 crisis; and continuing support from international institutions.

Note

1 Close (2016) adapts the concept of amoral familism from Banfield (1958), whose original work on rural Italy has been rightly criticized for its biases.
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