



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY  
Department of Political Science

STV102  
Tutor: Björn Fägersten

# Sweden, Nicaragua and the Sandinistas

An analysis of Swedish foreign policy on Nicaragua 1979-90

Anders Djurfeldt & Klara Jamison Gromark

# Abstract

In 1979 the Sandinista movement revolted against the Somoza dictatorship and seized power in Nicaragua. The Swedish Social Democrats had earlier supported the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua and now welcomed the revolution. During 1979 and 1990 the Swedish policy on Nicaragua proved stable. The political support and the flow of financial aid were continuous despite changes of government, internal and external criticism and tension in the international system. The purpose of this essay is to explain why. This is carried out by using Kjell Goldmann's theory on foreign policy stability, which introduces the notion of "stabilizers" as forces inhibiting change of a foreign policy. The stabilizers are categorized in four levels of analysis - international, administrative, political and cognitive - which allows a broad perspective when analyzing the case. The analysis is undertaken by applying the theoretical framework on empirical material - literature, reports and interviews with central actors. By modifying Goldmann's framework to some extent, we find that the stability of the policy on Nicaragua 1979-1990 can be explained considering institutionalization of ideas and relations, along with personal characteristics of central actors and domestic politics.

*Key words:* Foreign policy stability, Nicaragua, Sandinista, Sweden, Goldmann, Palme, Schori.

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# 1 Introduction

One of the countries that have received most Swedish financial aid through the years is Nicaragua; a support that begun with the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship by the Sandinista movement in 1979. Between 1979 and 1989 Sweden gave Nicaragua one billion Swedish crowns and was during the 1980s the western country that gave the most economic assistance to Nicaragua.<sup>1</sup> Together with the Socialist International and the European Social Democratic movement the Swedish Social Democrats viewed positively the progressive social movements that were growing strong in Central America, and support was also directed to the democratic struggle in El Salvador and Guatemala.<sup>2</sup>

According to Stefan de Vylder, the Sandinista movement was initially based on radical students who found inspiration in the Cuban revolution. Yet, the movement quickly adapted to the tradition of anti imperialist struggle in Nicaragua since the 1920s and 1930s when the US occupation was effectively challenged by Augusto César Sandino. The Sandinistas initiated their guerrilla combat in the mountainous countryside during the 1960s. By doing this they followed the revolutionary model promoted by “Che” Guevara that stated that a revolution should be run by a rural guerrilla and not by a communist party. During the 1970s they launched their first armed attacks on the Somocista National Guard and they soon gained public support and attracted international attention.<sup>3</sup>

In 1984, during the raging war against the contras, (extremist paramilitary forces sponsored by the US), Nicaragua held its first democratic elections. According to de Vylder’s investigation of Nicaragua from 1986, the Sandinistas were heavily criticized for disturbing the opposition’s election campaign.<sup>4</sup> Still, the elections were internationally recognized as free and fair,<sup>5</sup> except by the US, but democratic limitations within the Sandinista movement were still obvious. The Swedish and other European Social Democratic parties tried to convince the Sandinistas to soften their approach concerning the dialogue with the opposition, revolutionary rhetoric and human rights.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Pierre Schori points out in his chapter on Latin America in *Dokument Inifrån* that the Swedish Social Democrats “supported the Nicaraguan government concerning aid, cooperation and international law. But (we) perhaps stood closer to some parts of the opposition

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<sup>1</sup> Nilsson, A., 1991: 187.

<sup>2</sup> Schori, 1992: 303.

<sup>3</sup> DeVylder, 1981: 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> De Vylder, 1986: 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Schori, 1992: 332.

when it came to the view on democracy.”<sup>7</sup> In an interview about the support to Nicaragua in 1984, Palme said: “our support is conditioned. We’ve told them, and we repeat it, they have to maintain pluralism and democracy to sustain our support.”<sup>8</sup> To recognize that there were diverging standpoints about the democratic status of the Sandinistas on the issue is important, but to discuss it further falls outside of the scope of this paper.

Supporting a Nicaragua governed by the Sandinistas provoked much US criticism.<sup>9</sup> As Jean Grugel points out in her article on Spanish PSOE’s engagement in Central America: “The United States’ diplomatic pressures on all European governments not to take too independent a line on Central America has been very intense indeed.”<sup>10</sup> According to Grugel, the Spanish dependence on good diplomatic relations with the US created a “cautious and at times ambiguous” Spanish policy on Central America.<sup>11</sup> Yet, this never seemed to affect the Swedish policy on Nicaragua, which proved to be an overall stable policy in unstable times. The policy survived negative feedback, international tension, change of government in Sweden and the death of Olof Palme, who was a central actor in the policy.

This stability of the Swedish policy awakes our interest and lays the background to the purpose of our study and our research question.

## 1.1 Purpose and research question

What motivates a state’s foreign policy behaviour? What creates foreign policy patterns? And what inhibits them from changing? These are all questions that Kjell Goldmann asks in *Change and Stability in Foreign policy: Détente as a Problem of Stabilisation*. As a summary, Goldmann’s theory concerns “the assumption that there are patterns in the foreign policy of a government, and not just single acts.”<sup>12</sup> A change in policy arrives from a change in ideas.<sup>13</sup> This can be provoked by different factors: a change of conditions, negative feedback or residual factors.<sup>14</sup> He presents the concept of *stabilizers* inhibiting change in a foreign policy pattern. The stabilizers are categorized as *international*, *administrative*, *political* and *cognitive* stabilizers.<sup>15</sup> Exploring how stabilizers affected the Swedish foreign policy towards Nicaragua is the purpose of our study.

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<sup>7</sup> Schori, 1992: 334. (own translation).

<sup>8</sup> Goñi, 1987: 229 (own translation).

<sup>9</sup> Antman, 1996: 191.

<sup>10</sup> Grugel, 1987: 607.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 230.

<sup>13</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid: 15.

<sup>15</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 247.

Within the field of foreign policy analysis, foreign policy stability is a scarcely investigated subject, and the case we have chosen has hardly been investigated at all within the field of political science. These factors act as incentives for our study and make it, according to us, a very interesting matter of investigation.

We believe that, like most theory, Goldmann's model has its clear advantages and limitations, and that not all of it is applicable to our case. What we want to do is examine and understand the stability of Swedish policy towards Nicaragua with the help of theoretical and conceptual tools from Goldmann's theory, complemented by some additional theory. An important aspect to consider is that Goldmann describes his theoretical framework as a "sketch" and invites his readers to develop the theory: "The reader is asked to contribute to improving the theory that I have merely been able to sketch."<sup>16</sup> Even though we do not necessarily have a theory-developing ambition in this paper, and even though we do not test all parts of his framework, we have chosen to make some alterations of Goldman's theory. This, we argue, is relevant since the focus of this study lies on the case and not the theory. We have tried, where possible, to apply each particular stabilizer to our case. Where we found that Goldmann's theory was not applicable, we made some modifications of his framework. The choices we have made will be motivated and explained throughout our study. Our research question is our point of departure:

*How can the stability of the Swedish foreign policy towards Nicaragua during 1979-1990 be explained?*

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<sup>16</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 68.

## 2 Method and Material

### 2.1 Methodological discussion

The focus of this study lies on one particular case. While Goldmann tested his theory on a comparative cross-country study, we chose to do a case study. We believe that by applying the theoretical concepts to an empirical problem, the theory we have chosen and the additions we have made, will help us understand our case. We will study the four categories of stabilizers one at a time, analyzing their possible impact on the policy. The different types of stabilizers allow us to get a broad comprehension of the case, looking at it from four different angles. Our task is to examine how different factors may have stabilized the policy. In the theory chapter, a hypothesis within each of the four categories will be presented, to later be investigated in the analysis and evaluated in the conclusion.

To gather empirical data, we have chosen to do interviews by phone and via email. We have tried to reach people with insight in the Sweden-Nicaragua relations during the period concerned in our case. For example we have contacted employees at the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the Swedish embassy in Nicaragua and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). We also had email contact and made a telephone interview with Pierre Schori: one of the central actors in the Palme-administration and a driving force behind the policy on Nicaragua. The primary material has been complemented by literature relevant to our case, and the empirical data has been applied to the theoretical framework.

### 2.2 Choice of material

In studying our case we have put effort into finding reliable empirical material, both primary and secondary. However, our case has a clear ideological character, which evokes some methodological problems. The support to Nicaragua was and has been debated, and texts about this period tend to be normative. Because of the ideological character of the issue it has proved difficult to find reliable empirical data. As an example, articles written by conservative political scientists label the support as being for the Sandinistas, whereas socialist politicians, active during the time and after, choose to characterize it as going to the Nicaraguan people. Critics stress the brutality of the Sandinistas and their disrespect for human rights,

whereas the supporters to a larger extent blame the US supported contras for the civil war, and explain the slow democratization process as a result of the war restraints. These are all factors that we have had to consider in our study and in our choices of material, and we have attempted to take a non-normative standpoint in the presentation.

## 2.3 Operational discussion and definition of concepts

Among foreign policy analysts, the established definition of “foreign policy” is “a set of goals, directives or intentions, formulated by persons in official or authoritative positions, directed at some actor or condition in the environment beyond the nation state, for the purpose of affecting the target in the manner desired by the policymakers.”<sup>17</sup> The foreign policy towards Nicaragua involved political support as well as financial aid. Studying this we examine for example speeches, political statements and agreements, as well as the political actions taken in relation to Nicaragua (for example official visits, diplomatic activity and the administration of aid work).

Since a change of ideas is described by Goldmann as being the reason why a policy changes, the analysis of foreign policy stability consequently involves the study of ideas. Even if cognitive stabilizers are categorized as a separate factor, the importance of ideas is acknowledged within the framework as a whole. Therefore, we want to distinguish the fundamental ideas behind the policy on Nicaragua already at this early stage. Goldmann approaches the operational difficulties concerning the concept of ideas, relating to the difference between verbalized and non-verbalized policy: “Ideas are related to policies both in the sense of argument within the policymaking system and in the sense of public justification.”<sup>18</sup> We will not study what Goldmann calls “declared” and “real” motives as separate factors behind the policy, since Goldmann states that “the common dichotomy between ‘real’ and ‘declared’ motives is misleading.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, we found no indications of a difference between “real” and “declared” motives behind the Swedish foreign policy on Nicaragua.

The three main beliefs and convictions within the foreign policy on less developed countries (LDCs), including Nicaragua, during these years can be summarized to the concepts of national sovereignty, international solidarity and democratization.<sup>20</sup> The officially stated goals of the engagement in Nicaragua were to support Nicaragua in the defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity

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<sup>17</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Jernek, 1990: 127-129.



along with contributing to the development towards political democracy and social justice.<sup>21</sup>

The central concept that forms the basis of our research is the notion of “foreign policy stability”. Goldmann argues that “an analysis of policy stability presupposes a definition of policy change.”<sup>22</sup> A change of policy is defined as “either a new act in a given type of situation, or a given act in a type of situation previously associated with a different act, or a new act in a new type of situation.”<sup>23</sup> Goldmann summarizes the sources of change in three categories: a) a change in conditions, b) negative feedback and c) residual factors.<sup>24</sup> A change in conditions involves adaptation to a change in the environmental context, for example a change in the international system.<sup>25</sup> Negative feedback involves the concept of learning, that is, the re-evaluation of a policy when it does not produce the wanted effects.<sup>26</sup> Residual factors concerns events and processes unrelated to the policy, but still affecting it, for example a change in leadership in the composition of power or in the policy-making process.<sup>27</sup> Foreign policy stability is consequently the resulting situation of stabilizers inhibiting policy change when the sources mentioned above puts the policy under pressure.

The notion of sources of change is problematic because of its unclear nature and the problem of investigating how they actually pressure the policy to change. Furthermore, a source of change may sometimes act as a source of stability. An example of this will be presented in section 4.1. Had we studied a case of foreign policy change, the notion of sources of change ultimately would have played an important part in the analysis. But when dealing with a clear case of foreign policy stability, as we are, the concept, we argue, becomes less useful because of extreme difficulties of measuring the extent to which a source of change actually exerts pressure on the policy. Discussing the impact of sources of change on a policy that is and remains stable is in fact contra-factual. Therefore, the sources of change will not be a main feature in the analysis.

Goldmann’s definition of a stabilizer is as follows: “A stabilizer of policy P of agent A: any attribute of P, of the ideas on which P is based, of A, or of A’s relations with the environment that reduces the effects on P of changes in conditions for P, of negative feedback from P, and of residual factors.”<sup>28</sup> Each particular stabilizer will be defined and presented in a less technical manner in the following chapter.

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<sup>21</sup> Goñi, 1987: 131.

<sup>22</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 235.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 235-236.

<sup>24</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid: 6.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

# 3 Theoretical framework

## 3.1 International stabilizers

“International stabilizers have to do with the external relations of the state.”<sup>29</sup> We choose to focus on two of Goldmann’s international stabilizers, *international institutionalization* and *third parties* since the third, *dependence*, does not seem applicable to our case. Goldmann’s notion of dependence concerns a mutual interdependence between the two states, which would act as a stabilizer for the policy.<sup>30</sup> However, we do not see any clear or important Swedish dependence on Nicaragua and will therefore not apply this concept.

Goldmann considers *international institutionalization* as an important inhibitor of foreign policy change. This includes factors such as international law, norms and agreements which, according to Goldmann, is “the traditional method for policy stabilization in international relations.”<sup>31</sup> This can be related to Stephen Kocs’ law based model for understanding foreign policy. Kocs describes how obligations imposed by international law decide states’ foreign policy: “Because they accept international legal norms as legitimate, states usually impose compliance with those norms on themselves.”<sup>32</sup> Within the theory of foreign policy stability, what Goldmann describes as “normative regulations” has to do with this kind of compliance that arises from the expectations that exist within and between states in the international system. A state’s foreign policy can be insensitive to change for such a reason: “By consistently pursuing a foreign policy, a country may create international expectations that are costly to violate.”<sup>33</sup> Goldmann contends that “the main difference between the foreign policy of great and small powers would therefore be that systemic stabilizers (for example, international structures and agreements) are more important for the latter than for the former.”<sup>34</sup> This is an important point for our analysis.

The concept of *third parties* is the second international stabilizer that we will study. A “third party” will step in between two states in conflict and this type of action easily becomes a pattern in a country’s foreign policy. According to Goldmann, Sweden’s active policy of neutrality is a good example. Goldmann

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<sup>29</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 247.

<sup>30</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 31.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: 30.

<sup>32</sup> Kocs, 1994: 540.

<sup>33</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 31.

<sup>34</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 242.

puts it in terms of friends and enemies: “stable relations of amity and enmity help to stabilize some policies.”<sup>35</sup> The author describes the reasoning about third party stabilization as rooted in structural balance theory.<sup>36</sup> Robert Pape is a political scientist who has written a great deal on balance theory. His theories concern balancing in a unipolar system, but the core argument, small states balancing against the aggressions of a large state, is still related to the notion of third parties. The act of balancing, according to Pape, involves the use of “nonmilitary tools, such as international institutions, economic statecraft, and strict interpretations of neutrality.”<sup>37</sup>

Our hypothesis suggests that the international institutionalization and the Swedish defense of international law, together with the US aggressions in Nicaragua provoking Sweden to act as a third party, stabilized the policy towards Nicaragua.

## 3.2 Administrative stabilizers

Goldmann presents a set of aspects of administration that supposedly contribute to stabilize a foreign policy. Spontaneously, we did not find any of them especially applicable to our case. Goldmann himself brings up the difficulty in applying the stabilizers on this level empirically and stresses the need for a “rather fundamental reconsideration of this aspect of the theoretical sketch.”<sup>38</sup> According to us, this motivates our alteration of the theory at this level. We choose to emphasize what Goldmann describes as *bureaucratic inertia*<sup>39</sup> which can easily be related to the theories of *path dependence*.

Margaret Levi’s definition of “path dependence” is that “once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, she argues that “the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice.”<sup>41</sup> Paul Pierson explains how the relative benefits of a policy grows and the willingness to change gets reduced over time.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, organizations tend to stick to their path to reduce costs and to be able to benefit the most from their previous investments. This is supported by Goldmann, who argues that “investment implies that policy changes will carry the cost of not using an existing asset which may in turn increase the political cost.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 254.

<sup>36</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 68.

<sup>37</sup> Pape, 2005: 17.

<sup>38</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 195.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid: 54.

<sup>40</sup> Levi, 1997: 28.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Pierson, 2000: 252.

<sup>43</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 48.

However, there are different viewpoints on what should be considered investments. Peter Gourevitch challenges the rationalist view on actors performing according to calculations of costs and benefits.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he claims that political actors in particular arrangements develop what he calls “specific assets.” This notion stands for a broader definition of “investments”, involving also social and political aspects such as relationships, expectations, privileges and knowledge of procedures.<sup>45</sup> Although Gourevitch is dealing with investments in institutions and exclusively political actors, we argue that his broader notion of investments is applicable to our case.

Goldmann discusses a third way of domestically institutionalizing a policy which actually sums up our argument: “some policies require the investment of resources into physical capabilities or administrative agencies for their implementation. It too may create expectations of consistency and continuity of the policy.”<sup>46</sup>

Arguing that the financial aid makes up an important part of a state's foreign policy, and that it can be viewed as a part of an important investment, makes it relevant to our study. Our hypothesis is that the aid relations between Sweden and Nicaragua had a stabilizing effect through the force of path dependence. Hence, we will treat the concept of path dependence as the stabilizer at this level.

### 3.3 Political stabilizers

Goldmann's political stabilizers concern “the possibility that a foreign policy may be protected against pressures for change by being embedded in domestic politics.”<sup>47</sup> Here it becomes vital to define the concept of *domestic politics*. Goldmann's definition is quite narrow. It refers to the struggle for power and leadership in the domestic country of the foreign policy.<sup>48</sup> Later, he develops the concept, describing the main forces within domestic politics as: “key actors, like the chief political parties and interest organisations, perhaps the leading media, maybe public opinion.”<sup>49</sup> The three stabilizers that Goldmann presents on this level are *institutionalization*, *support* and *salience*.

Domestic *institutionalization* very much concerns the aspects of expectation and consistency. A policy gets institutionalized when it gets repeated year after year, and when the expectations are high about the policy being pursued. Goldmann argues that institutionalization is a mechanism that makes policies self-reinforcing. A high degree of institutionalization is therefore probably a significant stabilizer.<sup>50</sup> As well as within the concept of international

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<sup>44</sup> Gourevitch, 1999:143.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid: 144.

<sup>46</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 48.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid: 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid: 39.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid: 49.

<sup>50</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 252.

institutionalization, Goldmann argues that “behaviour patterns create expectations, and expectations are not violated without costs.”<sup>51</sup> Domestic institutionalization is said to be difficult to keep apart from international, because of their similar nature and tendency to blend and become part of one another: “The phenomenon we call institutionalization stands on the border between international and domestic stabilizers of foreign policy. It is not always possible to keep the international and domestic aspects apart.”<sup>52</sup> This is something we will return to in our analysis.

*Support* concerns how the policy is perceived by for example chief political parties, interest organizations and public opinion.<sup>53</sup> Enthusiastic support or radical opposition can make a policy more or less vulnerable to change in a variety of ways. Goldmann presents the methodological problems concerning this specific stabilizer. Depending on the political system, mass attitudes have more or less influence on the decision making forces.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, how to study the impact of support very much differs depending on which country and type of regime that is being investigated. Goldmann claims that when studying a parliamentary democracy the central focus should be on the political parties. Then additional political forces can be included in the study, for example public opinion and interest organizations.<sup>55</sup> This would, according to Goldmann, “permit more precise and detailed analysis.”<sup>56</sup> Studying Sweden, being a parliamentary democracy with relatively transparent political institutions, public support can be assumed to play an important role. Therefore, support will be operationalized as studying public opinion as well as the political parties.

A policy’s degree of *salience* concerns its level of relevance and importance in the eyes of the decision makers. A policy having a high level of salience is the opposite of being considered trivial. The stabilizing impact of institutionalization and support, according to Goldmann, depends on the policy’s salience.<sup>57</sup> Goldmann compares the notion of salience to the concept of power which indicates its difficulties of being operationalized.<sup>58</sup> The salience of an issue does not necessarily have to do with its level of controversy, or debate. According to Goldmann, a policy can be widely debated without being salient and salient without being widely debated. By Goldmann’s definition, salience is rather the extent to which an issue determines coalitions and cleavages within domestic politics.<sup>59</sup>

We will consequently operationalize the concept of salience by studying to what extent the policy had a coalition-building function and, according to Goldmann’s suggestion, by examining the degree of attention that the central actors gave the policy on Nicaragua. Our hypothesis at this level is that the

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<sup>51</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 252.

<sup>52</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 48.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid: 49.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid: 51.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid: 52.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid: 53.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Swedish policy on Nicaragua was stabilized by the domestic institutionalization, as well as the wide-spread support and the salience of the issue.

### 3.4 Cognitive stabilizers

The cognitive approach involves the study of ideas: “the cognitive stabilizers are found in the ideas upon which the policy is based.”<sup>60</sup> Within the theory of foreign policy stability the study of ideas is however not a clear cut issue. According to Goldmann, cognitive stabilizers operate only on the individual level.<sup>61</sup> Yet, the author continues, for ideas to have a stabilizing affect on a foreign policy they have to be either officially adopted or widely shared within the organization.<sup>62</sup> This implies that the central beliefs of one or two individuals alone will not have a stabilizing effect on a policy.

Traditional research on the cognitive approach within foreign policy analysis concerns the impact of individuals’ or key actors’ central beliefs on foreign policy decision making.<sup>63</sup> In relation to the theory of foreign policy stability, Goldmann suggests a different perspective. He does not wish to accentuate the importance of individual beliefs as he does organizational: “here the concern is with organizational rather than individual thinking.”<sup>64</sup> As mentioned above, the stabilizing effect arises only when the fundamental ideas are shared by various members within the policy making process: “the structure of officially adopted beliefs – a foreign policy doctrine, a party program - is relevant only insofar as the official beliefs are also widely shared by the members of the policy-making system.”<sup>65</sup>

Goldmann presents three stabilizers on this level - *consistency*, *centrality* and *testability*. Testability is defined by Goldmann as the extent to which a belief can be challenged by discrepant information.<sup>66</sup> This stabilizer is, according to the author, far more problematic than the other two: “Testability, in contrast is not an objectively observable feature of the belief system’s structure but a genuinely subjective matter of how large an impact empirical evidence would have on the believer.”<sup>67</sup> Because of the relatively speculative nature Goldmann ascribes to this particular stabilizer, we choose not to include it in our analysis.

*Consistency* of beliefs is involved when “all links between policy and goal attainment are believed to be positive.”<sup>68</sup> That is to say that the beliefs and ideas

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<sup>60</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 247.

<sup>61</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 35.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See for example Rosati, Jerel A, (2000): “The Power of Human Cognition in the Study of World Politics.” In *International Studies Review*, Vol. 2, Nr 3, 2000, s. 45 -75.

<sup>64</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 23.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 35.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid: 38.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid: 36.

are based on straight conviction, are not questioned and form the fundamental basis for the policy. Invulnerability to a change of the fundamental ideas hence implies stability in the foreign policy. Here lies the stabilizing effect of consistency on foreign policy: "The pursuit of the policy is believed to have a uniformly favourable impact in the terms of the objective the policy is intended to serve."<sup>69</sup>

*Centrality* of beliefs concerns the fact that "a policy will be regarded as cognitively central to the extent that it is believed to be linked positively to other policies."<sup>70</sup> Explicitly, a policy can be stabilized by the fact that its underlying ideas also form the basis of other policies. The more policies a policy is connected to, and the stronger the links, the more stable the policy.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the theories of ideas as stabilizers we wish to, quite contrary to Goldmann, include individuals as possible stabilizers of a policy. To relate to a common argument within the research on individuals' impact on foreign policy, organizations don't act, individuals do: "The government of a state is an organization and as such it is not in itself capable of seeing, thinking, learning or preferring. Only the human beings that make up the organization can do that."<sup>72</sup> We believe that the extent to which the official as well as the individual ideas get implemented, and the centrality they obtain, depends on the characteristics of the central actors. Characteristics we would use as a broad notion, including for example personal interest, knowledge about the issue concerned, diplomatic and rhetorical skills and personal networks. Hence, one part of our analysis will focus not so much on the ideas as on the possible stabilizing impact on the policy of the central actors as persons. We recognize the difficulty of measuring this aspect, but we are convinced that it would be a shortcoming for our study to ignore it.

Our hypothesis is that the consistency and centrality of the official and individual beliefs behind the Swedish foreign policy towards Nicaragua had a stabilizing impact on the policy. Furthermore, we believe that so did what we call characteristics of the central actors.

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<sup>69</sup> Goldmann, 1988: 36.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid: 37.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Gustavsson, 1998: 84.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Balancing US aggression in Nicaragua and defending international law

Analysing the impact of the stabilizers on the international level presupposes a brief presentation of the international context concerning Nicaragua. When Ronald Reagan came to power in 1980 the tensions in the international system escalated. These tensions were felt in Central America. With fear of communist establishment in the region the support to the contra movement was intensified: “President Ronald Reagan and Secretary George Shultz have repeatedly stressed their support in Central America for democratic freedoms threatened in the face of communist totalitarianism.”<sup>73</sup> Schori describes in *Dokument Inifrån* how the “Reagan doctrine” and the new US Central American policies were devastating for the region from a Swedish (Social Democratic) point of view. The Carter administration had, according to Schori, shared the Swedish perspective about the development in Central America in various ways and the author describes it as “capitalism with a human face.”<sup>74</sup> The Carter administration, as well as the Socialist International, stressed the principles of non-military intervention, and that a socio-economic development had to pave the way for democracy in the region.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, when the Reagan administration introduced the new policy for Latin America the Swedish reactions, within the political elite as well as society at large, were strong.

Relating to Goldmann’s concept of international institutionalization, much evidence can be found of how the international doctrine on national sovereignty was of great importance to Sweden. That the respect for international law was a crucial point of departure for the policy towards Nicaragua cannot be denied: “If crimes against international law, as it is formulated in the UN treaty, gets accepted in silence, a law of the jungle would be dominating in world politics. And in that jungle the small states would not be the lions.”<sup>76</sup> There is no doubt that the Swedish foreign policy at the time was influenced to a great extent by anti-imperialism and that the USA was looked upon as a violator of important international norms, especially the principle of national sovereignty. Sweden very

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<sup>73</sup> Malloy, 1987: 221.

<sup>74</sup> Schori, 1985: 88 (own translation).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 89.

<sup>76</sup> Schori, 1992: 80 (own translation.)



much stressed the importance of international law while the US actions sprung from realist theory and had their focus on power interest and national security motives. When the US placed mines in the Nicaraguan harbours in 1984 it was viewed as a direct violation of international law and the normative system. In a speech Palme held in Gothenburg in 1984 this becomes clear: “The rules of international law must be applied in Latin America as well. It must concern all states, even superpowers. To, in peace time, mine another country’s territory, is a hostile act, and hence a gross violation of international law and the UN treaty.”<sup>77</sup> In 1986 the International Court of Law sentenced the US to pay for the damages done in Nicaragua, according to customary international law.<sup>78</sup> However, the US chose to ignore the sentence and withdrew its acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the court.<sup>79</sup> This accentuates how systemic stabilizers (international law, structures and agreements) as discussed in section 3.1, are less important to superpowers than to small states like Sweden.

Respecting small states’ sovereignty was not solely an altruistic matter. It also involved status in the international arena, and the strengthening of Swedish neutrality. If Sweden made its stand clear in international matters it would have more room to function as an alternative to the block politics and spread the “Swedish model” in other parts of the world. According to Jernek, the Swedish active neutrality policy created an “institutionalised and binding tradition, which invites every morally responsible Swedish government to criticize new wrongs in the world to not lose the credibility as the protector of international law and principles.”<sup>80</sup> This standpoint influenced the political support as well as the financial aid to Nicaragua. The aspect of credibility in the international system probably had a stabilizing affect on Swedish foreign policy, something that was reflected in the policy towards Nicaragua. As Goldmann puts it, “Sweden’s policy of neutrality demonstrates the possibility of extreme foreign policy stabilization.”<sup>81</sup> A quote from Palme talking about the neutrality policy can be seen as confirming Goldmann’s point: “This policy must bear the hallmark of unyielding determination. The world must be able to trust Sweden’s course.”<sup>82</sup> This gives us a picture of the stabilizing effect of international institutionalization on the policy on Nicaragua.

Here the concept of balancing within the international power-structure becomes relevant and describing Sweden as a “third party” is not far fetched in the context. In Lennart Andersson’s *Biståndet till U-länderna* the main motive behind the aid to Nicaragua (and to North Vietnam) is described as “hindering US aggression and superpower politics.”<sup>83</sup> The Swedish “active neutrality policy” was important in the Swedish relations with the LDCs. Swedish foreign policy became an alternative to both superpower blocks, and Sweden played the role as an

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<sup>77</sup> Palme, 1984-05-01: 19 (own translation).

<sup>78</sup> Monroe, 1987: 206.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Jernek, 1990: 136 (own translation).

<sup>81</sup> Goldmann, 1982: 255.

<sup>82</sup> Palme, 1984-09-17: 4 (unofficial translation).

<sup>83</sup> Andersson, 1988: 83 (own translation).

alternative for cooperation for LDCs. Small state solidarity and national sovereignty were key words and the foreign policy during the time was very much dominated by socialist values.<sup>84</sup> The rhetoric in the case of both Vietnam and Nicaragua was anti-imperialistic and The United States was blamed for inhibiting growth and development in Central America.<sup>85</sup> In our interview with Pierre Schori, he describes how the three main ideas and key elements behind the policy - national sovereignty, international solidarity and democratization - became actualized by the “international negative support directed to the contra movement.”<sup>86</sup>

The determination and stability in the US standpoint in Central America must have had a stabilizing effect on Sweden functioning as a third party. To relate to the discussion on sources of change in section 2.3, Reagan coming to power can be seen, if considered a change in the international system, as a possible source of change. Nevertheless, this functioned rather as a source of stability because Sweden refused to succumb to US pressure. As the US aggression and violation of international regulations continued, the Swedish counteractions and policy were stabilized. By diplomatic means, Sweden tried to alter the relationships of enmity, within and outside Nicaragua: “we should keep contributing to Ronald Reagan learning to live with the Sandinistas and the Sandinistas learning to live with the opposition.”<sup>87</sup> Eivor Halkjaer (former director of the department of Latin America (RELA) at SIDA) describes the Swedish policy on Nicaragua as “a policy with strong connections to the Swedish solidarity with small states that fought an infamous dictator and a small country in the shadow of a big and powerful neighbour that had not played a constructive role during the public uprising.”<sup>88</sup> This description inarguably clarifies the Swedish third party engagement.

## 4.2 Foreign aid and “Path dependence”

We will on this level study the possible stabilizing impact of the foreign aid to Nicaragua, through the force of path dependence, on the Swedish foreign policy. Relating to our hypothesis in section 3.2, we will study the foreign aid, and the way it was administered. Therefore, it becomes relevant to examine SIDA, the part of the administration that implements the financial aid directives. As mentioned above, “path dependence” is defined as sticking to a policy to reduce the costs of change out of consideration of the investments made. Adopting Gourevitch’s notion of specific assets, the investments are not only economic but also social and political.

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<sup>84</sup> Jernek, 1990: 128-129.

<sup>85</sup> Schori, 1985: 65-66.

<sup>86</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31 (own translation).

<sup>87</sup> Schori, 1985: 72 (own translation).

<sup>88</sup> Halkjaer, interview, 2006-12-20 (own translation).

The fact that Nicaragua was made a program country has in our empirical material proved to be an important economic, social and political investment. As mentioned above, in 1979 the Swedish government initiated a flow of financial aid to Nicaragua, which later came to be further intensified by making Nicaragua a program country for Swedish development aid in 1982. The decision of making Nicaragua a program country was preceded by many transactions from the Swedish Social Democratic party (SAP), Swedish Labour Unions and organisations (like ABF) to the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua.<sup>89</sup> As Gourevitch suggests, by developing specific assets, that is, by making economic, as well as social and political investments, the costs of changing to another policy are reinforced. In our case, by receiving delegations of Sandinistas in Sweden, sending large groups of aid workers to Nicaragua, investing money and knowledge there and by the aid workers developing personal networks in the country and obtaining cultural and linguistic knowledge, specific assets developed through the administration. These specific assets should be viewed as investments of great importance to the policy. Daniel Asplund, who went to Nicaragua through SIDA, describes working with aid in Nicaragua as being “influenced by the revolutionary spirit.”<sup>90</sup>

The system of program countries is a stable form of administering aid involving long term mutual commitment between the donor and recipient country.<sup>91</sup> Once a program country was chosen, only something highly drastic could annul the decision and evoke a change.<sup>92</sup> According to Lennart Andersson, once an extensive foreign aid relation is established, it becomes difficult to alter. In our case, the financial aid constituted an important part of the Swedish foreign policy towards the recipient country Nicaragua. Through the financial aid the Swedish state could show its support for the new directions Nicaragua was taking. However, to withdraw or even lower aid once in progress is difficult and hard to motivate, and is very seldom done.<sup>93</sup> Lennart Wohlgemuth argues that “to withdraw aid once it is established is to make a dramatic political statement.”<sup>94</sup> This argument would imply that introducing a program aid relation is an investment of great political importance which makes it a stabilizing force. Both de Vylder, (Chief economist at the Research Division at SIDA in 1982-1985) and Halkjaer confirm that Nicaragua being a program country very much functioned as a stabilizer on the policy as a whole.<sup>95</sup> “In the case of Nicaragua it is obvious; the large and long term aid presupposes a stability in the foreign policy.”<sup>96</sup>

Our case suggests that the specific assets developed through the program aid relations may have further enhanced the stability of the foreign policy because of the expectations of support deriving from the established Swedish-Nicaraguan aid

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<sup>89</sup> Schori, 1985: 60.

<sup>90</sup> Asplund, interview, 2006-12-08 (own translation).

<sup>91</sup> Andersson, 1988: 89.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid: 78.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid: 89.

<sup>94</sup> Wohlgemuth, interview, 2006-12-07 (own translation).

<sup>95</sup> De Vylder, interview, 2006- 12-20.

<sup>96</sup> Halkjaer, interview, 2006-12-20 (own translation).

relations. In other words, this sort of engagement creates certain automation or “path dependence”, of the foreign policy towards the aid receiving country which in turns stabilizes it.

### 4.3 Domestic politics as a stabilizer

In relation to the concept of domestic institutionalization our empirical material shows how the fundamental ideas about supporting the LDCs gradually became institutionalized in the Social Democratic, and Swedish, foreign policy after 1962 when SIDA was established.<sup>97</sup> The same motives were expressed as explaining the standpoints in for example Vietnam, Chile and Africa,<sup>98</sup> and support was given to groups struggling for democracy throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. As mentioned above, by constantly repeating an idea year after year and spreading the idea within the political system, an expectation that the idea will be implemented arises which leads to its institutionalization. The official declarations made by Palme throughout his years as party leader and prime minister can be seen as evidence for how these ideas became institutionalized. As discussed in chapter 3, parallels can be drawn between domestic and international institutionalization concerning expectations, consistency and the importance of ideas. The Swedish foreign policy had a certain character and a pattern was internationally and domestically expected to be followed.<sup>99</sup> Halkjaer describes the policy towards Nicaragua as “a very typical outcome of the Swedish international politics at the time – Vietnam, the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, Nicaragua...”<sup>100</sup> This further implies the impact of domestic institutionalization and enhances our understanding of the stability of the policy.

Salience, as explained in section 3.2, concerns the attention decision-makers pay to a policy. In our research we have found extensive confirmation that the support to Nicaragua was a question far from trivial during the years studied. In Schori’s *Orkanens öga* the revolution in Nicaragua is described as a historical breakthrough in Central America.<sup>101</sup> After years and years of oppressive dictatorships, the progressive social movements had revolted against the established regime. The process of supporting the reconstruction of the country, its independence and democratic development was a process that the Swedish Social Democrats gave much attention.<sup>102</sup> The policy on Nicaragua was also an issue that can be described as coalition-building since it united the left wing parties and the liberals creating a cleavage between them and the right wing.<sup>103</sup> It can therefore, we argue, be considered a salient policy within the political system.

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<sup>97</sup> Andersson, 1989: 33-34.

<sup>98</sup> Elgström, 1990: 144.

<sup>99</sup> See section 4.1.

<sup>100</sup> Halkjaer, 2006-12-20 (own translation).

<sup>101</sup> Schori, 1985: 55.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid: 60.

<sup>103</sup> DN, 1985-03-01.

Schori confirms that the widespread support and interest for the Sandinista revolution in the Swedish society influenced the 1979 election campaign and made the support of Nicaragua a salient issue.<sup>104</sup> Schori describes how he along with other members of the Socialist International went to Nicaragua only a few months after the change of government. When he returned to Sweden he had a list of pledges from the Sandinistas which he presented to the current minister of foreign affairs, the liberal Hans Blix, who was willing to initiate the governmental support to Nicaragua.<sup>105</sup> This further confirms the coalition-building nature of the issue and its rather high degree of salience.

To what extent did the other political parties support the policy on Nicaragua? On February 21 1985 Reagan made a statement about the US being willing to dismiss the Sandinista government.<sup>106</sup> This provoked strong criticism from Palme and the foreign minister at the time, Lennart Bodström. When the US confronted the criticism, spokesmen from the liberal parties (c and fp) defended Palme and said that they shared the respect for the principle of national sovereignty and that there was reason to criticize the US policy in Central America.<sup>107</sup> Only the conservatives (m) openly criticized the Social Democratic standpoints. Halkjaer describes the criticism from the right as very heavy and accentuates the many debates in the parliament and in newspapers that the policy on Nicaragua evoked.<sup>108</sup> Hence, even if there was no overall consensus behind the Swedish foreign policy on Nicaragua, the support definitely stretched over the party boundaries. This is further confirmed by Schori, who describes the support to Nicaragua as being about democratization and popular education, which was why it became an appealing issue for most parties.<sup>109</sup> The widespread support among the political parties must have served as a stabilizing factor of the policy.

How about the support within the Swedish public? The political and social interest for Latin America evolved after the Chilean coup d'état in 1973.<sup>110</sup> The many politically active Latin Americans, who fled the political persecution and migrated to Sweden, helped stress the issue of Nicaragua in Swedish society.<sup>111</sup> According to Halkjaer in a report from SIDA from 1989, the Swedish solidarity movement for Nicaragua had a unique character.<sup>112</sup> Even if Social Democrats dominated, the engagement was wider and the movement was not as linked to one particular party as the movements for Vietnam or Cuba were. People from different age groups were engaged and the interest was not solely dominated by students and intellectuals. According to Halkjaer, most of the work was done in trade unions, municipalities and at workplaces. Because of its professional nature, the movement was more than just an expression of solidarity and altruism.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

<sup>105</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

<sup>106</sup> DN, 1985-03-01.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Halkjaer, interview, 2006-12-20.

<sup>109</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

<sup>110</sup> Schori, 1992: 302.

<sup>111</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

<sup>112</sup> Halkjaer, 1989: 12.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Schori explains how the issue of Nicaragua was more accessible and easy to comprehend compared to other foreign political questions like for example the Middle Eastern conflicts. This, according to Schori, gave the solidarity movement for Nicaragua a special nature and resulted in extensive support.<sup>114</sup> According to Jernek, Palme advocated the relation between public opinion and responsible elected governments. “Criticism, debate and influencing public opinion (...) should be transferred to the international arena and result in an open argumentation between states.”<sup>115</sup>

Having this in mind, it is plausible to believe that the extensive solidarity movement that Halkjaer and Schori describe, and the widespread support for Nicaragua in the Swedish society, was acknowledged by the elite politicians and helped stabilize the policy. Schori underlines the argument in an interview by Per-Ulf Nilsson about the Swedish support for Nicaragua: “There is a network of social movements on a grass root level both amongst donors and receivers. Their mutual contact is of great importance.”<sup>116</sup> When we contacted Halkjaer she confirmed that the solidarity movement did help stabilize the policy: “I believe that it played a great role for the politics and the financial aid, the government could rely on it when storms came in from the right.”<sup>117</sup>

## 4.4 Ideas as stabilizers and personal struggles for solidarity

In order to examine the consistency and centrality of the fundamental ideas behind the policy towards Nicaragua, we would first and foremost like to identify their roots. The three main beliefs (or ideas) - national sovereignty, international solidarity and democratization - had a long tradition within the Swedish Social Democratic party. According to Jernek, Palme had role models like Woodrow Wilson and Hjalmar Branting and was inspired by Kant’s utopian world system and Grotius’ theories about how the respect for law and norms inhibits serious conflicts between states.<sup>118</sup> These ideas were thus not a creation of Palme’s as much as they were a part of a traditional Social Democratic set of ideas. In fact, Jernek emphasizes the fact that Palme was an important “idea carrier” more than “idea creator”.<sup>119</sup>

We can find evidence of consistency when studying how the fundamental core beliefs are related to the beliefs about how to achieve the goals of the policy. The Swedish standpoint was a conviction that the financial and political support that was directed to Nicaragua was the only way to defend the national sovereignty of

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<sup>114</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

<sup>115</sup> Jernek, 1987: 128 (own translation).

<sup>116</sup> Nilsson, P., 1989: 139 (own translation).

<sup>117</sup> Halkjaer, 2006-12-20 (own translation).

<sup>118</sup> Jernek, 1990: 128-129.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid: 123.

Nicaragua and help the country achieve the democratic goals, i.e. according to the set of beliefs the policy was thought to be the only way to achieve the goals. As we have shown in the former chapters, Sweden supported Nicaragua politically as a way to defend the country against US aggression and financially as a way to help establish democracy. This implies a consistency of the official ideas behind the policy, since the causal link between political and financial support and the ideas of democracy and national sovereignty was considered to be positive.

In accordance with the notion of centrality, the ideas of national sovereignty, international solidarity and democratization were all important aspects in many of the Swedish external relations. These ideas formed the basis of the policies on decolonization in Africa, the support to Afghanistan, the policies in Latin America as a whole and the support to Vietnam, just to mention a few. As discussed regarding the international level, the Swedish foreign policy had a special nature in accordance with LDCs: “During the entirety of his time as party leader, the years 1969-1986, Palme time after time returned to the idea of national sovereignty when the relations in the third world were discussed.”<sup>120</sup> Ideas about international solidarity are described by Ole Elgstöm as “having survived as a vital aspect within the workers’ movement’s belief system.”<sup>121</sup> This implies that the core beliefs in the policies towards the LDCs had been and continued to be consistent within the Social Democratic party. According to Jernek, Palme often stressed the continuity of the Social Democratic government’s acting within the foreign policy area.<sup>122</sup> Halkjaer’s description of the foreign policy on Nicaragua as “very typical” at the time (see section 4.3), highlights the centrality of the ideas behind the policy, which most probably had a stabilizing impact.

To relate to what we described in section 3.4 as characteristics of central actors, according to Halkjaer, there is no doubt that our case was influenced to a great extent by especially two individuals: the Prime Minister, Palme, and Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Schori. These two had in fact a decisive influence on making Nicaragua a program country in 1982.<sup>123</sup>

What made the policy on Nicaragua so important for these two? Palme’s interest and engagement in Latin America as a region started in 1948 when he visited his relatives in Mexico for a couple of months. In 1969, he travelled to Chile where he was invited to the home of Pablo Neruda. According to Palme’s wife, Lisbeth Palme, this journey made an unforgettable impression on Palme.<sup>124</sup> During his first period as Prime Minister he paid official visits to Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba. Palme was also the first European head of state to visit Nicaragua after the revolution.<sup>125</sup> His many travels have said to have contributed to Palme’s great interest in foreign policy in general and development in the LDCs in particular. In the research project *Olof Palme i sin tid*, it is described how “Palme internationally held a, for Swedish politicians, unique position. His

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<sup>120</sup> Ekengren, 2005: 182 (own translation).

<sup>121</sup> Elgström, 1990: 143 (own translation).

<sup>122</sup> Jernek, 1990: 123.

<sup>123</sup> Halkjaer, interview, 2006-12-20.

<sup>124</sup> Palme, L., 1987: 19.

<sup>125</sup> Palme, L., 1987: 19.

foreign policy standpoints were often recognized all over the world.”<sup>126</sup> Describing Palme’s profound knowledge on Latin America and his passion for the region, Schori stresses how: “frequently, Olof Palme emphasized our desire to contribute to the social and economic development in Latin America.”<sup>127</sup> In our interview with him he describes how “Palme was consistent as a person and therefore not an opportunistic politician. Because of his conviction and commitment, the support to Nicaragua was genuine, active and long term.”<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, he points out the importance of the characteristics of the central actors: “To have a good idea is only half the job. Then it must be put into practice.”<sup>129</sup>

Schori was active in SAP, the Socialist International, and was the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1982-1991. Schori had a personal engagement in Central America and has written several books and articles on the region. He was active in the organisation of the support to the Sandinistas before the revolution took place and had many personal connections and friends within the country and its neighbours. In fact, the Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega spent some time with Schori in Sweden already before the revolution.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, Schori was appointed secretary of The International Committee for the Defense of the Nicaraguan Revolution that was established within the Socialist International.<sup>131</sup> Schori, as well as many other Social Democrats, shared Palme’s core beliefs. National sovereignty, international solidarity and democratization are central in his texts on Nicaragua.<sup>132</sup> By travelling to Nicaragua and keeping up the informal as well as the formal relationships in the country, by being fluent in Spanish and by working as an important diplomat for these questions, Schori became a driving force in the Swedish policy towards Nicaragua.

We would like to argue that the fact that Palme and Schori were personally engaged in Nicaragua, that they had social networks in the region and with the Sandinistas, that they were fluent in Spanish and that they personally emphasized issues concerning Nicaragua and Latin America, must have had a stabilizing effect on the policy. To have two such central actors with a strong personal engagement in and social connection to the policy must have affected it to a certain extent.

The death of Palme in 1986 could, theoretically, be seen as a possible source of change of the type residual factor. How did this affect the policy and the ideas behind it? Although this is a hypothetical discussion, we argue that it is interesting to look at whether this event might have pressured the policy to change, and if not, how it remained stable even after the death of Palme.

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<sup>126</sup> Björk et al, 2001: 8 (own translation).

<sup>127</sup> Schori, 1987: 23 (own translation).

<sup>128</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31 (own translation).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. (own translation).

<sup>130</sup> P3, ”ABBA och den sandinistiska revolutionen.”

<sup>131</sup> Schori, 1985: 60.

<sup>132</sup> See Pierre Schori’s *Dokument Inifrån - Sverige och storpolitiken i omvälvningarnas tid* and *I Orkanens Öga – Om den kommande revolutionen i Centralamerika*.



Since we have acknowledged the importance of Palme's characteristics for the policy, one might argue that the policy would be destabilized when it lost its strongest advocate. Did not the change of prime minister as a result of Palme's death affect the stability of the policy? According to Schori, this was not the case. He argues that when Palme died, many years had passed since the relation with Nicaragua had been established and that it in 1986 was so stable that it was not affected by his death. Furthermore, he argues that in 1986 the policy on Nicaragua did not require the same active engagement as it did in the beginning and that at this point it had become a natural part of the foreign policy as a whole.<sup>133</sup>

One could argue that the consistency and centrality of the ideas behind the policy had a stabilizing impact at this stage. Because of Palme's role as an idea carrier, i.e. that the ideas had been institutionalized and that they were shared by many members of the Social Democratic party, the fact that he died did not destabilize the policy towards Nicaragua. The long tradition within the Social Democratic party, of the ideas that Palme advocated, suggests that the consistency of the ideas and the stability of the policy on Nicaragua was not altered by his death.

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<sup>133</sup> Schori, interview, 2006-12-31.

## 5 Conclusions

Before we summarize the conclusions drawn from our analysis, we will briefly evaluate the implications of our choice of theory, material and method.

Using Goldmann's theory on foreign policy stability has been an inspiring way to analyze foreign policy. The very notion of foreign policy stability, as it is described by Goldmann, contributes to an understanding of what decides the course of a state's foreign policy on a particular issue. In our research, we have acknowledged that the Swedish foreign policy towards the LDCs in general and Nicaragua in particular followed a certain pattern and was based on a set of ideas that can be considered consistent. To recognize that the policy towards Nicaragua formed part of a greater pattern enhances the understanding of the stability of the policy. Overall, to identify the character and basic nature of a state's foreign policy deepens the understanding of its relations with other states. To distinguish the different factors that stabilize a policy is to recognize the policy's most important foundations. This, in turn, helps us understand why a policy will be more or less sensitive to change. This has been an important insight that we have gained from applying the theory of foreign policy stability on our case. The greatest limitations we have encountered studying foreign policy stability are the difficulties in operationalizing the different stabilizers and measuring their degree of stabilizing impact. However, insights provided by using the theoretical framework of foreign policy stability and the notion of stabilizers can form the basis for understanding what motivates a state's foreign policy behaviour, what creates foreign policy patterns and what inhibits them from changing. Understanding foreign policy stability is to understand the forces of institutionalization. Many of the stabilizers in our framework, on both the international, administrative, political and cognitive level, can in fact be viewed as forces of institutionalization having an impact on policy.

Concerning the gathering of empirical data, the fact that almost twenty years has elapsed since the time we focus on in our research inarguably lead to problems getting in touch with the actors central to the policy. Nevertheless, we managed to consult several people who could contribute with insight and knowledge about the case. We consider this a great asset for our study. Among the interviews we carried out, we consider the ones with Schori and Halkjaer as the most informative and important.

In his book from 1988, Goldmann chose to apply his theory on a comparative cross-country study, while we decided to do a case study. Although the case study has its advantages, such as providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena of foreign policy stability and its causes, it also has certain limitations. The case study reduces the possibilities of making generalizing conclusions. Nevertheless, by focusing on one case and by interviewing actors in the process we claim to have discovered important factors that otherwise possibly could have been

disregarded. This was very much the case on the administrative level. Our communication with people from SIDA enhanced our understanding of the impact of specific assets and path dependence on our case. Overall, the choice of method has been satisfactory.

To relate to our research question – How can the stability of the Swedish foreign policy towards Nicaragua during 1979-1990 be explained? – we can conclude that the stability of the policy can be explained by using the framework of international, administrative, political and cognitive stabilizers. Each level of analysis has proved to have explanatory power for our case and it becomes clear that the Swedish policy towards Nicaragua 1979-1990 was resistant to change for many reasons. Some of the stabilizers may stand out as more plausible than others, but what we wish to emphasize is the multivariate nature of the policy's stability. To summarize the conclusions drawn from our analysis, we will below evaluate our results from each category of stabilizers.

As a result of our investigation, we can conclude that the international institutionalization and Sweden acting as a third party should be viewed as important stabilizers of the policy on Nicaragua, which confirms our hypothesis at this level. We have observed that the two stabilizers are closely linked in our case and that in fact the defense and advocacy of international law very much obliged Sweden to act as a third party. It stands clear that the Reagan doctrine and the change in American politics on Central America functioned as an important incentive for Sweden to balance against US aggression, which in turn stabilized the policy. Acknowledging the causality between the two stabilizers has deepened our understanding of the stabilizing impact on the policy at this level. The international level of analysis may be the most convincing part of the study because of its extensive explanatory power.

We argue that our modification of Goldmann's level of administrative stabilizers has served as a simplified but effective way to analyze the stabilizing impact of one part of the administration. Using the theory of path dependence has proved to have explanatory power for our case. That the development of specific assets can lead to path dependence in a relation between two states, we consider a form of institutionalization that should not be ignored in foreign policy analysis. Instead of studying the administration as a whole, we have merely studied a part of it, the administration of the aid relations. Since our hypothesis suggested that the aid relation and the way it was administrated (through program aid) had a stabilizing effect on the foreign policy towards Nicaragua as a whole, we considered it reasonable to focus on this part of the administration. The aid relation constituted a great part of the foreign policy towards Nicaragua and the aid was administrated in a very stable form, which included the development of important specific assets. This makes the assumption that the aid relations to some extent led to path dependence, and a stabilized policy, plausible. The fact that Halkjaer, the former director of the Latin America Department (RELA) of SIDA, confirms this hypothesis gives us further reason to believe that we are right. An interesting matter of future investigation would be to look deeper into the possible stabilizing relation between aid relations and foreign policy. One could for example undertake a cross country study based on our modified framework to investigate this.

Summarizing the chapter on political stabilizers we conclude that the domestic institutionalization, salience and support stabilized the policy. As mentioned in section 3.3 it is however difficult to distinguish between the domestic and the international aspects of institutionalization. This was something we experienced in our analysis. The fact that the Swedish foreign policy doctrine has its roots in the times of Branting and Hammarskjöld, with clear emphasis internationally on altruistic motives and sovereignty defense, creates expectations on the Swedish foreign policy towards small states exposed to superpower aggression. The revolution in Nicaragua raised expectations on the Swedish government from abroad as well as from within Sweden. The coalition building effect that the policy on Nicaragua had on the domestic politics and the attention it was ascribed by the central actors confirms the salience of the issue. The assumption that the solidarity movement and widespread support in the society helped stabilize the policy is confirmed by our primary sources. We recognize that the impact of public opinion on foreign policy is a widely discussed issue within the field of foreign policy analysis.<sup>134</sup> Yet, both Halkjaer and Schori stress the importance and unique character of the solidarity movement towards Nicaragua and they both give prominence to the fact that it had a stabilizing effect on the policy. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that the widespread support as well as the domestic institutionalization and salience of the issue acted as a stabilizer of the policy towards Nicaragua, which confirms our hypothesis.

Our conclusion on the cognitive level is that the consistency and centrality of the ideas behind the policy helped stabilize it to a wide extent. The main ideas behind the policy - national sovereignty, international solidarity, and democratization - had through the Social Democratic tradition been institutionalized in Swedish foreign policy towards LDCs. Perhaps, when we see how the consistency and centrality of the ideas form the very basis of the foreign policy on Nicaragua one could call the cognitive stabilizers the most significant in our study. Had the ideas not been institutionalized, internationally and domestically, and played such an important role in the Swedish foreign policy as a whole, the policy on Nicaragua would probably not have been as stable. Something should also be mentioned concerning Goldmann's lack of consideration of the individual in his framework. Regarding the stabilizing impact of what we describe as the characteristics of Palme and Schori we do not believe that the importance of individual actors should be totally disregarded in a theoretical framework of this kind. We believe that a policy can get thoroughly stabilized on the cognitive level only when the consistency and centrality of the main ideas behind the policy gets put into action by central actors with the appropriate characteristics. We consider this, together with our modification on the administrative level, as important contributions to the understanding of our case. And we believe that these perspectives should be considered when undertaking research on foreign policy stability.

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<sup>134</sup> See for example, Bjereld, Ulf - Demker, Marie (2000): "Foreign Policy as Battlefield: A study of National Interest and Party Motives." In *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2000, pp. 17-36.

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