

## **The Transition from Armed Opposition to Electoral Opposition in Central America**

Abstract: With the third wave of democratization having swept much of the world during the late twentieth century, many armed opposition groups disarmed and transformed themselves into political parties. In this paper, I explore the electoral performance of four Central American parties that have roots in armed opposition movements: Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador; Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit in Guatemala, and Democratic Unification Party in Honduras. I find that the movements that have encountered the greatest success during their revolutionary period have also found the greatest success in electoral competition (FSLN and FMLN) while the parties that trace their roots to relatively less successful armed opposition groups have struggled (URNG and PUD). Group level factors, with a focus on the number of combatants and popular support during the conflict, tend to provide a better explanation than institutional factors for the initial success of these groups as political parties.

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During the second half of the twentieth century, several groups took up arms against authoritarian regimes in Central America. Civil wars raged in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. While never experiencing full-fledged civil war, Honduras also experienced a high level of political violence. By the mid-1980s, a process of political liberalization had begun in each of these countries, a process many hoped would eventually culminate in more socially, economically, and politically equitable systems as well as an end to the ongoing violent political conflicts. By the early 1990s, most of the region's conflicts had begun to taper off, and by the late 1990s the region's major armed opposition groups had disarmed, demobilized, and begun a process of integration into the formal political system as political parties.

While Central America has proven an ideal region to conduct comparative analyses involving both the emergence of armed opposition groups and, to a lesser extent, their outcomes (LaFeber 1993; Anderson 1982; Goodwin 2001; Paige 1997; Baloyra-Herp 1983; Vilas 1988, 1995; Wickham-Crowley 1989, 1992; Arnson 1999; Wood 2000; 2003), there has been little comparative work concerning the ability of the former antagonists to adapt to the new political environment in the pursuit of their goals. This is an important topic because while there was great variation in the manner in which the civil conflicts ended, all resulted in the transformation of the former armed opposition groups into political parties (See Table 1). In Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) directed a broad-based coalition in the overthrow of a brutal regime before competing in the electoral process. In El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) negotiated a political settlement to the civil war before disarming, demobilizing, and taking part in competitive elections. In Guatemala,

the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) also secured a negotiated settlement ending its civil war prior to making the transition to political party. Finally, in Honduras, a number of relatively minor armed opposition groups were defeated by government forces, accepted amnesty, and subsequently formed the Democratic Unification Party (PUD). After almost forty years of revolutionary violence, the major armed opposition groups in Central America have all disarmed, demobilized, and competed in the formal political process as political parties.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In this article, I seek to answer two fundamental questions. First, to what extent have the former guerrilla groups in Central America been successful as political parties? While there are many ways in which we might measure success for new political parties, this paper is concerned with how successful these groups have been at capturing votes and seats in legislative and executive elections. In terms of their electoral performance in these elections, one can see the more successful armed opposition groups, the FSLN and FMLN, have also been the more successful political parties. At the same time, the less successful armed opposition groups, the URNG and PUD, have also been the less successful political parties.

The second question seeks to answer why the FSLN and FMLN have fared better than the URNG and PUD. In many ways, these armed opposition groups confront similar obstacles to those any new political party must confront. For example, new parties need to develop a nationwide organization, choose party leaders, select candidates for political office, collect signatures and set up party offices in a predetermined number of municipalities before receiving legal recognition. But political parties with roots as

armed opposition groups are not “new” organizations in the sense that they are starting from scratch. Most have long histories dating back years, if not decades. They developed a leadership and organizational structure conducive to fighting an irregular military campaign – a campaign requiring secrecy, clandestine operations, and vertical command structures. Some were quite strong militarily, counting on a significant number of armed combatants. Others may not have been as militarily proficient, but instead relied more heavily upon an extensive support network of non-combatants. Regardless of the size and military strength of the organizations, they are not necessarily prepared to compete in democratic elections. Each group, then, must transform itself from an insurgent organization designed to operate primarily in the military realm to one designed to compete primarily in the political realm. Consequently, the insurgent histories of these groups are likely to be at least as important to explaining their performance as political parties as issues we typically associate with new political parties.

In the following article, I provide a brief overview of these groups’ histories as armed insurgent groups and their more recent performance as political parties in legislative and executive elections. Then, I discuss how well institutional and group related factors (organizational strength and popular support) help explain the varied performance of the former armed opposition groups in Central America as they attempt the transition to political parties.

## **FROM ARMED OPPOSITON TO ELECTORAL OPPOSITION**

With the conclusion of the revolutionary period in Central America and the demobilization of the armed opposition, how might one evaluate whether these groups have been successful as political parties? On the one hand, some might argue that these groups have already failed simply by the fact that they have surrendered all hopes for the revolutionary transformation of society required to improve the lives of the region's impoverished masses. Each group's transformation into a political party and its acceptance of the general framework of liberal democratic politics is simply evidence of that failure. On the other hand, many authors have pointed out that the great majority of those that joined the revolutionary movements did so because the nonviolent electoral route to power had been denied through fraudulent elections, various exclusionary practices, and intense political and social repression (Goodwin 2001; McClintock 1998; Wood 2000, 2003). In many ways, then, the end of wide-scale political violence allows these groups the opportunity to participate in their country's political, economic and social decision-making processes – the goal that led them to take up arms in the first place. The manner in which each of these groups has chosen to participate is through the formation of political parties and competition in the electoral process. With that in mind, it is perfectly reasonable and quite appropriate to evaluate the performance of these groups in terms of their performance as new political parties.

Unfortunately, the literature on political parties has not produced a single, generally accepted measure of individual party success. This makes it difficult to systematically evaluate the performance of new political parties. Authors have approached the success of new political parties in terms of their ability to endure or persist over a number of elections, capture a certain percentage of the vote or legislative

seats, attain a certain level of institutionalization, and influence the design and implementation of policy. In presidential systems such as the ones in Central America, one might also measure the success of new parties at the municipal, legislative and presidential levels. With regards to evaluating the success of these groups here, I measure success based upon how well the party has performed in capturing votes and seats in legislative and executive elections. This is not to argue that the other measures of success are unimportant. I simply believe that a political party's ability to persist, attain a certain level of institutionalization, and consistently influence the design and implementation of government policy is best accomplished by a party successfully having its candidates attain political office through the electoral process.<sup>1</sup> This belief is supported by the fact that each of the revolutionary groups chose to become a political party and not some other type of pressure group. Therefore, in the following section, I provide a brief overview of each group's formation, insurgent history and electoral performance in legislative and presidential elections.

## **Nicaragua**

In 1961, the National Liberation Front was established in response to years of repressive rule by the Somoza family and after having been inspired by the success of the Cuban Revolution a few years earlier. In 1963, the movement renamed itself the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) drawing upon the image and inspiration of historic Nicaraguan leader Augusto Sandino. For the next fifteen years, the FSLN performed relatively poorly, suffering a series of military defeats and internal splits that almost destroyed the organization. In late 1975 the group officially split into three

competing factions – Proletarian Tendency, Insurreccional Tendency, Protracted People’s War Tendency. Each tendency differed in how best to achieve revolutionary success, and to a certain extent, on how society should be constructed following the overthrow of the regime. As the political violence in Nicaragua escalated during the 1970s, the different tendencies reunited in March 1979 to pursue the single goal all could agree upon – the overthrow of the regime. In addition, some have argued that the unification of the three groups also came about because of their realization that long-term revolutionary success “could not be assured on the basis of support from a single social class or simply by means of tactical alliances and military adventurism” (Dunkerley 1988, 242). In July of that year, the FSLN helped lead a broad based coalition of students, labor unions, peasants, and economic elites in forcing the removal of the last of the Somoza family rulers, Anastasio Somoza Debayle.

By early 1980 the FSLN emerged as the dominant force within the new government. Initially, the FSLN made public declarations of support for political pluralism, neutrality in the superpower conflict, a nonaligned foreign policy, and a mixed economy (Robinson and Norsworthy 1985). The declarations were meant to defuse domestic and international pressures from both the left and right of the Sandinistas and to maintain and expand the national unity which was instrumental in the fall of the previous regime. Early on, the Sandinistas announced their intention of postponing national elections until 1985. The Sandinistas eventually moved these elections up to November 1984 in an attempt to increase their legitimacy both domestically and, more importantly, internationally. The Sandinistas had grown more concerned about a possible escalation

of U.S. involvement in the country beyond “indirect” support for the Contras to more overt forms of intervention, particularly following the US invasion of Grenada in 1983.

Since the resumption of elections in Nicaragua in 1984, the FSLN has amassed the longest experience of electoral competition among the region’s armed opposition groups. Following these elections, the Sandinistas also competed in the 1990, 1996 and 2001 legislative and executive elections. Their performance in each election is detailed in Tables 2 and 3.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

In 1984, the FSLN and a number of opposition political parties competed in both presidential and National Assembly elections, with the Sandinistas winning an unsurprising victory. At the presidential level, the FSLN candidate, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, easily defeated candidates from six other political parties with 63% of the national vote. In the elections for the National Assembly, the FSLN won just shy of two-thirds of the total seats (sixty-one out of ninety-six) with 62% of the vote, running on a platform stressing the FSLN role as the “vanguard of the revolution” (IHRLG and WOLA 1984). Though certain political parties boycotted the elections to protest what they considered an unfair advantage of the FSLN, many in the international community believed the elections to be reasonably free and fair (Socialist International, Washington Office on Latin America, the International Human Rights Law Group), particularly when compared to elections conducted under similar or worse conditions in neighboring countries.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1990, Nicaragua again held legislative and presidential elections. Though some pre-election polls showed the Sandinistas vulnerable, their actual defeat in the presidential election was rather unexpected. After winning sixty-one seats in the 1984 elections, the FSLN only managed to retain thirty-nine seats in the new ninety-two seat National Assembly. Though the opposition's fragmentation in 1984 was probably not the primary reason for the opposition's failure, as the Sandinistas held widespread popular support at that time, in 1990 the opposition and the United States worked to avoid the same mistake. The United States convinced the fourteen opposition political parties comprising the National Opposition Union to rally around the candidacy of a single candidate for the presidency, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. In addition to a unified opposition candidate, other factors working against the Sandinistas include the poor state of the economy (caused by both Sandinista mismanagement and the escalating costs of fighting an internal insurgency trained and funded by the United States) and the belief that if the Sandinistas were removed from office through elections, the US would no longer need to support the Contra insurgency. Both factors provided strong incentives for voters to throw their support behind the opposition's candidate. In the end, the FSLN candidate, Daniel Ortega, secured 41% of the vote to Chamorro's 55%. So came to a close the only period of executive control by a Central American revolutionary group.

After the surprising Sandinista electoral defeat in 1990, differences of opinion within the party intensified as the Sandinistas had to confront their rejection at the ballot box and determine how they could recapture the presidency and momentum moving forward. In late 1993, two "currents" formed within the FSLN divided over such issues as "Ortega's leadership style, the violent tactics used by Sandinista organizations, and

unresolved debates over party structure and program” (Butler et al. 1996: 31). Following attempts to reform the party from within, “For a Sandinismo of the Majorities” formally broke from the FSLN and formed its own political party, the Movement for the Renovation of Sandinismo, in January 1995. The FSLN then entered the first post-war elections, and third overall, in October 1996 somewhat weakened over its inability to resolve its internal differences amicably. For the third consecutive election, the FSLN chose Daniel Ortega as its candidate, and for the second consecutive election, the FSLN finished second. On election day, Ortega lost to the former mayor of Managua and candidate of the Liberal Alliance, Arnaldo Alemán Lacayo, 51% to 38%. Although capturing less on an absolute basis, Ortega lost by roughly the same percentage as he did in 1990. At the legislative level, the FSLN won thirty-five seats with 37% of the total votes.<sup>3</sup>

In January 2000, Alemán and Ortega completed a pact that would divide power between their two parties, provide a legal defense for the two leaders against prosecution for prior or current wrongdoing, and enact a series of electoral “reforms” that would hinder the formation and success of new political parties. It is in this context that the fourth national elections since the fall of Somoza occurred in November 2001. In the presidential elections, Daniel Ortega lost with 42% of the national vote to Alemán’s handpicked successor as the candidate for the Constitutional Liberal Party, Enrique Bolaños Geyer, who received 56%. In legislative elections, the FSLN won just under half the seats (forty-three out of ninety-two) with just over 42% of the votes.

While the FSLN has not been able to recapture the presidency since losing office in 1990, it remains one of the two strongest electoral forces in Nicaragua and the only

revolutionary group in Central America to have served in both government and opposition roles. In terms of its electoral performance, the FSLN has done quite well. In four legislative and presidential elections, the FSLN has averaged 47.5% and 46% of the vote respectively at each level. The changes to the electoral rules through the pact in 2000 make it highly likely that the FSLN will continue as one of the two most important political parties in Nicaragua for the foreseeable future. In the next section, we turn to a discussion of another former armed opposition group that has managed to become one of the two strongest political parties in the political system in which it competes, the FMLN.

## **El Salvador**

In El Salvador armed opposition to the military regime emerged in the rural areas of the country as the 1970s progressed, but this radical alternative was overshadowed by moderate, nonviolent opposition efforts in the form of electoral contestation, strikes, and protest marches. At the time, most Salvadorans believed change was necessary, but held out hope that change could occur without resorting to revolutionary violence. As political and social mobilization increased over the course of the decade following fraudulent elections in 1972 and 1977, the Salvadoran military and death squads associated with the country's wealthiest and most powerful families responded to this mobilization with even higher levels of repression. The denial of political and social change through elections and other less confrontational collective action led to increasing numbers of Salvadorans willing to support a socialist revolution as they saw "no other way out" (Goodwin, 2001). In May 1980, Salvadoran guerrilla groups formally agreed to coordinate their activities through the Unified Revolutionary Directorate and in October,

the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) was formed. The FMLN was comprised of five distinct guerrilla groups: the Popular Forces of Liberation – Farabundo Martí (FPL), People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), Revolutionary Party of the Workers of Central America (PRTC), and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL). Through different processes and at different speeds, all had become convinced that violent change was necessary. Initial hopes for a popular insurrection similar to the recent experience of the FSLN in Nicaragua were overly optimistic and the FMLN’s January 1981 “final offensive” failed to achieve a general insurrection and overthrow of the government.

For the next ten years, the FMLN battled the government of El Salvador in a bloody civil war during the course of which over 75,000 Salvadorans died. In the late 1980s, several domestic and international conditions coalesced, proving favorable to a negotiated settlement to the conflict. On January 16, 1992, the FMLN and the government of El Salvador formally resolved their military conflict at a ceremony at Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City. While these Chapultepec Peace Accords addressed social, economic, military, police, and political reforms, one of their most enduring legacies has been to facilitate the transformation of the FMLN into a political party. On December 14, 1992, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal officially inscribed the FMLN as a legal political party enabling it to compete for the first time in the 1994 “elections of the century.” As seen in Tables 2 and 3, the FMLN has competed in a number of elections for the Legislative Assembly (1994, 1997, 2000 and 2003) and presidency (1994, 1999 and 2004) since the conclusion of the war.

In the 1994 “elections of the century,” the FMLN captured 22% of the national vote. This translated into twenty-one of the National Assembly’s eighty-four seats and transformed the FMLN into the country’s second largest political party. At the same time, the incumbent party and main adversary of the FMLN, the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), won thirty-nine seats in the Assembly. After a decade of war, this electoral performance propelled the FMLN into a solid legislative position through which to pursue its political program in the postwar period. At the presidential level, the FMLN entered into a coalition with the center-left Democratic Convergence (CD) party. The CD consisted of many members of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, a political ally of the FMLN during most of the war. In the elections, neither the FMLN-CD candidate, Rubén Zamora, nor the ARENA candidate, Armando Calderon Sol, surpassed the fifty percent threshold required for a first round victory. This forced a runoff election where Zamora, after attaining 25% in the first round, captured 32% in losing to Calderon Sol.

Three years later in the 1997 elections, the FMLN captured twenty-seven seats, which translated into roughly one-third of all assembly seats. Though the FMLN “only” captured six more legislative seats in 1997 than 1994, the results should not be underestimated. During the 1994-1997 legislative session, seven deputies broke ranks with the party and reduced the FMLN’s number of deputies to fourteen.<sup>4</sup> The 1997 elections saw the FMLN not only survive the loss of a number of its historic leaders and the airing of much of the party’s dirty laundry from the war, but almost double its actual deputies from fourteen to twenty-seven in becoming the second largest party in El Salvador’s Legislative Assembly.

During the process of choosing its candidate for the 1999 presidential election, the FMLN again presented itself as a divided party unable to manage its internal differences and poorly prepared to resolve the country's problems. After a tainted primary process, Facundo Guardado captured fewer than 30% of the vote for the FMLN in the national election. Though Guardado's total votes surpassed those captured by Zamora in 1994, the election was a major setback for the FMLN as it was unable to capitalize upon its strong showing in the 1997 mid-term elections. In addition, unlike 1994, the FMLN failed to force a second round of voting as the ARENA candidate, Francisco Flores, attained over 50% of the vote.

In 2000, the FMLN rebounded from its poor showing in the previous year's presidential elections. For the third consecutive legislative election, the FMLN increased both its vote and seat share in winning a plurality of seats with thirty-one. The FMLN was followed closely by ARENA, which captured only twenty-nine seats despite having won a slightly higher share of the total national vote relative to the FMLN (36% to 35%). These elections were a remarkable accomplishment in the history of the FMLN, as for the first time and in only its third attempt, the FMLN became the largest party in the country's unicameral legislature. The FMLN continued its legislative success in the most recent legislative elections of March 2003. The FMLN retained the same number of deputies (thirty-one) and increased its lead over ARENA from two to five seats. The success of the FMLN in the election was somewhat offset by the fact that its percentage of the total vote declined by more than 2%.

The FMLN was poised to mount a serious challenge in the March 2004 presidential elections after a strong showing in the 2003 legislative and municipal

elections. Similar to 1999 when the FMLN selected the former *comandante* Facundo Guardado, the FMLN chose another former *comandante*, Schafik Handal as its candidate. Unfortunately for the FMLN, Handal's candidacy was not well received according to national public opinions polls prior to the elections. As in 1999, the FMLN was criticized for selecting a candidate directly tied to its revolutionary period and not a candidate with widespread support amongst the general voting population. The campaign was a particularly intense and dirty one, dominated in the print and electronic media with images and references to Handal's role in the violence of the 1980s and veiled threats from US functionaries as to the potential repercussions of an FMLN victory. The continued and obvious financial advantage of the incumbent party in painting the country red, white and blue (the tricolors of ARENA) most likely was another decisive fact in the campaign. Though many had predicted that no candidate would receive a majority in the first round and that a runoff would be needed, Elías Antonio Saca of ARENA soundly defeated Handal in the first round with 57% to Handal's 36% of the vote.

Twelve years after the signing of the Peace Accords, the FMLN performance at the executive level has been decidedly mixed. On the positive side, in three presidential elections, the FMLN has increased its vote totals from just over three hundred thousand in the first round of the 1994 election to over eight hundred thousand in 2004. The FMLN has also successfully increased its share of the national vote from 25% to 29% to 36%, a significant achievement. These performances have solidified the FMLN as the primary alternative to the governing ARENA party, a success experienced by few former insurgent groups. On the negative side, after forcing a second round in the 1994 elections while in coalition with other opposition groups, the FMLN failed to make it to a second

round in either 1999 or 2004. While the FMLN vote total and share of the national vote have indeed increased since 1994, the party has been defeated by over 20% in each presidential election. And in the most recent election, while polls indicated that a majority of the population wanted an alternative to ARENA, the FMLN could not convince the majority that they were the alternative. At the legislative level, the success of the FMLN is more clear-cut. After securing the second most seats in the 1994 legislature, the FMLN continued to improve and it is the largest party in the country's legislature today.

While the FSLN and FMLN have performed very well both as insurgent groups and political parties, we now turn to two organizations that have had more challenging experiences.

## **Guatemala**

Guatemala's civil war was both the longest and bloodiest of the Central American conflicts. From 1960 until 1996 an estimated 200,000 Guatemalans, mostly indigenous Mayans, were killed or "disappeared." Like the guerrillas in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the Guatemalan guerrilla groups fought independently for several years before Cuban prodding encouraged their unification. In February 1982, the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), and the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT) formed the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG). Over the next decade, the guerrillas were weakened by a series of military defeats and assassinations, the apparent failure of Marxism-Leninism as a viable alternative to the liberal-democratic order, and their failure to develop a broad

based opposition to the military, and then civil-military, regimes. After several years of negotiations, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) and the government of Alvaro Arzú signed the Firm and Lasting Agreement in December 1996 bringing an end to thirty-six years of civil war. The guerrilla groups that formed the URNG in 1982 officially began the legal process of becoming a political party fifteen years later in June of 1997. The URNG received its formal inscription as a political party in December 1998 and began preparations for the following year's elections.

In 1999, the URNG prepared to form part of the New Nation Alliance (ANN) along with the Democratic Front for a New Guatemala (FDNG), the Democratic Leftist Union and the Authentic Integral Development Party for legislative and presidential elections. The alliance would have allowed the URNG and the Guatemalan left to capitalize on the previous electoral success of the FDNG which had elected six deputies to the Congress in 1995. But the leftist coalition fractured when the FDNG withdrew from the alliance in the midst of the 1999 campaign after complaining that the other members of the ANN were engaged in “discriminatory and undemocratic political maneuvering” (Holiday 2000, 82). In the presidential election, the ANN candidate, Álvaro Colom Caballeros, won just over 12% of the vote and finished in third place, well behind the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) and the National Advancement Party (PAN).

In the congressional elections, the URNG as part of the ANN won nine congressional seats. This accounted for 8% of the congress' total of 113 seats. For many new political parties, 8% of the seats would be quite an accomplishment. According to Rodrigo Asturias, the URNG was indeed pleased with the results given the difficulties the

organization confronted in competing as a political party for the first time.<sup>5</sup> But given that the majority party led by former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt (FRG) captured sixty-three seats (56%) and the second most successful party (PAN) captured thirty-seven seats (33%), some remained more pessimistic about the URNG's electoral results. David Holiday (2002, 82) argues that the outcome of the elections “nevertheless essentially translated its military defeat into political defeat.”

Like the FMLN, the URNG presented one of its historic leaders as its presidential candidate in its second attempt at the presidency after choosing an individual loosely tied to the insurgency in its first attempt. In November 2003, the URNG selected Rodrigo Asturias (nom de guerre Gaspar Ilom), the son of Nobel Literature Laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias. Asturias might have been the URNG candidate in the 1999 elections had his group, ORPA, not been implicated in a kidnapping scheme during the final stages of the peace negotiations. In the eyes of the electorate, this undermined his commitment and that of the party to the peace process and democracy.<sup>6</sup> After a disappointing campaign, Asturias finished in sixth place, capturing less than 3% of the national vote. As the URNG's performance dropped from 12% to 3%, so too its vote total dropped by over 200,000, leaving it with fewer than 70,000 votes.

The elections for the country's legislature in 2003 were similarly disappointing for the URNG. In November, the URNG captured 4% percent of the vote for the legislature and less than 3% for the presidency. In the congressional elections, the URNG only managed to capture two seats and dropped into a tie for seventh. The URNG performance was considerably worse than simply capturing fewer seats relative to 1999,

as the total number of seats available had increased from 113 to 158 in the intervening years.

On the one hand, the 1999 electoral results were poor for an organization that (1) could trace its roots back nearly forty years, (2) seventeen years as the URNG, (3) at one time had counted on the support of several hundred thousand Guatemalans, and (4) had been propelled into the national spotlight during several years of negotiations involving the United Nations leading up to the signing of the peace accords. On the other hand, the URNG as part of the ANN attained roughly 10% of the vote for the legislature and presidency. Ten percent is very good for a new political party without any previous electoral experience. The electoral results in 2003 were disappointing, though, and require the URNG to reevaluate its role and future in the Guatemalan political process if it is not already too late. The next elections are scheduled for 2008, and it is unclear whether the URNG will be able to reverse its downward trend and become a significant, or even minor, player in Guatemalan politics.

## **Honduras**

Though Honduras did not suffer political upheaval to the extent of Guatemala, Nicaragua or El Salvador, armed opposition groups did engage in sporadic guerrilla activity from the early 1960s until the early 1990s. At its height, the Morazán Front for the Liberation of Honduras (FMLH or FMLNH) counted on the support of three hundred combatants maximum and engaged in minor actions in the mid-1970s before increasing activities beginning in 1979 (Booth and Walker 1999; Ruhl 2000). Another guerrilla group, the Popular Movement of Liberation “Cinchoneros”(MPLC), was founded in 1980

after members of the Communist Party of Honduras abandoned the “reformist approach” to political change (Gross 1995). The third major Honduran revolutionary group was that of the Popular Revolutionary Forces Lorenzo Zelaya (FPR-LZ). Like the MPLC, the FPR-LZ was also founded in 1980. Individually, none of the groups were very powerful nor did any of them count on the support of a significant number of combatants. In 1983, these three groups (MPLC, FPR-LZ and FMLNH) joined with two other organizations (the Communist Party of Honduras and the Central American Workers’ Revolutionary Party of Honduras) to form the National Directorate of Unity (DNU). This action is similar to the attempted coordinated activities undertaken by the other Central American guerrilla groups. By most accounts, though, it does not appear that the insurgents undertook any significant joint action (Gross 1995; Booth and Walker 1999). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was obvious that armed opposition to the Honduran government was not likely to accomplish regime change. In May 1990, the FMLNH announced its intention to abandon armed struggle, yet it remained somewhat active as of late 1991 (Gross 1995).

In 1991, the Honduran government announced an amnesty program for political prisoners and guerrillas in exile. As a result, many former guerrillas agreed to abandon what remained of the armed struggle and coalesce into a new political party. The former guerrillas hoped that what they could not achieve through violence, they could achieve through the ballot box (Booth and Walker 1999: 137). In January 1994, the Patriotic Renovation Party (PRP), the Revolutionary Honduran Party (PRH), the Party for the Transformation of Honduras (PTH), and the Morazanist Liberation Party attained legal recognition as the Democratic Unification Party (PUD) and began preparing for national

elections. Given that these groups had been militarily defeated and the two major parties had averaged 95% percent of the vote in the previous four legislative elections, expectations prior to the 1997 elections were not very high. However, the PUD did hope to “awaken enthusiasm among the grassroots sectors that have been seeking solutions to communal, national and regional problems for a long time and are now overcoming the old bipartism tendencies” (Envío 1997).

The PUD selected Matías Funes, former member of the Patriotic Committee Francisco Morazán and founder of the Patriotic Renovation Party, as its presidential candidate. In November, Funes won just over 1% of the national vote garnering more than one percent in six of eighteen departments. In the congressional elections, the PUD received just over 2% of the national vote and successfully captured one seat from FCO Morazan in the congress even though it captured only 3% of the votes in Morazan. Though the PUD fared better in Colon (12.7%), La Paz (5.9%) and Santa Barbara (3.6%) than it did in Morazan (3%), it did not do well enough to capture any additional seats.

In 2001, the PUD again chose Funes as its candidate for president. Like 1997, Funes captured slightly more than one percent of the vote. Where the PUD did make inroads was at the congressional level. In these elections, the PUD improved significantly from its performance in 1997, increasing its share of the national vote from 2.3% to 4.5%. While its vote share nearly doubled, its congressional seats quintupled from one to five, leaving it as the third largest party in congress. The PUD improved significantly in 2001, but still does not pose an immediate threat to replace one of the two traditionally dominant Honduran parties. In the 2001 elections, the National Party captured 61 seats and Liberal Party 55 seats. The twelve seats held by the remaining

political parties, including the PUD with five, have placed these smaller parties in a strategically important position and might improve their chances in future elections. Given that the PUD has only contested two elections and its share increased dramatically from the first to the second contest, it would seem inappropriate to dismiss the PUD as a failure at this moment.

## **Discussion**

In a sense, the electoral showings of these four armed opposition groups are not terribly surprising. The initial electoral success of these groups is largely consistent with their performance as armed opposition groups. The militarily victorious FSLN is the only group to win the presidency and is still one of the two largest parties in Nicaragua today. The FMLN was one of the strongest guerrilla groups in Latin American during the 1980s and forced the government into accepting a negotiated settlement to the war. In the post-war era, the FMLN immediately became the second largest party in the country's legislature and the party best positioned to defeat the incumbent ARENA party in elections for the presidency, the position ARENA has held since 1989. In Guatemala, though less powerful militarily than the FMLN in El Salvador, the URNG also won a negotiated settlement to that country's conflict. In its first electoral competition, the URNG placed third with roughly 10% of the national vote. Finally in Honduras, the armed groups comprising the PUD were militarily defeated; this was the least successful insurgency in the region. As a political party, the PUD barely surpassed 1% of the vote in both the 1997 legislative and presidential elections. We should be careful not to give too much explanatory power to wartime factors, though. It appears unlikely that the

military success of the organizations should be the only variable in explaining each group's electoral performance. These organizations trained and prepared for war, not the electoral competition that came with the post-war period.<sup>7</sup> As a result, we must now consider both military and political factors that might help account for postwar performance.

### **EXPLAINING POLITICAL PARTY SUCCESS**

Why have the FSLN and FMLN fared rather well as political parties while the URNG and the PUD have tended to struggle? With regard to explaining the electoral performance of these new parties, there are a number of avenues to pursue. As mentioned earlier, these groups must confront similar challenges as do all new political parties. Often, one of the biggest challenges to the emergence and success of new political parties involves the rules of the game under which electoral competition takes place. It is for this reason that Matthew Shugart (1992) identifies electoral rules and electoral reforms as key concerns affecting whether a guerrilla group will accept a political settlement to its civil war and, subsequently, whether it is likely to become a relevant party in the postwar political system. Certain electoral and institutional arrangements are expected to favor the success of new political parties. Specifically, we should expect that new political parties would perform better in elections for the presidency where majority runoff is used rather than plurality voting. Both Shugart and Carey (1992) and Mark Jones (1994) find support for the contention that plurality voting for the presidency tends to depress the number of parties, whereas majority voting

typically leads to greater multipartism. This is not necessarily to argue that new parties will be more successful in systems employing plurality voting rather than majority voting; plurality electoral rules for the presidency tend to reduce the number of effective parties closer to two, whereas operating under majority runoff rules tends to allow for a greater number of parties to coexist.

At the legislative level, we also have a number of expectations concerning how the electoral rules are to affect these new political parties. It is expected that new political parties are more likely to emerge and succeed where candidates are elected via proportional representation rather than single member district voting (Duverger 1961; Rae 1969; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994). Single member district voting tends to create a two-party system by overrepresenting the two largest parties and making it more difficult for third party challengers to compete effectively. Voters also tend to vote for those parties that have a clear chance at winning, at the same time that political leaders gravitate towards those parties that they believe have the best chance at winning. Typically, this makes it much more difficult for new parties to break into and succeed in political systems employing single member district voting. On the other hand, political systems employing some form of proportional representation tend to have the goal of preventing the overrepresentation and the underrepresentation of political parties. Therefore, a new political party that captures a small percentage of the vote is more likely to succeed in a system employing proportional representation than a party with similar results competing in elections using single member district voting.

In addition to the electoral rules of the game, the size of the insurgent organization and the popular support it maintained during the conflict are factors likely to

impact their performance in elections. In terms of the organizations, we would expect that insurgent groups with greater numbers of militants will be more successful as political parties than those with fewer militants. New political parties require the support of a number of full-time campaign and office staff that can commit to the building of the new electoral vehicle. These insurgent groups should be at an advantage relative to other groups attempting to build a new political party in that they already have mobilized a committed group of followers. We would also expect that armed opposition groups that enjoy greater popular support during their insurgent phases will be more successful as political parties than those that enjoyed little or no popular support. In an article on how the process of democratization is likely to affect revolutionary movements, Jeffrey Ryan (1994, 41) argues that “the construction of a broad-based coalition extending beyond the core of the revolutionary movement itself” is likely to be the key determinant of whether and how the revolutionaries survive the onset of democratization. Revolutionary organizations that have successfully cultivated a broad-based coalition prior to the onset of democratization are likely to attain a negotiated settlement whereas organizations that have not developed a broad-based coalition prior to democratization are likely to face a choice of either surrender or destruction. In a similar vein, we would expect the development of a broad-based coalition to also contribute to the success of the group as a political party in the post-war period. The existence of a broad based coalition will provide the new political party with a pool of potential voters.

To summarize, several institutional factors related to the political system appear likely to influence the postwar success of new political parties based on insurgent groups. A new political party is more likely to succeed under presidential systems where majority

runoff electoral rules are utilized rather than plurality electoral rules. A new political party is also more likely to succeed when the legislature is elected via proportional representation rather than single member district voting. In addition, a new political party is more likely to succeed if it counted on a large number of combatants and popular support during its history as an insurgent group.

In the remainder of this section, I explore to what extent institutional variables, the size of the insurgent organization and the general level of popular support cultivated by the organization during the conflict help us to understand their performance as political parties.

### **Evaluating the Impact of Institutional Factors**

Although there do exist a number of differences between the political systems and electoral rules among the four countries, the similarities generally outweigh the differences. The major similarity is that at the executive level each system is presidential. Whereas we might expect a new political party to have a higher likelihood of succeeding in a parliamentary system versus a presidential system, all four parties have had to compete under similar institutional arrangements. In terms of the rules for electing the president, though, there are a number of differences. El Salvador and Guatemala employ majority runoff electoral rules for the presidency whereby if no candidate receives 50% of the vote plus one, a runoff is held several weeks later between the two candidates with the highest votes in the first round. In El Salvador, the FMLN successfully advanced to a second round in 1994, but since then, the presidency has been determined in the first round of voting. In Guatemala, the URNG has not played a direct role in the second

round of the elections in either 1999 or 2004. It is possible that without the 12% received by the URNG in 1999, one of the two largest parties might have secured a first round victory instead of advancing to a runoff. The ability of the URNG to influence the electoral outcome in 1999 should have elevated the party to a more prominent position in Guatemalan politics and improved its standing for the 2003 elections. Instead, during the inter-election period, the URNG came under criticism both from within the party and its supporters for its close relationship to the governing party, the FRG. So even with the relatively favorable electoral rules and performance in its first electoral competition, the URNG failed to take advantage of the situation.

During the 1980s, elections for the Nicaraguan presidency were conducted via plurality formula, although the winning candidate in both elections conducted under these rules received well over 50%. In 1995, Nicaragua adopted the use of a majority runoff formula similar to that used in Guatemala and El Salvador, although the threshold for winning in the first round was lower at 45%. As a result of the 2000 pact between Alemán and Ortega, the threshold was reduced again to 40%.<sup>8</sup> In the four presidential elections since Somoza's overthrow, each one has been decided in the first round. While the threshold required for a first round victory has been reduced over the years, this fact has not had a significant effect as the winning candidate has captured over 50% each time. Since the return of elections to Honduras in 1982, a simple plurality formula has been used in electing the president. The simple plurality formula has worked against the PUD. After the PUD's first competition in Honduran presidential elections, voters realized that they cast "wasted votes" for the party. The PUD captured one percent in 1997 and 2001, at the same time that its support in legislative elections increased from

two to five percent; it seems likely that this higher proportion of voters would support the PUD in presidential elections if their vote would somehow influence a second round. Unfortunately for the PUD, the plurality electoral rules will likely hinder its growth for the foreseeable future.

Previously, I hypothesized that a new political party is more likely to succeed competing in a presidential system under majority runoff electoral rules rather than plurality electoral rules. The results of the impact of presidential electoral rules on the four cases is somewhat mixed. In Central America, the FMLN and URNG both compete under majority runoff electoral rules and the PUD under simple plurality while the FSLN has competed under both plurality and majority runoff electoral rules. The FSLN consistently achieved over 30% of the vote under both types of rules and seem to have been unaffected by the change. The FMLN has performed relatively well under majority runoff even advancing to the second round in the 1994 elections. While operating under the same electoral rules in Guatemala in 1999 and 2003, the URNG could not repeat its third place performance in its second attempt falling into a tie for seventh. Finally, the PUD has obviously struggled under the simple plurality presidential electoral rules in Honduras. The two largest Honduran parties consistently receive over 85% of the vote making it extremely difficult for the PUD and other small political parties from influencing the outcome of the presidential elections.

At the legislative level, all countries similarly possess a single legislative chamber elected using some form of proportional representation. Guatemala and El Salvador combine two-tiered district voting. In El Salvador, voters cast a single ballot for the party of their choice; this single ballot is then applied to candidate lists at both the district and

national levels. In Guatemala, voters cast separate ballots for each level. In Nicaragua, the rules for electing the legislature have changed a number of times since the first elections in 1984. From 1984-1990, Nicaragua maintained a two-tiered district system where voters cast a single ballot for both district-level and national-level lists. In the 1990 elections, Nicaragua utilized single-tier districting before moving to a somewhat more complicated electoral formula from the 1995 elections until the present. Finally, Honduras operates under single-tier districting. Historically, Hondurans voted a single ballot that would cover the executive, legislative and mayoral contests. A recent change in the electoral law now permits voters to cast their ballots for the presidency, the Congress and the mayor independently of each other. This electoral reform might help the PUD and other small Honduran parties build upon their recent success as Hondurans become more accustomed to the new form of voting. It would appear that this reform paid immediate dividends for the PUD as its legislative vote increased from just over 1% in 1997 to over 4% in 2001. This increase occurred at the same time that its vote for the presidency remained at 1%.

We expected that a new political party was more likely to be successful in legislative elections under proportional representation rather than single member district electoral rules. All four political parties compete under favorable proportional representation electoral rules. It does not appear then that unfavorable electoral rules (operating under single member district voting) have hindered the performance of these new political parties. The most serious obstacle related to the success of any of the four groups would appear to involve the PUD in Honduras, though, that has recently changed in its favor. Historically, Honduran voters were required to vote for a single party for all

elected positions. Voters could not split their vote for one party at the presidential level and another party at the legislative level. This characteristic of the Honduran system strengthened the two major parties and seriously hindered the development of third party alternatives. Now that the electoral rules have changed making it more favorable to new political parties, the PUD and other small political parties might develop into more serious electoral competitors.

In addition to institutional factors, we also expect that some new political parties with roots as insurgent groups will be better prepared for the challenges of electoral competition than others. In the following section, I discuss to what extent the size of the organization and the popular support on which it would draw during the conflict help explain the performance of these new political parties.

### **Evaluating the Impact of Organization and Popular Support**

In Nicaragua, the FSLN could only count on a few hundred combatants during most of the 1960s and 1970s. Though the FSLN spent over fifteen years attempting to mobilize Nicaraguans, the number of FSLN combatants only grew significantly in the late 1970s. In the immediate years prior to the revolution, “the overall number of FSLN troops thus ballooned from between five hundred and one thousand in early 1978 to nearly three thousand by late 1978 to around five thousand by July 1979” (Booth 1985, 145-50). At the same time that Sandinista military forces grew, general opposition to the Somoza regime from elites, political parties, and unions also strengthened in the form of the Broad Opposition Front. Following the fall of Somoza, the FSLN and the new government came to power with widespread popular support. In the early years of the

revolution, the Sandinistas promoted a democracy that “emphasized popular participation in formulating and implementing public policy and the distribution of services and programs to the great mass of poor Nicaraguans” (Booth and Walker 1999, 82). The revolutionary program’s advances in health care, education and literacy, and popular democracy contributed to the success of the Sandinistas in the 1984 elections. Unlike the other Central American guerrilla groups, the FSLN also benefited from its control over the government’s resources, favorable access to the media, and its involvement in the design and implementation of the electoral rules.

In the case of the FMLN in El Salvador, it is estimated that during the 1980s the guerrillas could count on 8,000 to 12,000 combatants (Dunkerly 1985; Halloran 1987; Wickham-Crowley 1992; McClintock 1998).<sup>9</sup> At the end of the conflict, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) demobilized 15,009 members of the insurgent group. These numbers included 8,552 combatants, 2,474 wounded noncombatants, and 3,983 political cadres (Luciak 2001). Some believed that the FMLN not only possessed one of the largest guerrilla groups in the hemisphere, but it also maintained the support of roughly 50,000 Salvadorans during the course of the conflict (LeMoyne 1989). Wood (2003) estimates that roughly one-third of the *campesinos* remaining in the FMLN controlled municipalities she studied provided support to the guerrillas. In the lead up to the 1994 elections, though, it was unclear how well the FMLN would perform. According to an FMLN legislative deputy, many associated with the right believed that the FMLN would fail as a political party, and this was the only reason that the FMLN was permitted to participate in the first place.<sup>10</sup> In the 1994 elections, the FMLN in coalition won 25% of the presidential vote and 22% of the

legislative vote. While not exactly one-third of the support, it was still a substantial percentage of the electorate given the less than ideal voting conditions.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s in Guatemala, the URNG was thought to have counted on the support of 6,000 – 8,000 combatants. By the mid-1990s, the actual number of armed combatants fell by roughly half, as many were either killed or left the organization after having become convinced that military success was highly unlikely. In 1997, 2,940 armed combatants and 2,813 international and political support members of the URNG were successfully demobilized (Luciak 2001). During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, many of the mid-level cadres were either killed or voluntarily withdrew from the URNG in order to participate in the revitalized Guatemalan civil society.<sup>11</sup> During its transition to political party, the URNG “was revealed to have a relatively small organization and not one with a large group of cadres trained or prepared to be political or electoral organizers” (Spence, et al. 1998, 11). With regard to the popular support of the URNG, it might have counted on the support of up to 500,000 at its peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Jonas 1994). As the conflict dragged on, there was a distancing of the URNG from the bases which had sustained them for so long.<sup>12</sup> At the signing of the peace accords in December 1996, over 20,000 attended the celebrations in Guatemala City. While not all the participants at the celebration could be counted as solid insurgent supporters, the URNG interpreted the attendance as indicative of widespread support at the national level. The support for the signing of the peace accords in addition to the showing of another leftist political party in the 1995 elections, the FDNG, also led some to overestimate its popular support.<sup>13</sup> But in public opinion polls prior to the 1999

elections, it was estimated that the URNG could possibly capture ten and fifteen percent of the vote.

In terms of the size of the guerrilla organizations in Honduras, as of 1987, estimates varied from roughly 200 (Schulz and Schulz 1994) to no more than 600 (Halloran 1987), to 1000-armed combatants (SOUTHCOM).<sup>14</sup> By the time the guerrillas accepted the government's offer of amnesty in the early 1990s, the number of combatants on which the PUD could count were even fewer. In terms of popular support, none of the Honduran guerrilla groups "had ever shown any signs of having mass support, much less the ability to coordinate their activities" (Schulz and Schulz 1994, 216). While the FMLNH was able to count on a minimal level of support from the country's teachers and the PRTCH could count on some support from *campesino*, this support was low overall and in a comparative context (Dunkerley 1988). In both absolute terms and relative to the other Central American guerrilla groups, the Honduran groups counted on few actual combatants and low levels of popular support.

How well of an explanation does the total number of militants and general level of popular support provide in explaining the performance of the new political parties? While electoral rules provide little help in explaining the electoral performance of these new political parties, the organizational strength and popular support commanded by these groups during their insurgent years are better explanations for the performance as political parties. The FSLN in Nicaragua maintained roughly five thousand combatants at the moment of revolutionary success and an extensive noncombatant support network. During the years between the revolution and the 1985 elections the Sandinistas continued to develop their military and support networks. In El Salvador, the FMLN demobilized

fifteen thousand individuals, including armed combatants and rural and urban support networks. Both the FSLN and FMLN counted on significant numbers of combatants and noncombatant supporters. The large numbers that each group sustained during the conflicts helped each group succeed in its first electoral competition and establish themselves as key political players to this day. This original support has also helped each party to overcome divisions that occurred within the organizations during the post war period.<sup>15</sup>

While the URNG demobilized roughly six thousand total combatant and noncombatant supporters, these numbers were much lower than they had counted on a decade earlier. In addition, the URNG suffered from the defection of several high-level leaders, during both the insurgent phase and political party phase. Whereas the FMLN and FSLN had developed more extensive political organizations enabling them to overcome several high level defections of key members, the URNG was already in a weakened position and has struggled with these losses as evidence by its poor showing in the 2003 elections. Finally, the PUD entered electoral competition weaker both organizationally and in terms of public support relative to the region's other guerrilla groups. The PUD's poor showing in its first election reflected its weakness as a guerrilla group, but its improved performance in its second electoral competition is important to pointing out that the medium and long-term electoral performance of these new political parties is not simply tied to their showing as guerrilla groups.

## **Discussion**

While electoral rules are perhaps important in explaining the transition of guerrilla groups to political parties in a global analysis under different institutional configurations, they have limited relevance to the initial performance of Central America's former guerrilla groups. All four groups compete in presidential systems with PR rules determining elections to the legislature. The FSLN and FMLN have performed very well in presidential and legislative elections. Even the URNG performed relatively well, capturing roughly ten percent at both levels in 1999, leading one to believe it had the opportunity to succeed under the existing political arrangements in Guatemala. Only the PUD appears to have been impacted by unfavorable rules, yet even it seems to have been able to overcome the challenge.

In terms of organization and popular support, these factors appear to provide a much better explanation for the performance of these groups. The more successful organizations in terms of organizational size and popular support have been the more successful political parties. Both the FSLN and FMLN are currently the largest legislative parties in their respective assemblies and the primary opposition party when it comes to elections for the executive. On the other hand, the less successful insurgent groups have been the less successful political parties. The URNG in Guatemala, after thirty-six years of war and fifteen years as a unitary armed group, is seriously threatened with disappearing from the political scene after barely surpassing the legal minimum required to maintain its legal standing in the 2003 elections. In Honduras, while the PUD never counted on as many combatants or as much popular support as the region's other

armed opposition groups, electoral rule changes and its improvement in the 2001 elections do provide the new party with hope.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the second half of the twentieth century, Central America was a hotbed of revolutionary activity. Revolutionary groups emerged in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. At the end of the century, though, each of the former armed opposition groups had disarmed, demobilized and pursued the electoral route to power. The FSLN, after successfully overthrowing the incumbent regime militarily, is still the only party to have occupied the presidency. After accepting a negotiated settlement to its civil war, the FMLN transformed itself from the country's primary armed opposition party to its primary electoral opposition. Today, both the FSLN and FMLN are major political forces in their respective political systems. The URNG went from a marginal military presence in the early 1990s to the third largest party in 1999 before becoming a marginal political presence at the beginning of the new century. Finally, the PUD in Honduras has the opportunity to exert a more significant role through the ballot box and electoral politics than the respective armed groups ever did during the revolutionary period.

In explaining the performance of the former armed groups as political parties in Central America, both the size of the insurgent group and the level of popular support maintained at the end of the conflict are more useful than institutional explanations. While the initial electoral performance of these new political parties was closely tied to

their experience and performance as armed opposition groups, their medium- and long-term success may be tied more to the ability to exploit the personnel and skills developed during the insurgent period while simultaneously expanding their electoral base to include those not directly involved in the earlier struggle.

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**TABLE 1**  
**CONFLICT OUTCOME AND INITIAL ELECTORAL COMPETITION**

<b>POLITICAL PARTY</b>	<b>ACRONYM</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>CONFLICT OUTCOME</b>	<b>FOUNDING ELECTION</b>
Sandinista National Liberation Front	FSLN	Nicaragua	Military victory	1984
Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front	FMLN	El Salvador	Negotiated settlement	1994
Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit	URNG	Guatemala	Negotiated settlement	1999
Democratic Unification Party	PUD	Honduras	Military defeat	1997

**TABLE 2**  
**FORMER INSURGENT GROUP PERFORMANCE IN**  
**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

	<b>ELECTION 1</b>	<b>ELECTION 2</b>	<b>ELECTION 3</b>	<b>ELECTION 4</b>
<b>FSLN</b>	1984: 63%	1990: 41%	1996: 38%	2001: 42%
<b>FMLN</b>	1994: 26% (32%) <sup>a</sup>	1999: 29%	2004: 36%	-
<b>URNG</b>	1999: 12% <sup>b</sup>	2003: 3%	-	-
<b>PUD</b>	1997: 1%	2001: 1%	-	-

<sup>a</sup> The FMLN ran in coalition with the CD in the 1994 presidential elections. In the second round, the FMLN received 32% in losing to the ARENA party.

<sup>b</sup> The URNG ran as part of the ANN in coalition with the DIA and UNID in the 1999 presidential elections.

The vote for each party is rounded to the higher number.

**TABLE 3**  
**FORMER INSURGENT GROUP PERFORMANCE IN**  
**LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS**

	<b>ELECTION 1</b>	<b>ELECTION 2</b>	<b>ELECTION 3</b>	<b>ELECTION 4</b>
<b>FSLN</b>	1984: 64%	1990: 42%	1996: 38%	2001: 46%
<b>FMLN</b>	1994: 25%	1997: 32%	2000: 37%	2003: 37%
<b>URNG</b>	1999: 8%	2003: 4%	-	-
<b>PUD</b>	1997: 2%	2001: 5%	-	-

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<sup>1</sup> The relationship between electoral success and the other measures of success, while no doubt also important, is reserved for future projects.

<sup>2</sup> While ten political parties were eligible to participate in the 1984 elections, only seven chose to do so (Robinson and Norsworthy 1985).

<sup>3</sup> On election day in October 1996 the MRS fared quite poorly, capturing only 1.3% of the national vote and leaving it with only one deputy in the National Assembly.

<sup>4</sup> Shortly after the legislature convened in 1994, Joaquín Villalobos, Ana Guadeloupe Martínez, and other members associated with the National Resistance and the People's Revolutionary Army separated from the FMLN because of strategic, tactical and ideological differences related both to the conflict and the party's new role in the postwar period.

<sup>5</sup> Rodrigo Asturias, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 22 April 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Juan Francisco García, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 14 April 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Alberto Ramírez Recinos (AKA Tino), interview by author, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, 6 April 2004.

<sup>8</sup> An additional provision in the electoral rules provides for a threshold of 35% for a first round victory if no other candidate captures at least 30% of the total vote.

<sup>9</sup> The estimated number of combatants varied from 10,000 to 12,000 during the early 1980s and 8,000 to 10,000 near the end of the decade and into the 1990s.

<sup>10</sup> Héctor Córdova, interview by author, San Salvador, El Salvador, 3 May 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Tania Prado Palencia, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 19 April 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Alberto Ramírez Recinos (AKA Tino), interview by author, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, 6 April 2004.

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<sup>13</sup> Tania Prado Palencia, interview by author, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 19 April 2004.

<sup>14</sup> SOUTHCOM estimates of the number of combatants associated with Latin American guerrilla groups including Honduras were reported in the Latin American Weekly Report, November 5, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Since the transition to electoral politics in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala the former revolutionary organizations have all suffered internal splits. In Nicaragua, a faction led by Sergio Ramírez left the FSLN, formed an alternative political party, and competed under the banner “Movement for the Renovation of Sandinismo” (MRS). In El Salvador, two groups have left the FMLN and formed their own political parties. Joaquín Villalobos, Ana Guadeloupe Martínez, and a number of ERP and RN members left to form the Democratic Party (PD). The FMLN’s presidential candidate in 1999, Facundo Guardado, was booted from the party in 2001 and formed the Renovating Movement (MR) in 2002. The MRS, PD, and the MR all failed as political parties following the first election in which they competed.