PARTY SYSTEMS AND DEMOCRACY AFTER THE CONFLICTS:
EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND NICARAGUA

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Abstract

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What factors explained party system formation in the post-conflict countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua? The answer to this question is not immediately obvious as the countries present two puzzles for the existing literature on party systems. The first is the surprising path of development that the systems have followed, given the history of the countries and their institutions. The second is the continuity that the three post-transition systems have exhibited. To explain the development of these systems, I propose a path dependent argument that identifies the transition process as a critical juncture (Pierson 2000:75; Collier and Collier 1991:29). The events that took place during the transition, when a competitive and inclusive party system began to take shape, placed these systems on a particular path of development. Early decisions shaped future possibilities and self-reinforcing mechanisms make the probability of departing from the set pattern increasingly unlikely (Pierson 2000:74-6; Collier and Collier 1991:29-31).
Chapters One outlines the project’s main argument: that the transition process explains party system institutionalization. Chapters Two, on leftist parties, and Three, on conservative parties, analyze how the interactions between four actors (the military, the armed opposition, the conservative political elite, and the economic elite), during the transition determined the degree to which the party system would be polarized and the type of party organizations that would form. Chapter Four explores how polarization and party organization explain party system institutionalization. Polarization increases or decreases the distance between parties, lowering or raising the costs of switching parties from one election to the next, while the type of partisan organization affects the extent to which citizens are bound to the party system, with durable organizations tending to encourage loyalty among voters. Chapter Five explores whether differences across party systems matter for how citizens relate to the party system and democracy. The chapter analyzes how the two party system characteristics that are the focus of the dissertation, polarization and electoral stability, affect voter turnout. The Conclusion discusses the generalizability of the argument and examines some consequences of party system formation for new democracies.
To my sisters

and

my mother, for everything.
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CHAPTER 1:
A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PARTY SYSTEMS OF POST-CONFLICT CENTRAL AMERICA

1.1 Introduction

There have been profound changes in Central America since the 1970s and 1980s. For over two decades, meaningful elections have been the mechanisms through which political leaders have been chosen in all five Central American countries, a first for a region where elections were often little more than a façade, and political change was achieved through coup d'états. These changes are perhaps most dramatic for those countries that suffered through prolonged internal conflicts: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. In these countries, the transitions served a dual purpose: ending the armed conflict and establishing a regime change. Since the resolution of these dual transitions, political contestation has taken place through elections and without the involvement of armed groups.

As in most representative democracies, political parties and party systems have played an important role in these new democratic regimes, aggregating interest, structuring the electoral process, and formulating public policy, to name but a few of their roles. What is most surprising about the new party systems that formed is their

\[1\] Honduras also underwent a transition at the end of the twentieth century; however, the dynamics in this country were different, for one, an internal armed struggle similar to the others never developed.
developmental path. In the 1980s, an unexpected pattern of similarities and differences between the three party systems emerged, one that varies substantially from the countries’ historical experiences and one that is not easily explained by existing theories of party system formation. This dissertation addresses this empirical puzzle, asking what factors explain party system formation in the post-conflict countries of Central America.

To explain the development of these systems, I propose a path dependent argument that identifies the transition process as a critical juncture (Pierson 2000:75; Collier and Collier 1991) for party system formation. The events that took place during this process, when a competitive and inclusive party system began to take shape, placed these systems on a particular path of development. Biezen (2005) refers to this as a “generation” effect and argues that “conditions in which a party first emerges would largely determine its internal structure as well as the nature and strength of its external linkages” (151). I argue that the transition is a critical juncture for party system formation because the early decisions in the process shaped future possibilities, restricting the choices that would be possible in future interactions between the elite. In addition, self-reinforcing mechanisms have made the probability of departing from the set pattern of development increasingly unlikely, which explains the stability of the patterns established.

In this introductory chapter, I first outline the empirical puzzle that these three post-conflict party systems present for the existing literature on party system formation. The next section introduces my explanation for party system formation in the three post-conflict countries and how an analysis of the three party systems contributes to the literature. The fourth Section briefly outlines two alternative approaches to party system
formation and the fifth Section describes the cases, methodology, and primary actors of the dissertation. In the last section I summarize the arguments of the coming chapters.

1.2 The Empirical Puzzle

The type of party systems that have developed in the three post-conflict Central American countries has varied in interesting and unexpected ways. The patterns of similarities and differences across the three systems are not easily explained by their historical trajectories or existing theories of party system formation, including institutionalist arguments, which have dominated the literature on political parties and party systems in recent years. For instance, an overview of the historical pattern of these countries would lead to the expectation that the Guatemalan and Salvadoran party systems would resemble each other and differ from the Nicaraguan system because the political developments of the first two countries have tended to follow similar paths, while Nicaragua’s has vary substantially (Artiga González 2000; Mahoney 2001; Baloyra-Herp 1983; Paige 1998). For example, in the their contemporary history (post-1960), both El Salvador and Guatemala were shaped by an agro-export economic model; a military-oligarchic alliance; an “official” political party that regularly won “elections;” the use of the state to suppress demands for political and social reform; and the emergence of guerrilla movements in response to this state violence (Brockett 2005; Vilas 1994). During the same period of time, Nicaragua was under the control of a sultanistic leader (Booth 1998), a regime that eventually excluded all sectors of society from power and facilitated the eventual creation of a broad social coalition that replaced the regime through revolution (Everingham 1996:177-80). Soon after this rupture, the
better organized and more cohesive guerrilla faction of the coalition took control and established a leftist-revolutionary regime (Spalding 1994).

Alternatively, an institutionalist argument of party system formation would posit that the three party systems would converge along a similar path of development after the uncertainty of the first elections. In this literature, electoral rules are highlighted as having an important effect on political parties and party systems (Carey and Shugart 1995; Downs 1957; Duverger 1954; Cox 1990; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). There are numerous similarities between the three countries’ electoral rules. All three are presidential systems that include the possibility of a run-off election when no candidate wins a majority of the vote or a predetermined percentage of the vote; in addition, there is no immediate reelection of the executive. At the legislative level, all three countries have unicameral legislatures that are elected through proportional representation with close-lists and medium size district. These similarities across institutional rules would lead us to expect similar types of party systems in the three countries.

The three party systems, however, have not followed either of these two developmental paths. There are important differences across the three party systems, contrary to what the institutionalist literature predicts, but the pattern of similarities and differences across the three systems is not the one that the historical patterns would lead us to expect. In the post-transition period, it is Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems that resemble each other, while the Guatemalan party system differs.

Both the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems are relatively stable with two parties that dominate the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum. In Nicaragua, the
Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) and its opposition on the right dictate the politics of the country since 1990. Between 1990 and 2001, the Sandinistas and the right wing coalition, the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) in 1996 and 2001, captured over 88% of the vote in presidential elections. In El Salvador, the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) monopolize the electoral arena. Since the 1994 presidential election, the two parties have received over 70% of the presidential vote and in the last two elections (2004 and 2009) the parties received over 90% of the vote. A second important characteristic that the two party systems share in common is their high levels of polarization. In both systems, the most relevant parties have appropriated one side of the ideological spectrum, monopolizing an ideological “niche” so that the competitive parties stand at opposite ends of each other and the smaller, less relevant parties populate the center.

In sharp contrast, Guatemala’s party system is a highly unstable, even by post-1978 standards. In this system, new parties perform better electorally than older ones. In the last twenty-four years, Guatemalans have elected six governments to power with no party able to secure a reelection. In 1985, four parties received over 90% of the votes in the first free and fair elections since 1951; today none of these parties remain. The death

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2 The right in Nicaragua has experienced a number of changing coalitions. Since the 1990 election, the party that has dominated the right has been the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) under Arnoldo Alemán. In 2006, there was a shift in the right when an important faction broke away from the PLC.

3 In the 2006 election, unlike previous elections, three major parties competed for the presidency. Together, the three parties received 93% of the vote.

4 The Christian Democrats (Partido de Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca - DCG) was the last of these four parties to disappear, loosing its legal status after the 2007 election when it failed to receive
of older parties is accompanied by the birth of new ones. For instance, in the 2003 election both of the presidential candidates that competed in the runoff election belonged to parties that had formed less than three years before.\textsuperscript{5} In comparison to the other two systems, Guatemala’s party system is also much more ideologically moderate with the relevant parties placing themselves from the center-right to the right on the ideological spectrum.

If the existing explanations of party system formation cannot account for these developments in the party systems, what are factors that can? To answer this question, we need to analyze the transition process, which I identify as a critical juncture for party system formation. In the next section I introduce this argument.

1.3 Transitions as Critical Junctures

In the 1980s, the political developments of the three countries converged when as a result of domestic, regional, and international changes the countries began a process of political liberalization that eventually culminated in the resolution of the armed conflicts and the establishment of democracy. At their resolution, the three transitions served a dual purpose: ending the armed conflicts and establishing new democratic regimes. The events that took place during these transitions, when a competitive and inclusive party

\textsuperscript{5} One of the 2003 candidates, Álvaro Colom founded his party—Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE)—in 2001 after participating in the 1999 elections as the presidential candidate for the leftist coalition Alianza Nueva Nacional (ANN). The second candidate, and winner of the 2003 election, Oscar Berger created a coalition of three parties after being denied the presidential candidature of his party—the Partido de Avanza Nacional (PAN). Only one of the parties in this coalition existed prior to 2001.
system began to take shape, placed these systems on a particular path of development. Because of this effect, the transition process is a critical junction for party system formation in the three post-conflict Central American countries.

Collier and Collier (1991) define a critical juncture as “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries … and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies” (29). Pierson (2000) further clarifies the concept by arguing that critical junctures “generate persistent paths of political development” and that what makes a juncture critical is “that it triggers a process of positive feedback” (Pierson 2000:75). The positive feedback or self-reinforcing mechanisms are what ensures that after a critical juncture, “initial moves in a particular direction encourage further movement along the same path” and other options become “an increasingly distant, increasingly unreachable alternative” (74-5). In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the transition was a critical juncture because the early decisions in the process shaped future possibilities, restricting the choices of future interactions between the elite. In addition, self-reinforcing mechanisms have made the probability of departing from the set pattern of development increasingly unlikely (Pierson 2000:74-6; Collier and Collier 1991:29-31), which explains the stability of the patterns established.

What took place during this critical juncture explains party system institutionalization in the three countries. The interactions between four actors (the military, the armed opposition, the conservative political elite, and the economic elite) determined the degree to which the party system would be polarized and the type of party organizations that would form in the new systems. These two characteristics, in turn,
explain party system institutionalization (Figure 1.1). Polarization affects party system institutionalization because it increases or decreases the distance between parties, lowering or raising the costs of switching parties from one election to the next. The type of partisan organization that the relevant parties have in the party system affects institutionalization because it affects the extent to which citizens are bound to the party system, with durable organizations tending to encourage loyalty among voters from one election to the next.

Figure 1.1: Explaining Party System Institutionalization

In the interactions that shaped the party systems, the left played a critical role, influencing the decisions of the other actors. What strategy the left chose during this period of time was critical for two reasons: it influenced how it would go on to perform in post-transition elections and what strategies the other actors would choose in the transition. The right decided on its electoral strategy in response to the earlier decisions.
of the left and its perception of how threatening the left was to its own position. During the transition, the left’s *configuration of political opportunity* (Brockett 2005; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) changed. The very nature of the process, an opening of the political space, created a window of opportunity for the left that put it in a place of national prominence as one of the protagonists of the negotiation process and the representative of the progressive agenda in the negotiations.

There were various transition strategies that the left could choose during the transition; I identify the two that are most relevant for these countries: a procedural or substantive strategy. The focus of a procedural strategy is to secure changes in the political arena during negotiations, and strengthening the party’s national organization and its ties with civil society throughout the transition. The aim of a substantive strategy is to secure system-wide changes that address socio-economic problems during the negotiations, leaving the organizational restructuring and strengthening of the left’s organization and its ties with civil society until after the negotiations have been concluded.\(^6\)

When the left chose a procedural strategy it was better equipped to compete successfully in post-transition elections. By focusing on the electoral process and its organizational needs early in the sequence of the transition, the left could take advantage of the *political opportunity* (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001:46-7; Brockett 2005:14-21) that the transition process presented. The central role that the transition process gave

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\(^6\) Other strategies are also possible. In the African cases examined in Chapter Two, some movements adopt a materialist strategy, one that is focused on securing material gains for the leadership, such as donations from the international community. The important comparison is a procedural strategy compared to another type of strategy that does not emphasize the transformation of a guerrilla movement into an electoral organization, one that has a national presence and can mobilize citizens.
the left could be used to strengthen its organization and reorganize it for electoral purposes. It was also a period of time when the left was the national representative of the progressive agenda, an opportunity the movement could use to strengthen its ties with an electoral base of support. For the left, shifting the organizational focus to future electoral competitions and the importance of capturing and maintaining an electoral base of support early in the transition process was important. In the post-transition elections, the party would need a durable organization that can remain active between elections to help bind citizens to the party and successfully compete with the right.

For the left, ignoring the important task of building an electoral apparatus until after the transition has high costs. Building an electoral organization after the transition had passed is increasingly difficult for the left because the opportunities that the transition, such as the attention the left had as the representative of the progressive agenda, had passed. In addition, without its organizational restructuring underway, the left was not poised to take advantage of its initial access to the state after its first post-transition election to further invest in a durable organization.

What strategy the left adopted during the transition had important implications for the party system because an attribution of threat (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001:46-7) from the left influenced the strategy choices of the conservative political elite and the economic elite. The extent to which the left was perceived as a threat rested on both its strategy and previous organizational strength (an antecedent condition). When the left threatened the conservative political elite’s privileged position during the transition, the latter had an incentive to mobilize to counteract this threat. If the right wanted to win the loyalty of supporters, it had to reach out to citizens and “win” them back, necessitating an
extensive durable organization with a national presence, a party apparatus that is active between elections and has contact with society. Because of the conflict the conservative political had an incentive to match the left’s strategy and also build a durable organization.

When the economic elite also perceived the left as a likely winner, and there was no third actor that would, or could, protect its interests, this elite was willing to invest its resources into the creation and maintenance of a durable party organization. If, however, the economic elite could count on a third actor to protect its interests, either because of its traditional alliance with the military or the backing of the U.S. government, then the economic elite was able to avoid the costs of an extensive investment in the party system. Instead, the economic elite could adopt the more traditional strategy of investing in electoral campaigns to secure some influence over the winners of elections. Figure 1.2 presents the set of possible decisions that the right could choose, in reaction to the attribution of threat from the left.
As the figure also outlines, the decision by the economic elite to invest, or not, in the party system had consequences for the type of conservative parties that formed. The participation of the economic elite in the party organization increases the institutionalization of conservative parties. When the economic elite contribute to the party’s organization, political leaders cannot control the resources of the party, so that the party’s organization is not subordinate to the interests of ambitious leaders in the party. Alternatively, when the conservative political elite rely on its access to the state for the survival of the party’s organization, those who control access to the state also control the party’s organization.
These interactions between the transition actors and their strategic choices had a lasting effect on the development of the party systems. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, where the right attributed a high degree of threat to the left, because of its organizational strength and strategy choice, polarized party systems and parties with durable organizations formed during the transitions. The threat of the left promoted the coordination and unit of the conservative political elite in order to avoid party splits that would favor their main electoral rival and ideological opponent. The attribution of threat from a strong ideological opponent encouraged a party building strategy that has positive consequences for the stability of the party system and the regime. As a result of these traits, a stable party system formed from the transition effects. The difference between the two party systems is that in Nicaragua the economic elite has successfully avoided the need for a more substantial investment in the party system.

Alternatively, in Guatemala where the left was not perceived as a threat, the conservative political elite had little incentive to cooperate and form a united front for electoral purposes. Both this elite and economic elite have successfully avoided the need for a durable party organization. Instead, the conservative political elite rely on thin party organizations and media campaigns to win elections. Without a durable organization that can mobilize voters, securing the funds necessary to pay for national media campaigns is critical to winning national elections. This has preserved the influential role of the economic elite without the need for a more sustained investment in the party system. Without polarization to mobilize the conservative forces to cooperate and form durable organizations to bind citizens to the party system, the Guatemalan party system that
developed from the transition has been very unstable with high levels of electoral volatility, but ideologically moderate competition.

The patterns that emerged from these dual transitions have endured in the post-transition period in the three post-conflict Central American countries. This enduring influence is noteworthy because it stands in contrast to a number of other post-transition cases, especially in Latin America where a number of party systems have gone through significant changes in recent years. After the “third wave” (Huntington 1991) of democracy, a number of studies argued that transition effects leave behind important legacies that shape the type of democracy and institutions that formed in the new regimes (Colomer 1991, 2000; Geddes 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Munck and Skalnik Leff 1997; Karl 2005; Grzymala-Busse 2002). In subsequent arguments, however, scholars noted that transition effects were neither as clear nor as long lasting as was originally hypothesized (Cavarozzi 1992; Hagopian 1993; Hartlyn 1998; Przeworski 1991). The post-conflict cases of Central America, transitions effects have left enduring legacies in the party system. While the path dependent argument I propose does not rule out the possibility of future change in the party systems, that thus far the self-reinforcing mechanisms have ensured the continual relevance of the “transition effects.”

These effects remain relevant today because of three causal mechanisms. The first is the continual presence (or absence) of the attribution of threat from the left. As long as the political elite, on both sides of the ideological spectrum, continues to find it electorally useful to frame political discourse in terms of the “conflict dimension,” the party system maintains the same incentives to mobilize against the other ideological pole that was present during the transition. Similarly, the continual absence of threat from the
left negates the need to change a pattern of electoral competition that is efficient and requires only a short-time investment in party organizations.

A second mechanism that has ensured the continuation of patterns established during the transitions is *elite learning*. The political elite has learned which are the winning formulas from those patterns established during the transition, whether this is the continual investment in durable organizations and the maintenance of the conflict dimension or securing enough resources from the economic elite to finance electoral campaigns that revolve around individuals rather than parties. For instance, once the political elite chose a durable organization as an electoral strategy, it locked in this type of organization into the party system. The success of this type of organization reinforces the need for its existence and the parties that have them are unlikely to unilaterally stop investing in the organization for fear of the electoral costs that this might carry. Because the winning strategies have proven to be successful, the probability that the political elite will seek change is low.

In addition, through *power reproduction*, the winners of the party system have used their access to power to preserve their position, promoting institutional change (or inertia) that enhances their power and using existing institutions to block new party entries. The winning parties discourage challenging actors through co-opting and the set-up costs that new organizations face, as well as through the use of state institutions that can block new entries that might directly compete against them. In volatile party systems, the absence of stable competition ensures that the incentive to build personal reputations and form new parties continues to shape the party system.
1.4 Studying Post-Conflict Party Systems: Contributions to the Literature

I focus on the party systems of post-conflict Central America because political parties and party systems are central to democracy. They provide a link between state and society; aggregate interests at the mass and elite levels; structure the electoral process; mobilize and represent groups; and formulate public policy. Valuable contributions in the literature on party systems have noted the importance of parties and party systems for third wave democracies, as well as the differences between newer and older party systems (Bielasiak 2002; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Markowski 2000; Mozaffar and Scarnt; Norden 1998; Stockton 2001; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Zielinski 2003; Toka 1997; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Despite these contributions, important questions remain in the literature about party systems and in particular post-1978 party systems. How can we explain variance in the kinds of party systems that form in new democracies? What factors shaped new parties and party systems? These are the questions that I explore in the dissertation.

By focusing on how the Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran party systems developed in the post-transition period, the dissertation address an interesting empirical puzzle that has received little attention in the literature but that can contribute to two fields of scholarship: the scholarship on party systems and the scholarship on new democracies. Existing theories of party system development, such as social cleavage arguments (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) or institutionalism (Cox 1990; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989), cannot on their own account for the similar evolution of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems, and the differences between these and Guatemala’s. I propose an explanation that analyzes the process of dual transitions to
account for the surprising pattern of party system development in these three countries. The dissertation demonstrates that transition effects can have a strong influence over the type of party systems that form in the new democracies. Bermeo (2003) argues that post-conflict democratizations have their own dynamics and that these type of transitions should be studied separately from transitions that only incorporate an element of regime change. The dissertation explores this possibility by analyzing the impact that the transition process has on party system formation. The findings strongly suggest that dual transitions, those that include an element of conflict resolution and democratization, have particular dynamics and that these can have a longer effect on the post-transition regime than we have come to expect from non-conflict transitions.

The dissertation also contributes to the literature on post-1978 party systems by providing further evidence elites play a defining role in shaping these party systems (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Tavits 2008; Biezen 2003; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Riedl 2008). In the new party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the strategies of the elite during the transition had a strong influence over the type of party system that would form.

The dissertation also contributes to the literature by highlighting how polarization can have a positive effect on party system stability. Most of the literature on polarization has argued that it has dangerous consequences for the party system and regime stability (Sartori 1976; Linz 1978; Valenzuela 1978; Sani and Sartori 1983; Scully 1992; Norden 1998). Contrary to these expectations, my findings show that polarization has an important positive effect on elite and mass behavior, encouraging a higher level of
commitment to party politics and the new regime, as well as encouraging party system institutionalization by depressing electoral volatility.

The dissertation’s findings also stress the important role that the type of party organization can have on the institutionalization of the party system (Gunther 2005; Tavits 2005; Toole 2003). The type of party organization that predominates in the party system has important consequences for system stability since some organizational types, such as durable organizations, are more likely to anchor citizens to the party system. The dissertation also provides an answer to the question of what type of organization post-1978 parties will adopt, proposing an argument about when parties are more likely to build thin or durable organizations. My argument also contributes to the literature on path dependence.

A number of important studies have argued that when invoking path dependence arguments it is important to clearly specify the causal mechanisms that make history an important explanation for political developments (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Pierson 2004; Elster 1998; Hedström and Swedberg 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Thelen 1999). In the dissertation, I specify the causal mechanisms that during the transition process led to the formation of different types of party systems. I also specify the causal mechanisms that have reinforced the patterns established in this early stage of party system development.

Lastly, the dissertation contributes to the literature on party systems and democracy by considering what consequences variation across party systems can have for democracy. I show that differences across party systems have important consequences for voter turnout, with some party system characteristics encouraging or suppressing voter
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democratic regimes, reemphasizing the importance of studying party systems and understanding what factors shape their formation and development.

1.5 Alternative Explanations: Institutionalism and Social Cleavages

In the dissertation, I also consider alternative explanations of party system formation. In this section, I briefly outline the two most influential approaches to the study of party systems, the social cleavage and institutionalist theories of party system formation. In later chapters I provide greater detail on each alternative approach and its hypotheses.

The first approach that I draw alternative hypotheses from is the social cleavage argument, first proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The argument emphasizes the role that existing social cleavages play in imprinting party system formation. Parties, in this argument, emerge and form around salient cleavages and change in the party system takes place in response to the emergence of new social cleavages or changes in existing ones (Inglehart 1984; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In Latin America, some scholars have utilized this approach to examine party system institutionalization (Dix 1989, 1992). In one of the three countries I analyze, the most relevant cleavage is the ethnic cleavage. In the dissertation I evaluate the possibility that a cleavage-centered approach provides a more compelling explanation of party system formation and institutionalization in the three systems.

A second influential approach to the study of party system formation has been institutionalism, which argues that institutions create incentives and deterrents that
influence political actors. This approach argues that the response of politicians to institutions will form certain types of parties and party systems. Within this approach, the electoral rules have been emphasized as particularly important explanatory variables (Cox 1990; Duverger 1954; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). This argument has proven to be a powerful predictor of cross-system variance in the literature. I include an analysis of the institutional rules in place to examine the extent to which an institutionalist argument provides a better account of how the parties of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua developed.

1.6 Case Selection, Methodology, and the Actors of Primary Focus

1.6.1 The Cases and Methodology

There are both theoretical and methodological reasons for focusing on post-conflict Central America. The cross-case design gives the dissertation the advantage of a comparative perspective, while making it possible to focus on the causal mechanisms that link the transition process to the contemporary party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Recent discussions on qualitative methodology have warned that qualitative research can be subject to selection bias if it is based on cross-case analysis. I avoid this problem by employing within-case analysis to identify the causal mechanisms of the transition process (Collier, Mahoney, and Seawright 2004:12). As Collier, Mahoney, and Seawright (2004) argue, careful analysis of the evidence allows researchers to distinguish between the causal effect of the independent variable and the
error term because these type of analysis is interested in “looking for evidence of the causal processes through which the independent variable has an impact” (97).

A second problem that cross-case and within-case analysis potentially face is the overgeneralization of context-specific factors. Because I use the three cases to inductively derive propositions about what links the transitions process to post-conflict party system configurations, I avoid this problem. I work with propositions rather than hypotheses, because these propositions are drawn from the three cases and cannot, therefore, be tested using the same cases (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). My focus therefore is not on testing, but on identifying the causal mechanisms of the transition process. I use the cases to trace the transition process and determine the transitional effect on the post-transition party system. To determine whether the transition process explains party system formation in other similar cases, the argument would need to be tested on a different set of cases. The dissertation undertakes a limited test of the argument in Chapter Two by analyzing the extent to which organizational strength and strategy determined the electoral success of a sub-set of ex-guerrilla movements in Africa in the post-transition period.

The research design also takes advantage of the similarities and differences between the three countries across a number of explanatory variables. The countries resemble each other across historical, institutional, and social variables that the literature has traditionally emphasized to explain the formation of party systems, including social cleavages and institutions. The similarities across these explanatory variables make it possible to hold constant their influence on the formation of post-conflict party systems. The three cases are similar in that prior to the transitions none of the countries had had a
substantial experience with democracy. On the other hand, one of the most important differences between the three cases, the Sandinista Revolution, makes it possible to discount a longer historical pattern in the shaping of the three party systems, since it is Guatemala that is the most dissimilar case.

I begin my analysis of the dual transitions at the time when the incumbents took the first steps toward political liberalization. This means that the periods under study vary slightly across the three countries. In El Salvador the military began the liberalization process in response to the 1979 coup and in Guatemala in response to the 1982 coup. In Nicaragua, the transition process begins a few years later in 1983 when the Sandinistas began preparations for the first general election to be held since they took power.

The combination of most similar case design with different patterns of party system formation present an intriguing puzzle which the dissertation examines. To undertake this analysis, I employ a structured, focused comparison (George and Bennett 2004) using process tracing (George 1979; George and Bennett 2004) to analyze variation across the transition processes. This variation across the factors that I highlight, the organizational structure of the left, the balance of power between the actors, and the strategies that they pursued, explains the similarities and differences among the contemporary party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

To trace the transition process, I use in-depth interviews with members of the four transition actors. I conducted somewhere between 60 and 75 interviews in each of the countries in 2004 and 2005. I interviewed representatives of the military and armed opposition, who sat at the negotiating tables, as well as the politicians who negotiated on behalf of the government, and the government leaders who signed the peace accords,
including President Arzú (Guatemala), President Cristiani (El Salvador), and the former chief of staff to President Chamorro, Antonio Lacayo (Nicaragua). I also talked to UN officials involved in the negotiations, using their information as third parties to corroborate and fill in gaps from the interviews. I also interviewed members of the political parties. Most of these interviews were with legislators, both senior and junior members, but I also questioned individuals involved in the administration of the parties and active at different levels of the organizations to get a perspective on how the parties function and are organized, as well as how they are financed. I interview members of the economic elite to establish its preferences and strategies, in particular its perception of the left during the transition. I sought out members of the economic elite who had made public declarations about the peace accords, or who held leadership roles in prominent lobbying groups during the transition.\(^7\)

On average interviews with party members tend to be somewhere between thirty and forty-five minutes; interviews with the negotiators of the transitions, including the representatives of the armed forces, were between one and two hours; and interviews with the economic elite are about one hour. The interviews followed an open-ended format, although I included certain questions consistently, questions that asked respondents to discuss the organizational structure, the preferences, perceptions, expectations, and strategies of the actors during the transition process. I followed this

\(^7\) In particular, I looked for leaders of the most influential of these lobbying groups: in El Salvador, the Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (ANEP); in Guatemala, the Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industrias y Financieras (CACIF); and in Nicaragua, the Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada (COSEP). The economic elite of the three countries has historically used the three organizations to represent its interests in the political arena (Palacio Prado 2002; Segovia 2004, 2005).
open-ended format to hear as much as possible the narrative from the actors. This format sacrificed a more systematic style of interviewing, but the benefits of the more open-ended format were considerable. By allowing respondents to add information that I had not specifically asked for, respondents often added vital information that clarified the causal mechanisms of party system formation.

These interviews serve as the primary source of information for the dissertation. I supplement these data from the interviews with secondary sources that have described the sequences of the transitions and the role of these actors in them (e.g. Segovia 2005; Palacio Prado 2002; Wood 2000; Vilas 1994; NIMD 2005; INCEP 1995; Pasára 2003).  

1.6.2 The Actors of Primary Focus

In all three transitions, the same primary actors were involved in the negotiations: the military, the armed opposition, the economic elite, and the conservative political elite. While there is no variation in the cross-case comparisons in terms of who the actors were, there are differences in the composition and preferences of these actors. To identify the causal mechanisms of the transition process, it is this variation that is crucial.

The first actor, the military, is defined as the organized institution that controls the state’s security, intelligence, and coercive apparatus. In the pre-transition period, the Guatemalan and Salvadoran militaries are similar institutions, while the Nicaraguan military slightly differs. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the military dominated the

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8 The majority of the literature on the three Central American transitions has been descriptive in nature. While this provides rich information for the purposes of process tracing, it also means that few works have undertaken systematic studies of the dynamics and consequences of the transitions. Exceptions include the work of Azpuru (1999; 2006), Arnson (1999), and Wood (2000).
political arena for decades before the transitions. In both cases, the military controlled the state and government prior to the transition and were the ones responsible for the original process of political liberalization. In both cases—even after the initial transfer of power to civilian government—the armed forces continued to wage a war against the leftist armed opposition. Both the Guatemalan and Salvadoran armed forces were professional institutions whose self-defined goal was the destruction of the insurgency. To achieve this goal, the armed forces dedicated most of the resources of the state.

In Nicaragua, the military was a different type of institution. The armed forces were created as part of the FSLN’s project. The result was a military institution with strong links to the state and the party, but the military were not in charge of the state. Similarly to their regional counterparts, however, the Sandinista armed forces were in charge of an internal armed struggle. Despite the ideological differences between the Sandinista armed forces and their Guatemalan and Salvadoran counterparts, the three institutions had similar preferences at the time of the transition. The negotiators of the armed forces wanted to preserve, as much as possible, their respective institutions.

The second actor, the armed opposition, consists of the group(s) of actors that armed themselves and sought system-wide changes through a war against the state. In both El Salvador and Guatemala, the armed opposition was composed of leftist guerilla movements that sought revolutionary change in response to state repression (Brockett 2005). Both of these organizations included political and armed branches. The Nicaraguan armed opposition differed on several fronts. It stood at the other end of the ideological spectrum from its Guatemalan and Salvadoran counterparts. Unlike its
counterparts, it lacked a political branch and close ties to the political opposition, which undermined its role during the transition.

The role of the third actor, the economic elite, is important although less direct. While representatives of the economic elite were not always present at the negotiating tables the strategy decisions of this actor had important repercussions for the party system, shaping the type of conservative parties that formed. This elite is composed of those individuals that are owners of the large private holdings that dominate the national economy. In Central America these large corporations have tended to be under the control of prominent families active in the agro-export markets (Vilas 1994; Paniagua Serrano 2002). An investment pattern that began to change in the late twentieth century across the region, although not at the same depth or speed (Segovia 2005; Wood 2000; Palacio Prado 2002).

The last actor, the conservative political elite, is composed of those individuals who belonged to political parties before and during the transition process and in particular those that formed government during the transition process. Because free and fair elections took place in the three countries before the official ending of the armed conflicts, in each country a group of political actors—the conservative political elite—were already organized and participated in the political arena before the transition had ended. The strategy choice of this elite in a period of time when it faced competitive elections, in some countries for the first time, was important for the type of conservative parties that formed and the stability of the party system.

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9 Paniagua Serrano (2002) provides an revealing analysis of the Salvadoran economic elite, demonstrating the close ties within this group and its control of the country’s financial system, as well as its substantial influence over other sectors of the economy.
I focus on examining how the interaction of the four primary actors shape the party systems in the post-conflict period, but also take into account the role of secondary actors, such as the U.S. government, the Catholic Church, and the United Nations (UN).\textsuperscript{10} I include these actors as secondary, rather than primary protagonists because although they influenced the decisions of the four primary actors, ultimately secondary actors were not the decision-makers in the transition process. The ability that these secondary actors had to influence the outcome of the transitions depended on their ability to convince or constrain the actions of one or more of the primary actors. For instance, the U.S. government has historically been an important actor in Central America and its role in the transitions reflects this. However, although the U.S. influenced and constrained the choices available to the primary actors, it was ultimately the latter who were the signatories of transitions.

1.7 Outline of the Dissertation

In the following chapters I put forth a sequential argument that explains party system institutionalization in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Chapter Two examines the left’s role in the transition process. To explain the success of the left when it has to compete in competitive and inclusive elections, it is necessary to look beyond its pre-transition organization and include an element of agency. The chapter shows that the strength of the left’s organization is not fixed and its maintenance depends on what strategy the left chose during the transition. Those organizations that chose a procedural

\textsuperscript{10} The UN was particularly important in El Salvador and Guatemala where it played a mediating role in the negotiations and later in the implementation of the peace accords.
strategy, one that focused on the electoral needs of the organization early in the transition process, are the parties that have gone on to perform well in the post-transition period. To test this argument the chapter presents an analysis of six other similar transformations, from movement to political party, and finds that both elements, previous organizational strength and transition strategy, have to be included to explain electoral performance beyond the first post-transition election.

Chapter Three examines the extent to which the conservative political elite and the economic elite perceived the left as a threat during the transition. It argues that this attribution of threat shaped the strategy of these two actors. When the position of the conservative political elite was threatened by the potential victory of the left, this elite mobilized to counteract this threat. Because the left’s strengths rested on its organization, one that aimed to bind citizens to the organization, the conservative political elite adopted a similar strategy, matching the left’s strategy by building a durable party organization. When the economic elite also perceived the left to be a serious challenger to its position, and it could no longer count on a third actor to protect its interests, the economic elite invested significant resources into the creation of a durable conservative party. When both the economic elite and the conservative political elite perceived the left to be a threat, the result was a highly institutionalized conservative party that strives to protect its unity. Alternatively, when the economic elite did not invest extensively in the party system, the result was a conservative party with a durable organization, but one that is subordinate to the interest of ambitious leaders. When neither the economic elite nor the conservative political elite was threatened by the presence of the left in the party system, conservative parties with thin organizations formed in the party system. These parties are
controlled by prospective presidential candidates and rely exclusively on personal reputations and electoral campaigns to win elections.

Chapter Four argues that the findings of the previous two chapters, which explained when the left will be an electorally viable party and when conservative parties will form durable organizations, affect party system institutionalization. Party systems that include relevant parties with durable organizations tend to be more stable, in support of most arguments in the literature. This type of organization tends to bind citizens to the party system, encouraging loyalty from one election to the next. Contrary to other arguments in the literature, the chapter also shows that party systems with high polarization tend to lead to high levels of electoral stability. Polarization encourages stability by promoting the mobilization of citizens and increasing the distance between parties, increasing the costs of switching parties from one election to the next. Party systems with low polarization and thin organizations, on the other hand, tend to lead to inchoate party systems.

Do differences across party systems matter for how citizens relate to the party system and democracy? In Chapter Five I address part of this question by examining how the two party system characteristics that have been the focus of the dissertation, polarization and electoral stability, affect voter turnout. The analysis in this chapter expands to include a larger group of countries from Latin America. I adopt this approach, rather than just examining what impact these two party system characteristics have on El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua for two important reasons. By increasing the number of countries I am can use multivariate analysis to examine the relationship between party system characteristics and voter turnout. In addition, while previous
chapters have argued that the three post-conflict cases of Central America challenge a number of theories of party system formation, there is no theoretical reason to expect that the effects that polarization and stability have on voter turnout is limited to these three countries or that the effect will be different in these countries.\textsuperscript{11} The findings of this chapter suggest that electoral stability has a curvilinear relationship with voter turnout, so that at extreme values voters are less likely to participate in elections. The chapter also finds that just as polarization was an important motivator for elite behavior during the transition, it also has an important positive effect on voter turnout, encouraging higher levels of participation.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss the main findings of the dissertation: that transition effects explain party system institutionalization in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and that in dual transitions these effects have the capacity to endure. I also consider a future research agenda that would test the dissertation’s argument that dual transitions are critical junctures for party system formation in other post-conflict countries. Lastly, I discuss some of the consequences that these party systems have had for how democracy functions in the three Central American countries and briefly speculate on avenues of change that might help strengthen the three party systems and the quality of democracy in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

\textsuperscript{11} I limit the analysis to Latin America because of data availability, in particular because of scarcity of data in measuring polarization.
CHAPTER 2:
ORGANIZATIONS AND STRATEGIES, THE LEFT IN POST-CONFLICT CENTRAL AMERICA

2.1 Introduction

The countries of Central America, with the exception of Costa Rica, have a weak democratic tradition with little experience in nonviolent political competition. Despite this turbulent history, at the end of the twentieth century the countries of the region experienced a series of regime transitions. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the transitions were dual ones, ending the armed conflicts and instituting new regimes. Since then, free and fair elections have become the norm in these countries and progressive groups (including ex-guerilla organizations) are a part of mainstream politics. This is a significant development in a region where the state not only stopped progressive organizations from participating, but also persecuted and repressed such groups.

In this chapter I examine how the leftist, ex-guerilla movements of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua have performed as political parties in the new regimes. I explain why ex-guerilla organizations have either performed well or struggled electorally in the post-transition period. I focus on elections to determine the success of a political party because votes are essential to a party’s survival and the pursuit of its goals. How parties perform in elections dictate a wide variety of issues, such as the number of seats the party has in the legislature, the extent to which it has access to the state, and the level
of public funding a party receives. At an even more basic level, in many countries—including the ones I examine—the percentage of votes that a party receives determines whether the party will maintain its legal status.

In Nicaragua, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) is an example of a party that has performed well in post-transition elections. Since its electoral defeat in 1990, the party has succeeded in keeping a significant number of voters loyal to its label. This electoral success has secured the party’s role as a central political actor and its eventual return to power in 2006 when the FSLN won the presidency. El Salvador’s ex-guerilla organization, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), has also consistently received a large percentage of votes. The party has been the second biggest in the country since its transformation into a political party and in 2009 after fifteen years of being the opposition won the presidency. Compared to the strong electoral performance of the FSLN and FMLN, the electoral performance of Guatemala’s ex-guerilla organization, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guerrilalateca (URNG), has been poor. The URNG has been unable to gain a foothold in the country’s elections, performing poorly at all electoral levels.

To explain the variance in the electoral performance of these three leftist parties, I focus on the dual transition process and argue that it was a critical juncture (Collier and Collier 1991-39; Pierson 2000) for the development of the party system. I posit that it is in this period of time that the factors that facilitated the transformation from guerilla movement to electorally strong political party can be found. I identify two variables that shaped the electoral future of the FSLN, FMLN, and URNG: the reach of the
movement’s organization, the extent to which it has a national presence and ties with civil society, and the transition strategy that the left adopted.

The left’s organization is important because it is a political resource for the left, giving it a measure of strength during the transition and influence over potential voters in elections. Thus, I expect leftist parties with larger organizations that have ties with civil society and some influence over social organizations to perform better electorally in post-transition elections than leftist movements that had smaller organizations that have weak links with civil society. The left’s organization, however, cannot provide a full account of the left’s electoral performance in post-transition elections. Only by including the concept of agency can we account for the left’s electoral future. The left’s transition strategy is central to the explanation because it determines the extent to which the left takes advantage of the political resources it has during the transition (antecedent conditions) and the opportunities that the transition presents, such as placing the left at the center of the political arena, to help in its transformation into a competitive political party.

The left had various strategy choices available during the transition, but not all strategies were as helpful in the transformation into a political party that could successfully participate in competitive elections. I highlight two strategic choices and argue that the first, a procedural strategy, is more conductive to future electoral success. The focus of this strategy is to secure changes to the institutions that govern electoral competition during the transition negotiations and on strengthening the movement’s organization and its ties with civil society throughout the transition. The second is a structural strategy; its aim is to seek system-wide changes that address socio-economic problems, such as land redistribution, a more equitable distribution of resources, etc. and
leaves the reorganization of the movement into a political party until after the resolution of the negotiations at the end of the transition.

Although these two variables, the strength of the organization and the transition strategy, do not predetermine electoral outcomes, they do influence the probability that a leftist party will compete successfully for votes in the aftermath of the transition. When the left has strong ties with civil society and it adopts a strategy that makes the most of the opportunities of the transition, the left is more likely to become a strong electoral contender in the post-transition regime. This argument is an alternative to existing explanations of party system formation and the integration of ex-guerilla organizations into party systems that emphasize other variables, such as institutions or social cleavages. These explanations are unable to account for the pattern of party system formation in the three post-conflict Central American cases. Similarly, arguments that focus solely on the strength of leftist actors in the pre-transition period or the strategies of new parties in the post-transition period cannot fully account for how the left has performed electorally in the new regimes.

2.1.1 Why Study Leftist Parties?

Understanding how the FMLN, FSLN, and URNG have done in post-transition elections is important for a number of reasons. In a region where conservative parties have tended to dominate the political arena the left is particularly important. Historically, the left has been more likely to raise issues of inequality, poverty, and corruption. The presence of leftist parties is important for the articulation of popular interests and the inclusion of all social sectors in the party system. The presence of a wide range of
ideologies in the party system can have a positive influence in shaping a country’s programmatic agenda.

The presence of a viable leftist party is also critical for giving citizens a wide range of choices during elections. In these cases, the choices available to voters expand as parties positioned themselves on the left side of the political spectrum, a space previously empty due to state repression. Providing citizens with alternatives is important because it helps ensure that elections do not become insignificant or irrelevant processes. The presence of these choices can also have a positive effect on political participation, that is, voting. A number of scholars have found that the availability of choices, including their range, are important and influence citizens’ decision to vote or abstain (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Crepaz 1990; Dalton and Tanaka 2007; Gray and Caul 2000; Kostadinova 2003; Pacek and Radcliff 1995; Radcliff 1992).

The findings of this chapter also provide further theorizing about post-conflict democracies and how they might differ from other types of transitions (Bermeo 2003, 2007). In addition, the chapter contributes to our understanding of what factors lead to the successful transformation of ex-guerrilla movements into political parties and what impact their incorporation into the political arena can have on the party systems. These are important questions as previous work has shown that the successful incorporation of ex-guerrilla movements into the party system increases the probability that democratic transitions in post-conflict countries will survive (Lyons 2002, 2004; Wallensteen 2002; Söderberg Kovacs 2006). Given the number of potential dual transitions that are still pending, these lessons can help in the stabilization of new regimes.
The chapter also contributes to the literature on path dependence. This chapter’s findings provide an argument about how the transition process shaped the post-transition party system. The chapter highlights the importance of transitions as critical junctures and identifies the causal mechanisms of the transition process. I put forth the first sequence of an explanation of party system institutionalization, one that shows how early decisions in the process, by the left, shaped future possibilities, restricting the choices that would be possible in future interactions between the elite. In addition, the self-reinforcing mechanisms that I identify make the probability of departing from the developmental path unlikely (Pierson 2000:74-6; Collier and Collier 1991:29-31), which explains the stability of the patterns established.

Analyzing the electoral performance of these three leftist parties is also important because of the wider implications that their integration had on the party systems. The incorporation of new, previously excluded actors reshaped the party system in the post-transition period. Part of the impact that the left had on party systems is due to the rejection that important sectors in these societies have towards progressive programs. The extent to which conservative forces perceived the left to be a threat to their interests, values, and privileged position influenced the right’s transition strategy. When this threat existed, the fear that the left would take power, it pushed conservative actors into adopting a strategy that required high levels of investment in conservative parties and the party system, despite the added costs of such a strategy. This threat from the left was a mobilizing factor because of the dual nature of the transition process, which increased the perception of threat and the costs of losing.
The following section in the chapter provides a more detailed account of the FSLN, FMLN, and URNG’s electoral performance in post-transition elections. In the second section, I show how the legacies of the transition process have shaped the left’s electoral viability in the post-transition period. Section three outlines the strength of the left’s organization and its ties with civil society during the transition, while section four examines the type of strategy that the left pursued. In the fifth section, I discuss how these variables impacted the formation of the post-conflict party systems by shaping the left’s chances in future elections. Section six explores the importance of organizations and transition strategies in four other cases. The following section examines alternative arguments of party system formation and the incorporation of ex-rebel groups into the party system. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the importance of the transition process for leftist parties and party systems in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and the wider implications for how we analyze party system formation.

2.2 The Electoral Performance of the Left

The transformation from an organization that has as its primary goal the military defeat of the state to a political party is not easy. More often than not, organizations that have attempted this change have struggled to establish themselves as relevant parties. A study of the electoral performance of such groups in Central America reveals examples of successful and unsuccessful transformations. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the variance in the left’s performance in presidential and legislative elections in post-conflict Central America. While the vote share of the three parties has fluctuated in the post-transition period, both the FSLN and FMLN have tended to receive more than 30% of the
vote, especially in later elections. The URNG’s vote share, on the other hand, has dropped sharply over time.

Figure 2.1: Electoral Performance of the Left

SOURCES: Official electoral statistics from the Tribunal Electoral Supremo, El Salvador, Tribunal Electoral Supremo, Guatemala, Consejo Electoral Nacional, various years.

NOTES: 1) For Guatemala results include the average that the party received in departmental and national lists.
2) P: Presidential elections
3) L: Legislative Elections

Table 2.1 and 2.2 present, respectively, the FSLN’s and FMLN’s vote share in presidential and legislative elections. Compared to other parties in these systems, both of the leftist parties have performed well. In presidential elections, after placing second in three consecutive elections the FSLN was successful in its 2006 presidential bid. In El
Salvador, the FMLN has been the only likely alternative to the governing party and in 2009 won its first presidential election. In legislative elections, both the FSLN and FMLN have consistently captured a large percentage of votes in the post-transition period. As a result, these parties are one of the major players in the legislative arena.

### TABLE 2.1:

**NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FSLN</th>
<th>MRS</th>
<th>Liberal Alliances (PLC)</th>
<th>ALN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 1990</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1990</td>
<td>40.8% (39)</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>53.88% (51)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presidential 1996</strong></td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1996</td>
<td>36.49% (36)</td>
<td>1.4% (1)</td>
<td>45.25% (42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presidential 2001</strong></td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2001</td>
<td>51.1% (46)</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>48.2% (42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presidential 2006</strong></td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2006</td>
<td>38.0% (38)</td>
<td>6.3% (5)</td>
<td>27.11% (25)</td>
<td>28.3% (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** Consejo Supremo Electoral, Nicaragua

**NOTES:**
1) Numbers in parentheses are the number of seats that a party had in the legislature. In 1990, there were a total of 92 seats, in 1996, 93 seats, and in 2001 and 2006, 92 seats.
2) C: In coalition with the FSLN.
TABLE 2.2:
SALVADORAN ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FMLN</th>
<th>ARENA</th>
<th>PD</th>
<th>MR</th>
<th>CD-FDR</th>
<th>FDR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 1994</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- second round</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1994</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1997</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 1999</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2000</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2003</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 2004</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2006</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 2009</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2009</td>
<td>42.60%</td>
<td>38.55%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, El Salvador.

NOTES: 1) Numbers in parentheses are the number of seats that a party had in the legislature. There are 84 seats in the legislature.

2) (1) FMLN in coalition with Cambio Democrático (CD).

3) (2) FMLN in coalition with Unión Social Cristiana (USC).

4) PD: Partido Demócrata; MR: Movimiento Renovador; FDR: Frente Democrático Revolucionario.

In contrast, the electoral performance of Guatemala’s URNG has been poor. Table 2.3 compares the URNG’s vote share to the other major political parties in the system and shows the minor role that the URNG plays in elections. Originally, this was not the case. In the URNG’s first election, the party performance well, capturing the third largest bloc of votes. By its second election, however, the URNG’s vote share had dropped dramatically in both the presidential and legislative elections. This poor electoral performance has been repeated since.
### TABLE 2.3:

GUATEMALAN ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>1999 (departmental list)</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2003 (national list)</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2007 (national list)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 1999</td>
<td>12.4% (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- second round</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.5% (0)</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.5% (2)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1999</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>4.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.10% (1)</td>
<td>26.9% (7)</td>
<td>3.23% (2)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(national list)</td>
<td>2.9% (0)</td>
<td>4.10% (1)</td>
<td>4.10% (1)</td>
<td>26.9% (7)</td>
<td>27.7% (30)</td>
<td>0.81% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 1999</td>
<td>10.9% (7)</td>
<td>3.23% (2)</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>7.30%</td>
<td>3.23% (2)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(departmental list)</td>
<td>2.5% (0)</td>
<td>4.1% (1)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4.54% (3)</td>
<td>4.1% (1)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 2003</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>34.30%</td>
<td>28.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- second round</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>34.30%</td>
<td>28.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2003</td>
<td>4.2% (1)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>10.9% (4)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>0.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(national list)</td>
<td>5.2% (5)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>10.9% (4)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>0.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2003</td>
<td>4.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>10.9% (4)</td>
<td>4.9% (1)</td>
<td>0.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(departmental list)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>4.54% (3)</td>
<td>4.54% (3)</td>
<td>9.71% (14)</td>
<td>4.54% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential 2007</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>17.23%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- second round</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>17.23%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative 2007</td>
<td>3.56% (2)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>28.25%</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(national list)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>28.25%</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
<td>1.37% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOUCES: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, Guatemala.

NOTES: 1) Numbers in parentheses are the number of seats a party had in the legislature. In 1999, there were 113 seats in the legislature. In 2003 and 2007 there were 158 seats.

2) (1) URNG in coalition with Desarrollo Integral Auténtico (DIA).
This review of the left’s electoral performance in post-conflict Central America shows the electoral success of the FSLN and FMLN. While the FSLN’s strong electoral performance is perhaps less surprising, given the party’s position in power during the 1980s, the FMLN had fewer advantages during the conflict and yet, in the post-conflict period it has established itself as a major contender for power in El Salvador. The electoral success of both parties has ensured that they maintain a prominent position as national actors in the post-transition period. The poor electoral performance of the URNG, on the other hand, has diminished the party’s ability to play a significant role in the political arena.

2.3 Explaining Electoral Performance: Organizations and Strategies

To explain the electoral success of some leftist ex-guerilla movements, the FMLN and FSLN, and the unsuccessful electoral performance of another, the URNG, it is necessary to analyze the dual transitions that took place in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s. The transitions began when the incumbents of the three countries opened up the political arena in search of stability. Eventually, political liberalization expanded to include negotiations between the warring factions in the armed conflict in peace processes, although this was not the initial plan of those who initiated the process (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

What took place during the transitions shaped the party systems of the new democracies, including the future electoral performance of the left. Two variables were critical in influencing how well the left would manage the new electoral arena: the left’s organization during the transition and its ties with civil society and the left’s transition
strategy. These variables shaped these parties and party systems in the first years of the post-transition period such that the early outcomes (successful or unsuccessful) have been reinforced over time.

2.3.1 The Importance of Organizations

$P_1$: Ex-guerrilla movements that had an extensive political organization with ties to civil society during the transition will perform better in post-transition elections.

Those movements that have an extensive national organization with ties to civil society during the transition will perform better in elections. Since the focus of this organization had been on binding citizens to the movement during the conflict, support for the organization had high levels of commitment. Ties with civil society give the left legitimacy during the transition and these links can be turned into strengths for a political party (Shugart 1992:128; Allison 2006). An extensive organization gives a new party a potential group of activist who can be used to mobilize voters. Ties to civil society, mass organizations, unions, etc. also give the left ready access to a potential pool of voters, especially in the first post-transition election. In addition, the more influence that the left has over progressive movements and organizations the more likely it is that the left will become the representative of these organizations in the political arena.

12 The same cannot be said of the military capabilities of the organization, since neither access to weapons nor fighting experience easily translate into political resources for a new party.
2.3.2 The Importance of Strategies

P₂: The left’s transition strategy affects the extent to which it will successfully handle a transformation into an electorally relevant political party in the new competitive party system.

Although the organization that the left had prior to the transition is an important factor that affects the left’s capacity to compete successfully in post-transition elections, does not provide a sufficient explanation of the left’s electoral performance long after the resolution of the transitions. The strength of an organization is not fixed, its continual existence and maintenance depends on what strategy the left chose, in addition, the left needs a strategy that is focused on securing votes. Roberts (1998) makes a similar argument for the Peruvian and Chilean cases, noting that “the strength of a leftist party in civil society is no guarantee of success in the electoral realm” (77). While the left’s role during the transition gave it, among certain sectors in society, a certain amount of support this support does not automatically last beyond the first post-transition election. As Hofferbert (1998) notes for the post-communist cases that “[s]tatus as a heroic movement does not necessarily translate into a readiness to become just one more competitor in an open contest” (427). To compete successfully, the left has a new set of electoral needs, including binding voters to the organization and it has to adopt a strategy that addresses these needs.

The organizational strength of the left in the pre-transition periods might explain why the FMLN and FSLN performed better than the URNG in the first post-conflict election, it cannot explain why the URNG lost its vote share or why the FMLN and FSLN continued to perform well past the first election. As other studies have demonstrated, other leftist parties with organizational strengths have been unable to
survive transitions because of the strategies they adopted. Roberts (1998) findings for the left’s electoral performance in Chile and Peru is an example of this. For the countries he analyzes, it is the left’s strategy that accounts for poor electoral performance. In Chile, for instance, the Communist Party despite its organizational strengths in the pre-transition period was electorally unsuccessful while the Socialist Party’s electoral success in the post-transition period cannot be explained by its organizational weaknesses during the authoritarian regime. Grzymala-Busse’s (2002) work also finds that the success of communist parties in the post-transition period rests on the transition strategy that the leader of these parties adopted, not only on the characteristics of their pre-transition organizations.

Once the left decided to participate in the transition and negotiate to resolve the conflict, it faced a choice over what strategy it would adopt during the transition. A number of factors influence the left’s choice. These influences include: the existing strengths of the organization; the need to keep its constituency’s support; a calculation of what demands were feasible and realistic (the balance of power of the transition); what the left expected the international community would support; and what significance the left attributed to the transition itself.

I examine two potential strategies: a procedural one and structural one. The first option is a strategy that focuses on securing change in the political arena during

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13 The decision to seek a negotiated settlement to the conflict arose as a consequence of numerous factors, especially the changing world order and the insurgent’s calculation of whether it could sustain an armed opposition for much longer, given the population’s increasing sense of fatigue and their dwindling resources.

14 Other options include what I label a material strategy, one focused on securing the immediate allocation of economic resources to the organization (usually its leaders) in exchange for the
negotiations, as well as strengthening the left’s organization and its ties with civil society. I posit that this strategy facilitates the left’s transformation into a political party. In contrast, when the left adopts a structural strategy it is less likely to perform well in post-transition elections.

A procedural strategy is more conductive to facilitating the transformation of the left into an electorally strong party because the strategy is focused on the political arena and the needs of the new party at a time when the left has a number of advantages. It takes advantage of the political resources the left already has, its organization, and the opportunities the transition creates, such as the prominent position it has during the transition. An early focus on its electoral needs helps the left secure a position as the representative of the progressive agenda in the new party system, facilitating future electoral competition.

In contrast, when the left chose a structural strategy, its focus was on securing system-wide changes that address socio-economic problems. This strategy is less conductive to helping the left transform itself into an electorally successful political party because it uses its resources and energies during the transition to try to alter power relations in the political, social, and economic spheres. This is problematic for the left’s electoral future because the movement only begins to focus to its electoral needs, including the restructuring and strengthening of its organization, at the end of the transition process. For the left, relegating its electoral needs to the end of the transition is costly because at the end of the process the left can no longer count on some of the demobilization of the movement. This strategy is especially relevant in the African movements I explore later in the chapter.
opportunities that the transition process created, regardless of its organizational strength. For example, after the resolution of the transition the left is no longer the representative of the progressive agenda in the national arena, its prominent position in the political arena has diminished.

Timing plays an important role in the transformation of the left into an electorally competitive party (Pierson 2000). The two variables, organization and strategy, are important during a specific moment in time: the transition. To become an electorally successful party in the post-transition period, the left has to adopt the right strategy at the right time. During the transition process, the left’s configuration of political opportunity (Brockett 2005; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) changed, opening the political space and creating a window of opportunity that put the left in a place of national prominence as one of the key negotiators in the peace process. This process presented the left with an opportunity to capitalize on its role in this process, to use its prominence to focus on its organizational needs and the importance of capturing and maintaining an electoral base of support for future competitive elections.

The left’s organization and its electoral strategy have lasting effect on the left’s electoral performance because they determined the extent to which the left would have access to resources in the early years of the post-transition period and whether the left was poised to optimize these resources. Organizations are important to the left because to be competitive, political parties need to be able to run national campaigns and mobilize voters at the national level. Given that leftist parties are unlikely to receive large sums of money from the economic elite, in general but particularly in these countries, leftist parties require a large membership base and state resources to survive and compete.
effectively. Those leftist parties that focused on the need for a party organization during the transition when the process created certain opportunities, are better prepare to take advantage of early victories that give the party access to the state. This early advantage helps the left sustain its successful electoral performances past its first election, effectively using the state to perpetuate its position as an electorally successful party.

Ultimately, to compete successfully in post-transition elections the left needs an extensive national organization that has ties to society. While some of the leftist actors had strong organizations before the transition, the continual existence of this organization and its ties with civil society depends on what strategy the left chose during the transition as the party system took shape. It is theoretically possible that an organization that had extensive ties with civil society would be unable to sustain them or transform them into votes once the transition had concluded, as Robert’s (1998) work demonstrates.

If the left did not focus on strengthening its organization for electoral purposes and binding society to the party’s label during the transition it was unable to take advantage of the process and initial instances of success to build an electoral base of support. A party that does not take advantage of the opportunities of the transition and early victories is unable to sustain its initial success past the first election. Losing the momentum of the transition is costly for the left because after this period the opportunities of the transition have disappeared and its range of options has narrowed. Once a party is in decline, the opportunity to attract resources—members or money—diminishes. Social groups or political entrepreneurs are unlikely to invest in weak parties, choosing instead to form ties with existing successful parties or creating new parties. For
this reason, what took place during the transition process was critical for the electoral future of the left in the post-transition period.

Having now outlined my argument about what factors explain the left’s electoral performance in the post-transition period, in the next two sections I examine the left’s organization and its strategy during the transitions.

2.4 Pre-Transition Legacies: The Left’s Organization

Initially, in the first years of the member movements of the FMLN, FSLN, and URNG, ties with mass movements were not considered important. The three organizations were created in response to the exclusionary and repressive nature of the Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran regimes when their founders came to the conclusion that only an armed struggle would result in political change (Goodwin 2001; Brockett 2005). Because the goal of the groups was to challenge the authoritarian regimes militarily, the guerrilla’s military structure was a critical component of the movements. However, after the first failures to ignite revolutionary change in the 1960s, the leaderships of the guerilla organizations came to the conclusion that for the armed struggle to succeed a mass base of support had to be created. The result was the formation of political organizations that worked with civil society to create collaborators for the movements, support for the movements among society, and worked to prepare the

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15 The majority of the founders of the revolutionary movements were originally members of political parties and movements that broke away from their organizations to seek political change through armed struggle (Goodwin 2001; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Brockett 2005).
population for a regime change (Brockett 2005; Goodwin 2001; Jonas 1991; Martí i Puig and Figueroa Ibarra 2006).

Decades later, when the FMLN, FSLN, and URNG sat down to negotiate a political end to the conflicts, the importance of the military structure continued to be high—this time, because military power translated into bargaining power. The ties that these organizations had created with mass movements during the conflict proved to be as important for their electoral future. Although it is hard to quantify these ties with mass organizations, especially as two of the organizations—the FMLN and URNG—were clandestine movements at the time of the transition, there is evidence in the historical record of the extent to which they had these ties with society during the transition.

2.4.1 Extensive Organizations

At the time of the transition, the FSLN had a wide base of popular support despite its electoral defeat. The FSLN had maintained a policy of popular mobilization and incorporation, using its first years in power to consolidate the organization and its popular base of support (Booth 1985; Stahler-Sholk 1995; Dunkerley 1988). As part of this policy of mobilization, the FSLN created numerous national and local organizations and movements (Vilas 1986; Booth 1985; Brás 1994; Stahler-Sholk 1995; Robinson and Norsworthy 1988; Luciak 1990; Gilbert 1988).16 Serra (1991) estimates that millions of adults were members of Sandinista organizations, which gave the FSLN a large base of support. The support that the FSLN received from Nicaraguans in the first half of the

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16 The most important of the mass organizations created were the urban and rural unions and the Comités de Defensa Sandinista, but various other organizations that were devoted to specific issues, such as women and youth, were also formed (Close 1988; Gilbert 1988; Vilas 1986; Williams 1994).
1980s can be seen in the results of the 1984 election in which the FSLN won a majority of votes, control of the executive, and a majority in the legislature.\(^{17}\)

By the mid-1980s it is estimated that over half of the Nicaraguan population was part of the system of mass urban and rural movements that the FSLN had created (Stahler-Sholk 1990; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006). The FSLN dominated in its relationships these mass movements, they which had been set up to support the FSLN and its initiatives and their interests were subordinate to those of the party. However, in the latter half of the 1980s, relations between mass movements and the FSLN became more problematic (Stahler-Sholk 1990, 1995; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006; Vilas 1990). The FSLN was facing a number of problems, including an economic crisis and an armed opposition, both of which threatened the viability and reach of the FSLN’s social programs (Walker 2000; Stahler-Sholk 1995).\(^{18}\) The FSLN’s focus on participatory democracy and mass movements also began to change, partly as a consequence of the other problems that the government was facing. The return to geographical representation after the 1984 election, compared to the earlier model based on the representation of social sectors, and the co-option and even demobilization of some movements by the FSLN also strained relations between the FSLN and civil society (Walker 2000; Stahler-Sholk 1990; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006).\(^{19}\)

\(^{17}\) Most political parties participated in the 1984 election. While the U.S. refused to recognize the election, other observers accepted them as free and fair (Calvert 1998; Norsworthy and Barry 1989; Latin American Studies Association 1984).


\(^{19}\) See Stahler-Sholk (1995) and Luciak (1990) for more on the increasing autonomy of the labor movement during this time.
Although by the end of the 1980s the links between the FSLN and mass organizations were weaker than they had previously been, few have argued that this weakness cost the FSLN the 1990 election. Most analyses of the election point to economic factors, the end of the armed conflict, and the FSLN’s exclusive focus on the involvement of the U.S. as the cause of the nation’s problems as the reasons for the FSLN defeat (Anderson, Lewis-Beck, and Stegmaier 2003; Conroy 1990; Stahler-Sholk 1995; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006).\(^{20}\) While the electoral results showed a decrease in popular support for the FSLN, the party continued to have a well-organized base of political support in both urban and rural areas, as well as substantial control over the social movements it had created.

In El Salvador, the FMLN was also successful in building strong ties with mass movements, many of which the member organizations of the FMLN had created. Each of the four organizations that came together to form the FMLN had its own political structure in charge of building popular support for the revolution (Zamora 2003; Martí i Puig 2006).\(^{21}\) These political structures functioned under the direction of the individual member organization with some coordinating efforts between them, until the end of the

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\(^{20}\) The FSLN had its own interpretation of the causes of the defeat, see for example the party’s “Texto de la Proclama y Resoluciones del FSLN” in Envío (1990) and Smith (1997) who notes that factions within the FSLN took the electoral defeat as proof of a growing gap between the leadership and the rank and file, as well as the problems with the hierarchical structure of the party.

\(^{21}\) The Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FLP) created the Bloque Popular Revolucionario; the Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional (FARN) had the Frente de Acción Popular Unificada; the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) formed the Ligas 28 de Febrero; and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC) created the Movimiento de Liberación Popular. The last member organization, the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS), unlike the other organizations, was first a political organization that subsequently went on to form both a military structure, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación (FAL-1979) and a popular organization, the Unión Democrática Nacionalista (Zamora 2003; Gross 1995; Montgomery 1995). Author’s interview with Ana Guadalupe Martínez, ex-FMLN member and representative in the peace negotiations (June 2004), San Salvador, El Salvador confirmed this information.
armed conflict (Gross 1995; Zamora 2003). The FMLN also formed an alliance with the *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR), which included almost all of the progressive civil organizations active during the armed conflict (Brockett 2005; García 1989; Goodwin 2001; Montgomery 1995). Eventually, the FMLN and FDR formed the *Comisión Política-Diplomática* (CPD)—the FMLN-FDR’s foreign ministry—in an effort to create international support to bolster their national position. The CPD was very successful, establishing official representatives in thirty-three countries, securing funding, and the recognition of the FMLN as a “representative political force” by the international community (Montgomery 1995).

The FMLN also had an organizational reach and ties with mass organizations in the countryside, particularly in the northern areas that were under FMLN control (Wood 2001, 2003). In addition, the FMLN had ties with mass movements in the urban areas, including San Salvador (Brockett 2005; Goodwin 2001; Wood 2000, 2001; Montgomery 1995). The FMLN and its member organizations continued with their political work throughout the years of the conflict. This strategy became even more important in the second half of the 1980s. At this time, the FMLN began to expand its political work in both the rural and urban areas (Goodwin 2001; Montgomery 1995).

Estimates

[22] Members of the FDR included eleven political parties, professionals and technicians, small business organizations, the national university, six unions and union federations, a student organization, and the coalition of mass organizations: the *Coordinadora Revolucionaria de las Masas*, the *Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas* (UCA), and the Catholic Church participated in the FDR as observers (Montgomery 1995).

[23] Prior to the 1981 “Final Offensive,” the FMLN’s political work was much more limited; after the failure of the offensive there was a restructuring that placed greater emphasis on political work (Montgomery 1995; Wood 2000).

[24] Author’s interview with Ana Guadalupe Martínez (June 2004), San Salvador, El Salvador confirmed this information.
calculated that the FMLN had more than 50,000 committed supporters and probably the sympathy of at least ten percent of Salvadoran population (LeMoyne 1989).\textsuperscript{25} Montgomery (1995) argues that the FMLN’s base of support, especially in the urban areas, grew during this time because the guerrillas took advantage of the military’s decision to implement political liberalization.\textsuperscript{26}

In addition, the FMLN could count with the support of an impressive number of combatants, which potentially could work as party activists in the post-transition period. Estimates of the FMLN’s strength is estimated to be somewhere between 8,000 and 12,000 (Dunkerley 1988; Wickham-Crowley 1992). At the time of demobilization, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) demobilized 15,009 members (8,552 combatants, 2,474 wounded noncombatants, and 3,983 cadre members) (Luciak 2001).\textsuperscript{27}

The ties between the FMLN and mass movements were never as extensive as those that existed between the FSLN and mass movements in Nicaragua, in addition the Salvadoran civil society had a greater degree of autonomy from the guerrilla movement (Martí i Puig 2006). Yet the FMLN’s organization had an extensive reach, geographically and across various sectors of society and the international community during the transitions.

\textsuperscript{25} Dunkerley (1988) gives higher numbers, stating that by the late 1970s the link between the guerrillas and mass organizations had led to a combined membership of about 250,000 (372).

\textsuperscript{26} Montgomery’s observation is interesting in light of Ryan’s (1994) argument that democratization processes will tend to negatively affect a revolutionary movement by robbing it of a broad coalition in society as more sectors abandon the idea of an armed struggle to begin participating in mainstream politics.

\textsuperscript{27} Luciak (2001) estimates that the FMLN’s total membership was probably slightly higher, ten to fifteen percent, but that not all decided to participate in the demobilization process.
2.4.2 Limited Organizations

In Guatemala, the ties that existed between the URNG and mass movements towards the end of the conflict were much weaker. The guerrilla political structure suffered greatly as a result of the state’s counterinsurgency offensive in the early 1980s. Prior to this offensive, the movements that created the URNG had been successful in restructuring their organizations and strategy in the 1970s to emphasize political work, which had been largely ignored by the first wave of guerrilla movements. After the restructuring, the URNG was successful in creating a base of support in the countryside, especially among the indigenous population (Bastos and Camus 1996, 2003; Le Bot 1992; May 2001). 28 At the time, the URNG was also successful in establishing links and support in the urban areas (Brockett 2005; Gross 1995; Jonas 1991; Bastos and Camus 1996). 29 Although difficult to estimate, the URNG did manage to establish support for itself among the indigenous communities, with members of the community joining the guerrillas (estimates are that as many as 1,000 joined) and providing them with support, especially in the Ixil triangle in the department of Quiché, but also in neighboring departments in the western highlands (Brockett 2005; Carmack 1988).

The URNG, however, was unable to protect the level of support it had in the early 1980s in light of the overwhelming force of the state’s counteroffensive attack. By the mid-1980s very little of the URNG’s ties with social movements remained. 30 As Jonas

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28 For a more detailed discussion on the ties between the guerilla movements and indigenous community see Bastos and Camus (1996; 2003) and Plant (1999).

29 Author’s interview with Rodrigo Asturias, comandante URNG and representative in the peace negotiations, and Alba Estela Maldonado, combatant URNG, in January, 2005 confirmed this information,

30 The strategy of the armed forces revolved around the idea of separating the URNG from its base of supporters, by whatever means necessary. To achieve this goal the armed forces used a number of brutal
(1991) recounts, the URNG was unprepared for the counteroffensive of the early 1980s, underestimating the level of violence that the armed forces would employ and overestimating its own military capabilities. While the URNG refocused and strengthened its political strategy, it had not done enough to prepare its supporters leaving them “unprepared, unarmed, and unprotected” (Jonas 1991). Similarly, in the urban areas the level of coordination amongst the URNG’s combatants and supporters was not sufficient to handle the counteroffensive, which meant that the URNG was unable to coordinate a response or provide protection to its supporters. As a result in the mid-1980s, the URNG was forced to go underground and on the defensive, and in many cases disband its supporters and collaborators for their own protection.31

The number of URNG combatants decreased dramatically after the state’s actions of the early 1980s. In the years prior to the 1981-1983 counteroffensive, the number of URNG combatants are estimated to have been somewhere between 6,000 and 7,500 (Le Bot 1992:195; Perera 1993:10). Aguilera Peralta (1993-1999) estimated that by the mid-1990s the URNG had some 1,000 or 1,500 combatants and could count with the support of some 25,000 others. The official number of demobilized combatants was slightly larger than this estimate. The URNG demobilized 5,753 members (2,940 armed strategies, including scorched-earth campaigns, the massacre of villages, and forced participation with the armed forces through obligatory recruitments into the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC). The armed forces also sought to control the indigenous population through two programs, Polos de Desarrollo and Aldeas Modelo, which relocated communities away from areas of URNG influence. For more on the counterinsurgency, especially its effect on the indigenous community see: Bastos and Camus (2003; 1996), Carmack (1988), Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (1999), Jonas (1991), McCleary (1999), Reyes Illescas (1998), REMHI (1999), and Schirmer (1999).

31 Author’s interview with Rodrigo Asturias, comandante URNG, and Alba Estela Maldonado, comandante URNG, Guatemala City, Guatemala (January, 2005).
combatants and 2,813 international and political support members (Luciak 2001), but less than the FMLN’s numbers.

The consequences of the counterinsurgency for the URNG’s political work were also devastating. The organization lost leaders and supporters throughout the first half of the 1980s (Martí i Puig 2006). It was only towards the end of the decade that mass movements began to once again re-emerge in the country with the military’s opening of the political arena (Bastos and Camus 1996). The ties between these re-emerging mass movements and the URNG were however much weaker than they had been prior to the 1981-1983 counteroffensive. The new movements that emerged were much more autonomous (Jonas 1991, 2000; Bastos and Camus 1996, 2003; Reyes Illescas 1998; Martí i Puig 2006). One sign of the autonomy of these movements from the URNG was their independent participation in the peace process through the Comisión Nacional de Reconciliación (CNR) and its successor the Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil (ASC) during the negotiations. Guatemala was the only country in Central America where civil society participated independently in the peace process. Despite their weakness, however, ties continued to exist, giving the guerrillas some form of popular support during the transition. For instance, many of the proposals that the URNG presented in the negotiations came from the organizations involved in the ASC.

Throughout the conflict, the URNG maintained an international presence, managing to carve for itself an important position as the representative of a sector of the Guatemalan society. As more international attention turned towards Guatemala in the middle and late 1980s, a result of its poor human rights record and the regional transitions, the URNG leadership worked to cultivate this attention. This strategy
increased international support for its own position as a relevant national actor in the 1980s when militarily, the URNG no longer had a strong national presence (Pasára 2003; Martí i Puig 2006; Figueroa Ibarra 2006).32

In sum, both the FSLN and FMLN had extensive organizations and strong ties with mass movements and civil society at the time of the transition. In contrast by the time the transition began, the URNG had a much smaller organization with weak ties with civil society, although the organization continued to maintain an active front and was the one to represent the initiatives of civil society in the negotiation process.33

2.5 Transition Legacies: The Left’s Strategy

Neither the FMLN, FSLN, nor URNG followed a pure strategy, one that was entirely procedural or entirely substantive, but they did adopt strategies that more closely resembled one of these types. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the FMLN and FSLN chose a procedural strategy, while the left in Guatemala followed a substantive one.

32 Author’s interview with Rodrigo Asturias, comandante URNG (January, 2005), Alba Estela Maldonado, comandante URNG (January, 2005); Gen. Julio Balconi, military representative in the peace talks from 1991 to 1996 and Ministre of Defense under President Arzú (March, 2005); Col. Benjamin Godoy, Commander various military zones and Military Attaché to the Guatemalan Embassy in Washington, D.C. (1993) (March, 2005); Héctor Rosada, head government representative in the peace negotiations (April, 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

33 Goodwin (2001) categorizes such movements as movements of “persistent insurgency,” although unsuccessful, these movements persist for years and maintain significant popular support. He includes an analysis of the FMLN and URNG in his argument that we need a third category of insurgency for movements that are neither successes nor failures (Chapter 7).
2.5.1 Procedural Strategy: The FSLN and FMLN

What strategy the left chose did not depend entirely on its pre-transition organization or the balance of power between the negotiation actors, although both factors influence the decision. The FSLN’s decision to adopt a procedural strategy is probably the easiest to understand given its organizational advantages and its former position in power. The FSLN’s central interest was to preserve the status quo, the framework that it had created during its years in power, including the 1987 Constitution and the land reform it had implemented.\(^{34}\) The FSLN focused on a procedural strategy and protecting the integrity of the military (the Ejército Sandinista Popular, ESP). The logic was that this would serve as a guarantee against attempts at dismantling the Sandinista project or attempts at taking revenge against the FSLN.\(^{35}\) Unlike the other two leftist organizations, the FSLN already knew the results of the first democratic election; it knew that if the institutional framework was respected it could protect and pursue its policy preferences.\(^{36}\)

After the 1990 election, in the negotiations between the outgoing FSLN government and the incoming UNO government, the FSLN focused on the following eight points, which sought to maintain the institutions the FSLN had created as well as

\(^{34}\) Maintaining the new distribution of land was important for the FSLN, not only because it had been a core part of its revolutionary project, but also because if it had been dismantled it would have directly affected the FSLN’s constituency and the personal holdings of FSLN leaders.

\(^{35}\) Author’s interview with Gen. Joaquín Cuadra Lacayo, former FSLN member and second in command in the ESP (October 2005); Antonio Lacayo, Chief of Staff for President Chamorro (September 2005); and Sergio Ramírez, ex-FSLN member and Vice-President during the transition (October 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

\(^{36}\) Most observers of the 1984 Nicaraguan election would consider this to be the first “democratic” election. My focus on post-conflict transitions, however, means that I am more interested in the negotiations that took place after the 1990 election since the 1984 election did not end the armed conflict.
protect its organization: 1) recognizing the results of the 1990 elections as a process that strengthened democracy in the country and would lead to a long and lasting peace; 2) respecting the reforms undertaken during the previous decade and guaranteeing the 1987 Constitution; 3) demobilizing the Contra before the new government took power on the 25th of April; 4) subordinating of the armed forces and other security bodies to the president of the republic this included decreasing the military’s numbers, abandoning its partisan character, and respecting the new government towards the institution; 5) maintaining the integrity and independence of the different powers of the state; 6) respecting the urban and rural properties assigned before the 25th of February of 1990; 7) ordering the transfer of the executive power within a framework of mutual security; and 8) protecting the jobs of public servants (Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006; Núñez 1994).

The FSLN suffered from internal disorganization during the election and in its aftermath as different factions sought to control the party. One of these factions worked to strengthen the links with mass organizations, uniting with them in opposition to the new government’s neoliberal policies. This faction was under the leadership of Daniel Ortega, who by 1994 had secured control of the party apparatus (Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006). While the FSLN suffered from the shock of relinquishing its role as the state-party, the faction that took power of the organization worked to strengthen the party’s national organization and reinforce its ties with civil society at a time when the FSLN still had advantages from its years in power and the transition.

37 A translation of the full document signed between the FSLN and UNO government can be found in Carter Center’s (1990) observation report.
In El Salvador, the FMLN also adopted a procedural strategy in the transition. Institutional changes, including some constitutional reforms, electoral reforms, and the incorporation of the FMLN as a political actor were placed at the beginning of negotiating agenda, signaling the importance that the FMLN placed on them as prerequisites for the resolution of the conflict. Partly, the FMLN’s strategy choice was the result of the cohesion of the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) and the Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada (ANEP) and how they constrained the negotiations. Although this alliance was interested in ending the conflict and returning the country to a business-friendly environment (Segovia 1996; Wood 2000; Martí i Puig 2006; Cardenal 2002), it was not prepared to enter into a discussion of the economy or any socio-economic matters. ARENA never deviated from its position that as an elected government it had a mandate from the people that included an economic plan, and that this fell outside of the political causes of the conflict (Stanley 2006; Cañas and Dada 1999).38

The FMLN was aware that to try to include a more extensive substantive agenda would have stalled the process indefinitely, and there was no assurance that the FMLN would be in a similar position of strength if it waited for the next government.39 With the changing international context—the waning of the Cold War—as well as the changes

38 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol, ARENA member and president of the legislature during the peace negotiations (April 2005) Alfredo Cristiani, ARENA member and president of El Salvador during the peace negotiations (November 2005); Oscar Alfredo Santamaria, government negotiator during the peace negotiations (May 2005); Ana Guadalupe Martínez, ex-FMLN member and representative in the peace negotiations (April 2005); Salvador Samayoa, ex-FMLN member and representative in the negotiations (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

39 Author’s interview with Ana Guadalupe Martínez, (April 2005) and Salvador Samayoa (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
taking place at the regional level through the *Esquipulas* process, the expectation was that financial aid would decrease. There were also no guarantees that any subsequent government would be pro-negotiation or that the next government could be trusted to implement any accords signed.\(^{40}\) The only socio-economic policies that the FMLN sought in the negotiations affected those who had been members of the movements or its affiliates. As Wood (2000) argues, these policies were critical for the FMLN, which needed to keep its constituency happy.

At the same time, the FMLN recognized that it had organizational strengths that if reinforced could give it an electoral victory, after which it could promote a different socio-economic agenda.\(^{41}\) Already a center-left party, the CD, had done well in the 1991 legislative election, demonstrating that an electoral strategy could have favorable results. Once the FMLN committed itself to a negotiated solution to the conflict, it worked to transform its organization into a political party and its support base into party activists and voters. In the negotiations, the FMLN was concerned with assuring that future elections would be fair, that the organization as a party would have a role in protecting the electoral process, and that its future would be protected. It achieved this by negotiating reforms to the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE), which would give the three parties with the largest percentage of votes, seats in the TSE.\(^{42}\) Furthermore, to ensure

\(^{40}\) The FMLN trusted the ARENA government in this regard because it so closely represented the interests of the Salvadoran economic elite, which meant that the government would not be vetoed by this sector of society in a repeat of what had happened to the Duarte government (interview with Martínez 2004 and Samayoa 2005).

\(^{41}\) Author’s interview with Ana Guadalupe Martínez, (June 2004) and Salvador Samayoa (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

\(^{42}\) Three of five magistrate seats belong to the three largest parties, the other two filled by the legislature.
credibility for the electoral results parties have the right to nominate members to oversee the counting and verification of the official results. To protect the organization and its membership, the FMLN negotiated for the demilitarization of the state, the reduction of the armed forces, and a new police force.\(^{43}\) Outside of the negotiations, the FMLN leadership also worked to transform the organization into a political party, working to bring its members into the new reality.\(^{44}\)

2.5.2 Structural Strategy: The URNG

The URNG in Guatemala adopted a different transition strategy, accepting the general framework of the 1985 Constitution. The movement focused on pursuing a substantive strategy that included socio-economic reforms, including those that concerned the country’s indigenous population (Azpuru 2006; Pasára 2003; Azpuru 1999). The negotiating agenda reflects the priorities of the URNG, with substantive issues discussed at the beginning and institutional reforms, including the incorporation of the URNG into society, left to the end. As Azpuru (1999) notes, the major hurdles in the negotiations were understood to be the substantive issues by all the parties.\(^{45}\) Only after the accords that dealt with substantive issues had been signed were those considered to be procedural ones discussed: the Oslo Cease-Fire Accords, the Stockholm Accord on

\(^{43}\) ARENA also had an interest in these reforms since they gave the government an assurance of autonomy from the armed forces (interview with Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005) and (May 2005).

\(^{44}\) Author’s interview with Ana Guadalupe Martínez, (June 2004), San Salvador, El Salvador.

\(^{45}\) Author’s interviews with Alba Estela Maldonado (January 2005) and Rodrigo Asturias (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
Constitutional and Electoral Reforms, and the Madrid Accord on the Basis for Reincorporation of the URNG.

When institutional issues were finally discussed, few were to the URNG’s benefit. For instance, the Stockholm Accord, which dealt with constitutional and electoral reforms, called for the creation of a commission on electoral reform to study and make recommendations to Congress. As stated in the Accord, the commission was to form no later than three months after the signing of the last accord and would include representatives of all members of political parties with parliamentary representation, as well as members of the Electoral Tribunal. The composition of the commission left the URNG out of subsequent negotiations that aimed to reform the electoral law. Also noteworthy, the Madrid Accord, which dealt with the incorporation of the URNG into civil society, did not call for the automatic incorporation of the organization into the party system—as had been the case with the FMLN. As a result, the URNG had to go through the registration process as outlined by the law. The Madrid Accord dealt only with issues pertaining to the demobilization and incorporation of members of the URNG, rather than with the incorporation of the organization.

The weaknesses of the URNG partially influenced its decision over strategy. The URNG took advantage of the political context of the time, which favored an extensive substantive agenda. By adopting this strategy, the URNG secured the support in the negotiations of organized civil society and the international community (Martí i Puig 2006).46 Scholars and participants argue that by including the participation of a greater

46 According to Aguilera Peralta (1992), because the first phase of the Guatemalan peace process took place between the URNG and civil society, rather than the URNG and the government, the strategy of an encompassing negotiating agenda was reinforced rather than constrained.
number of actors, the URNG bolstered its own bargaining position (Jonas 2000). The leadership also saw an opportunity in the negotiations to address the causes of the conflict, which provided the movement with a victory that justified the years of struggle (Pasára 2003). The substantive agenda that the URNG chose sought to positively affect the URNG’s main groups of supporters, particularly the indigenous community. In these terms the content of the peace accords holds little surprises, and as Arnson (1999) rightfully notes “the talks themselves went much further than the military correlation of forces would have dictated” (20). The focus of the accords reflected the balance of power of the transition but also the preferences of the actors involved, including those of the URNG.

The problem for the URNG, as an organization was the lack of attention that it gave to procedural changes that could have favored its transformation into a political party. The URNG did not combine a substantive strategy with elements of a procedural one, neither in the negotiations nor in its internal practices throughout the transition. Interviews with prominent members of the URNG during the transition revealed that the subject of the organizational transformation that the movement would have to undergo did not become a prominent issue inside the movement until after the negotiations had concluded. It is possible that the URNG assumed that the momentum of the transition and

47 Author’s interview with Bernado, Arévalo de León, academic, and members of the Guatemalan Foreign Service during the conflict, Deputy Foreign Minister (1993-95) and Ambassador to Spain (1995-96) (March 2005) and Alba Estela Maldonado (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

48 Arévalo de León argues that it was in the interests of the Guatemalan government to agree to the inclusion of substantive issues because it gave the government legitimacy, nationally and internationally, a strategy that also helped the government establish autonomy from the armed forces (interview March 2005, Guatemala City, Guatemala). Rodolfo Asturias in an interviewed with the author stated the same idea (January 2005, Guatemala City, Guatemala).
the electoral success of a progressive party, the *Frente Democratico Nueva Guatemala* (FDNG), in the 1995 election would automatically transform the URNG into a relevant political party in the new system. Initially, this proved to be slightly correct, but the lack of attention towards the electoral needs that the URNG would have in the long term was a costly miscalculation for the new party.

2.6 A Winning Combination: Organizations & Strategies

For political parties to compete successfully in elections, they need access to resources with which to sustain the party and run campaigns. Although resources are not sufficient for winning, they are necessary if parties are going to be able to compete for votes. Some of the most common methods through which parties can raise money are: obtaining large donations from a small number of wealthy contributors; securing small amounts of money from a large number of supporters; receiving funds from the state; or using their access to the state for partisan purposes. Since leftist parties are unlikely to be the recipients of large donations from wealthy patrons, these parties are particularly reliant on the other three methods of securing resources. In Central America, however, contributions from the state are not generous enough that leftist parties can compete successfully based solely on these funds. At the same time, given the region’s historical problems with poverty and inequality, leftist parties cannot rely solely on a dues-paying membership to survive. Although a large membership base is important for other reasons, since it provides the organization with party activists that can participate in campaigns and mobilize voters. The most likely option for leftist parties for securing resources is
gaining a foothold into the state and using its resources for partisan purposes. Because of this reliance, getting cut-off from the state has catastrophic results for a leftist party.

For the left, what happened during the transition was important because it determined the extent to which it would have access to resources in the post-transition period. My explanation of the left’s post-transition electoral performance hinges on two variables. The first, the left’s organization and its ties with civil is a legacy of the left’s practices during the conflict. The organization and its ties with civil society are a political resource that helps the left undertake its transformation into a political party in a new regime. Existing ties and members give the left both a ready pool of potential voters, as well as a motivated group of citizens that can be used to mobilize the population in an election. For these resources leftist movements with stronger ties with civil society during the conflict perform better electorally after the transition.

The second variable, the left’s transition strategy, also has long lasting consequences for how well the left will perform in post-conflict elections. What strategy the left chooses is partly influenced by the resources it has available at the time, but also by how the left understood the negotiations—what purpose it believed the transition had—as well as the left’s preferences and priorities at the time. When the left focuses on a procedural strategy at the time of the negotiations and gives priority to securing resources for the party and creating or strengthening a national organization during the transition, it will be able to compete successfully in post-transition elections.

The FSLN, more than the other two organizations, had the advantages of incumbency. These advantages included an extensive network of ties with social movements, many of which the party had created. The FSLN also had the distinct
advantage of already having a national party organization, although one that was heavily reliant on the state for its subsistence (Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006). Although the FMLN’s advantages were not as extensive as those of the FSLN, the FMLN also had political resources—including an extensive political organization—that it could take advantage of as it undertook its transformation into a political party.

In addition, in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the two leftist parties used the advantages they had during the transition to protect and strengthen their existing organization. In the post-transition period, both the FMLN and FSLN used their early advantage to strengthen their position, using state resources to reinvest in the party. For instance, party members with public positions have to give a percentage of their wages to the party organization. This money goes to the central organization, which then disperses it to municipal and departmental organizations or sectors within the party. In Nicaragua collection of this money varies; contributions from people in less prestigious posts (secretaries, chauffeurs, etc.) that are paid with state resources are not always monitored, but contributions from more senior positions (such as legislators or mayors) are closely monitored. In El Salvador, the FMLN has fixed contributions at different levels and collects at all levels. Money is sometimes withdrawn automatically from bank accounts, with the consent of the member, and those who are not up to date with their dues are barred from future positions through the party (inside the organization or in public posts). Members of the party are also expected to use the resources of their position to help the party organization. Where the parties hold local governments, for instance, they use municipal offices and resources for the organization. In both countries, party members in official positions are also informally expected to hire party members for public posts.
The two parties have also used their position in state institutions such as the electoral institutions to protect the interests of the party, and in Nicaragua the judiciary has often been used to further the FSLN’s strategy. The FMLN’s success at the municipal level has also allowed it to use local resources for the party; for instance, in El Salvador public property in a municipality is always painted with the governing party’s colors, raising the visibility of the party and it is common to use public offices for party work.

Both the FMLN and FSLN focused their resources during the transition on pursuing a procedural strategy, which sought to secure benefits for and protect their organizations. During the negotiations this meant securing access to the state, for instance, representation in the electoral tribunals that would be in charge of overseeing elections and the registration of political parties. The negotiations were also a place where the FSLN and FMLN sought assurances for their future security—a demand the URNG in Guatemala was never in a position to make. The FSLN demanded the protection of the security forces it had created, while the FMLN demanded a purge in the armed forces and the creation of a new national police force. Throughout the transition, the FMLN focused on the internal changes needed to become a political party and establishing a political organization with a national reach. Similarly, the FSLN focused

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49 Some of the methods used by the FSLN to strengthen its hold of the state are less than democratic, in particular the pact (el pacto) with Alemán and the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) is a serious threat to democracy, such arrangements do highlight the FSLN’s understanding of the importance of maintaining the party’s organization.

50 All political parties in El Salvador partake in this practice, but the FMLN’s electoral success, and ARENA’s, means that the advantage of power for these two parties is magnified, and their continual use of state resources to invest in the party apparatus helps maintain their advantage.
on maintaining the national organization it had already created but that could no longer count on state resources to maintain.

Because both parties were already focused on the need for a national organization and ties with civil society to mobilize voters, both were ready to take advantage and capitalize on the results of their first election. The two parties used their access to the state—local governments and contributions from state employees affiliated with the party—to continue to invest in the party organization.

The case of the URNG, alternatively, illustrates the cost of adopting the wrong strategy during the transition. Although the URNG was certainly the weakest organization during the transition compared to the FSLN or FMLN, its poor electoral performance is the result of the two variables I highlight, not simply the movement’s weaknesses. The URNG’s poor electoral performance was not a foregone conclusion before the transition process had concluded. Had the URNG employed a different strategy during the transition, it could have significantly eased its transformation into a political party. Although the transition process gave the URNG new credibility as a national actor, it did not take advantage of this opportunity to build stronger links with an increasingly active civil society or to begin the process of creating a national party organization. The URNG’s focus during the negotiations on structural changes meant that little attention was given to its transformation into a political party, although it was always understood that this change would occur. For instance, the incorporation of the new party into the system through one of the peace accords, as had taken place in El

51 Author’s interviews with Alba Estela Maldonado (January 2005); Rodrigo Asturias (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala; and Salvador Samayoa, ex-FMLN member and representative in the negotiations (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
Salvador was never formally discussed in the negotiations. By the time the URNG began creating a political party in 1996, restructuring the organization and preparing its members for new political tasks, it had already signed the last of the accords and the ex-guerrilla movement had little in the way of political resources.\textsuperscript{52} By this time, many of the organization’s members had scattered in search of family, making it harder to reorganize them for electoral purposes. It took the URNG almost two years to meet the registration requirements. The task was difficult enough that during the process of registering there were concerns that the party would be unable to participate directly in the 1999 election, the first post-conflict election.

This lack of attention towards the electoral process and the need for a national organization was perhaps partly due to the URNG’s having taken for granted a favorable electoral performance in the first post-conflict election based on the FDNG’s vote share in 1995 (Jonas 2000). While their assumption proved to be partly correct—in 1999 the URNG was the third electoral force in the country—the lack of attention towards building a national organization meant that the party was not in a position to take advantage of this initial show of support. As well, the role that civil society played in the transition made various movements increasingly independent in the political arena (Krznaric 1999), which made it difficult for the URNG to establish itself as the representative of the progressive agenda in the party system after the transition.

There were also other disadvantages in the transition process that the URNG had no control over, but that hurt the organization. For instance, as Azpuru (2006) notes the

\textsuperscript{52} Author’s interviews with Alba Estela Maldonado (January 2005) and Rodrigo Asturias (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
process of constitutional reform in Guatemala required a longer time frame than in El Salvador and a referendum, which is probably why reforms requiring constitutional amendments were left to the end of the negotiations. But while this might have been the case, it still does not explain why the URNG did not pursue organizational changes that did not hinge on the negotiations until the end of the transition.

One of the consequences of the procedure for constitutional reforms was that the URNG did not take part in the legislative discussions that eventually created the final version of the constitutional amendments that were put to a referendum vote. Because the final peace accords had been signed by the time these discussions took place in the legislature, the URNG could no longer use the threat of abandoning the talks to influence the content of the constitutional amendments. This left the URNG with at best, a minor role in the process that sought to implement the changes it had worked to include in the peace talks. The diminished role that the URNG could play in shaping the constitutional amendments after the peace talks had concluded highlights the fleeting nature of the prominence that the transition process provides non-state actors.

While circumstances such as these did not help the URNG in its transformation into a political party, it was ultimately the lack of foresight about what the party would require, in particular forging ties with civil society and building a national organization that damaged the party’s future possibilities in the electoral arena. This lack of foresight is evident in the decisions the organization made during the transition and immediately following its conclusion. For instance, although the URNG used ideas that social movements presented to the negotiating table through the ASC on a number of topics, including indigenous rights, when in 1998 the Coordinadora de Organizaciones del
Pueblo Maya de Guatemala (COPMAGUA) took the initiative to push for a broader understanding of indigenous rights than the one agreed to in the peace accords, the URNG was not a part of this effort. Negotiations took place between COPMAGUA and the parties in the legislature with the URNG removed from the process entirely. Because the URNG did not participate in COPMAGUA’s other efforts to redefine the rights of indigenous peoples, the URNG’s ability claim credit for pushing forward and representing indigenous rights diminished.

The URNG’s lack of strategy in establishing itself as the representative of the peace accords and progressive agenda early on is further demonstrated by its lack of leadership in the referendum process, which took place before the general elections. The Sí vote was a vote for the constitutional reforms, which by 1999 included those agreed to in the peace accords with some modifications and thirty-seven new reforms that debates in the legislature had added to the list. As the transition process drew to a close in Guatemala, the URNG (and FDNG) “squandered the advantage that the Sí had demonstrated in all the polls” (Jonas 2000:205). Taking the victory of the referendum as a given, Jonas points out that the left did not mobilize its constituents by using the report of the Truth Commission (released earlier that year in February of 1999) or the demilitarization of the state and reduction of the military, which a large percentage of Guatemalans favored, to counter the well-organized and well-financed campaign that was mounted against the referendum. For a new political party that needed to establish itself

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53 For the accord on indigenous rights, the URNG adopted the recommendations made by the ASC, which included the most prominent indigenous groups. However, many of these same groups did not agree with the final accord that was signed because it left out a number of key issues, including those related to land. These topic was supposed to be included in the socioeconomic accord, but did not make it to any of the final agreements (Arnison 1999).
as a relevant actor, this loss of opportunity meant that the URNG wasted a valuable chance at the end of the transition process to appropriate the agenda it had helped create to mobilize citizens around the new party.

At the time of the transition, the URNG held a prominent position as a relevant national actor. Unfortunately, it did not use this critical moment in time to begin creating an organization with a national presence, transforming supporters into party activists and voters. In a study of the FMLN and URNG transformation into a political party, Allison’s (2006) work confirms this point, noting that “the URNG failed to identify how it as a political party could lead the mass movements that had developed with the democratic opening” (91). The lack of attention that the URNG gave towards the task of building a party organization and forging ties with social movements cost the new party the opportunity it had to become an electorally relevant party. Its overconfidence that it would automatically do well in elections without having to establish a national organization or creating links with civil society sealed the URNG’s fate as an unsuccessful electoral party in the new regime. After the transition was over, the party no longer had a prominent place in the nation’s politics, making it harder to attract the resources it needed to build an organization or ties with civil society. The lack of attention to such issues also meant that the party squandered its early electoral performance. Unlike the FSLN and FMLN, the URNG did not employ a coordinated effort to use the state for partisan purposes. In addition, whereas during the transition the URNG had the opportunity to become the representative of the progressive agenda through the negotiations, once this process was over it became harder to credibly claim to be the sole representative of this agenda in the party system.
Today, the URNG no longer has a prominent position as a national actor and with almost no access to resources, becoming a relevant political party is now an almost impossible task. With few party members in public positions, it has few state resources it can tap into to redirect towards the party organization and curtailing its ability to compete effectively for votes. Its small role in the legislature makes the party an unnecessary partner for social movements lobbying in the legislature. This reality has created a vicious circle for the party, to compete effectively in elections the party needs resources to mount a national organization and effective electoral campaign but it will not get these resources unless it can prove that it can compete effectively in elections. These realities mean that the probability that the URNG will become a relevant political actor in the future is low, although this was not always the case. The party’s early decision over strategy has set the party in a path that has become increasingly harder to deviate from (Pierson 2004, 2000).

Although the URNG had the most to gain from the position of credibility and importance that the transition process gave the left, the transition was also a critical period of time for the FMLN and FSLN. It is perhaps less surprising that these two parties performed well in the first post-conflict election, given the force both had accumulated during the conflict. But their ability to perform well consistently in elections cannot be taken as a natural outcome of their past strengths. Their ability to garner votes has lasted because of the strategy that the FMLN and FSLN adopted during the transition. The transition strategy that the FMLN and FSLN adopted kept their organizations and support from unraveling once the transition was over and the prominence that the process gave them declined. By focusing on the needs of the party and its organization
throughout the transition, both parties were able to place themselves as the representatives of the progressive agenda early on in the democratic game, solidifying their position in the party system. The use of the state to maintain their organization and its ties with civil society has enabled both to continue effectively vying for votes. The initial strategy that the FMLN and FSLN adopted reinforced their strengths to secure future success in elections (Pierson 2004).

By focusing on consolidating the national organization of the party and party label, both the FMLN and FSLN could defend their position against potential competitors their positions as the representatives of the progressive agenda in their respective countries. The result is that today, despite the different opposition strategies that the left in El Salvador and Nicaragua have pursued after the transitions, both parties have been successful in consistently pulling in a significant number of voters.

2.7 Beyond Central America

Other ex-guerrilla movements that underwent a transformation into a political party as part of a dual transition process further demonstrate the importance that an extensive organization and transition strategy play for new parties seeking to establish themselves as relevant contenders in elections. For instance, in Africa a number of dual transitions also took place in the latter half of the twentieth century and in these cases armed insurgency movements also become political parties in the new regimes. I briefly examine five other examples of transformations from movement to political party from this region and Latin America, choosing movements among those countries that had dual transitions that successfully concluded and held post-transition elections that were free,
fair, and inclusive. I choose cases from Africa because of the similarities between these and the Central American countries, for instance, the prolonged internal conflicts and the tendency toward small and weak states.

The three African parties that I examine are the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo) in Mozambique; the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa; and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. The first two, Renamo and the ANC, are examples of successful transformations into electorally strong parties while the last, the RUF, is an example of a party that did not go on to perform well in elections. The two Latin American movements are the *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M-19) in Colombia and the Contra in Nicaragua, which provide two other examples of failed transformation.

As Figure 2.2 shows, the electoral performance of these parties in post-conflict elections has varied. While the ANC and Renamo have secured a consistently high percentage of the vote in elections, the other three cases have faltered. This variance can be explained by examining the organization and strategy of ex.movements during the transition. Table 2.4 codes the two variables and demonstrates that the pattern found in post-conflict Central America is also found in other cases and regions.

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54 Another relevant case in Africa is the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) in Angola. I do not discuss this case, however, because the last agreement between the UNITA and government took place in 2002 and elections are still pending.
Figure 2.2: Electoral Performance of Alternative Cases.

In Mozambique, Renamo was created in 1975, with the help of regional forces, to oppose the post-colonial government of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo). Today, the new party has positioned itself as the second force in the country, although the party continues to depend heavily on the leadership of Afonso Dhlakama (Carbone 2005). Originally, much like the Contra in Nicaragua, Renamo was created as a destabilizing force under the sponsorship of what used to the Rhodesian security forces and later the South African government. Renamo’s tactics were very different from those employed by the leftist guerrilla forces in Central America, as it indiscriminately
employed terror tactics and killings, as well as kidnappings against the civilian population to increase its numbers (Weinstein 2007; Greenhill and Major 2006; Carbone 2005; Bauer and Taylor 2005). Yet despite these tactics (or perhaps because of them) and the government’s ineffective counteroffensive strategy, Renamo succeeded in securing control over areas of the country. In the later years of the conflict, after 1988, Renamo worked to create alternative government administrations in these areas in an attempt to establish itself as a legitimate actor in the eyes of the international community, although ideological coherence within the movement was always low (Weinstein 2007).

By the late 1980s, the conflict between Renamo and the government of Frelimo was at a stalemate. With pressure from the international community, the warring factions in 1992 signed the General Peace Agreement (GPA). One of the central provisions of the GPA was the transformation of Renamo into a political party to tie the movement to the democratic process. Renamo was also made a member of the National Electoral Commission to secure its participation in the electoral process (Rahmato and Ayenew 2006; Manning 2004; Greenhill and Major 2006). Other provisions in the GPA included: plans for multiparty elections; liberalization of the popular media; freedom of association and movement; civil rights protections; demobilization of the armed forces; creation of a new national army; and the re-integration of former militants into society (Greenhill and Major 2006; Bauer and Taylor 2005). Renamo’s strategy during the transition was focused on two goals: securing as many financial resources as it could from the

55 In Mozambique, Renamo was responsible for the majority of atrocities committed during the war against civilians, with estimates placing 82% of the blame for civilian attacks (Weinstein 2007).
international community and establishing itself as a political party for the upcoming elections.

Although Renamo was heavily dependent on the international community for the financial resources that its leader, Dhlakama, needed to keep the new party viable, during the conflict the armed movement had successfully secured control over significant sections of the country and formed close ties with local authorities in these areas (Manning 2004; Bauer and Taylor 2005). In particular, Renamo had a close relationship with traditional authorities in the countryside, which resented Frelimo’s attempts to centralize government (Rahmato and Ayenew 2006; Manning 2004; Carbone 2005; Weinstein 2007). As it became clear that the conflict would be resolved through negotiations, Renamo’s leadership worked to strengthen the movement’s organizational structure, especially in those areas it controlled, and made an attempt to build support in urban areas, albeit always ensuring the ultimate control of Dhlakama (Rahmato and Ayenew 2006; Bauer and Taylor 2005; Manning 2004).56

Today, the party organization continues to be a personalistic one that revolves around its leader and his control over patronage. This has hampered the party’s programmatic development and ability to act as an effective opposition force that can be a check to Frelimo (Bauer and Taylor 2005; Manning 2004; Carbone 2005). However, despite this weakness Renamo continues to successfully use its personalistic organization and the rhetoric of the conflict to secure a position in the party system through its electoral performance. But, unlike the FMLN and FSLN, Renamo has not maintained its

56 Historically, Renamo has always relied heavily on material goods and personalistic ties to hold the organization together (Weinstein 2007).
strategy of investing in the party organization in the post-transition period, which could threaten the party’s electoral future. Renamo’s dependence on the state for patronage also bodes badly for the party as Frelimo continues to monopolize the central government. After Renamo’s drop in the 2004 elections, its position is even more precarious since public moneys through parliament is an important source of funding for the party (Rahmato and Ayenew 2006).

In South Africa, the ANC was created in 1912 to oppose the white minority government of South Africa. The ANC’s transition strategy was also focused on establishing itself as a political party from the early stages of the transition, in the mid-1980s, before formal negotiations with the government began. The ties that the ANC had with civil society were extensive and its strategy throughout the transition worked to strengthen them. For instance, before the ANC was legalized in 1990 it had links with the United Democratic Front (UDF), which included a wide range of civil movements and which established itself as a credible legal opposition to the apartheid government. However, after the legalization of the ANC and the beginning of the transition, the UDF was slow to react to the changes taking place. At the same time, the ANC worked to undermine the front by incorporating leaders from the UDF into its own organization, weakening the ties members had to the UDF and competing organizations, and working to strengthen its own ties with social movements. The ANC also worked to recruit members of Township Civics to secure the needs of the party at the local level. In addition, the ANC was careful to cultivate an alliance with labor unions, which proved to be critical actors in the transition (Bauer and Taylor 2005; Ottaway 1991; Wood 2000).
From the beginning of the transition, the ANC worked to position itself to seize state power as the dominant political party in the new regime. The negotiations between the government and ANC gave the movement a prominent role in the transition and the ability to dominate the negotiation process to become the sole representative of the opposition. During the negotiations, the issues addressed were: electoral reform and the timing of the first elections (before or after constitutional negotiations); economic policy; and the legacy of violence (Wood 2000). Unlike the other successful cases discussed thus far, in South Africa economic issues were a part of the negotiations in South Africa. But in this case, it was a matter of incorporating aspects of a structural strategy within the ANC’s procedural strategy. And while economic policy was an important issue under discussion, the “focus initially was on institutional and political issues” (Wood 2000:189).

The ANC’s ties with civil society and its strategy during the transition, which sought to strengthen its resources—its ties with civil society and its organization—made it possible for the new party to become a strong electoral contender. Its strategy allowed it to dominate the transition and secure a place for itself as the opposition to the government, at the same time that it worked to weaken the possibility that other opposition actors, such as the UDF or the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) could successfully challenge its position (Ottaway 1991; Wood 2000).

57 The governing National Party was also interested in focusing on the procedural aspect of the negotiations, given it was working under the assumption that an electoral defeat was eminent. The party was therefore interested in securing a role for itself in the intern and transitional government through special institutional provisions (Wood 2000; Bauer and Taylor 2005).

58 In the first election, the PAC only received 1.2 percent of the vote (Wood 2000).
In Sierra Leone, the RUF was created with the help of regional actors, to overthrow the country’s one-party government in 1991. Even after a change in government, the RUF maintained its armed opposition. The conflict only came to an end when it became clear that none of the actors had the military capacity to win the internal war, but only after several attempts at a negotiated settlement had already failed. During the conflict, the RUF was originally heavily dependent on help from Liberia and Charles Taylor, and later to its access to the country’s diamond resource, which quickly made the movement a vehicle for personal enrichment (Mozaffar 1998). Similarly to Renamo in Mozambique, the RUF was responsible for a high percentage of the atrocities and human right violations during the conflict (Wierda 2007; Gibril Sesay and Hughes 2007). But unlike Renamo, after the signing of the final peace accords the RUF proved to be a weak electoral contender. The new party did not survive its first election in 2002.

At the insistence of the international community, an important part of the Lomé Accord was to transform the RUF into a political party by creating a government of national unity that included RUF leaders in various important positions. The final agreement also granted absolute and free pardon to the RUF, as well as a blanket amnesty for all war crimes (Abraham 2001; Francis 2000; Kandeh 2003; Bangura 2000). When the RUF violated the accord in May of 2000 by its leader, Foday Sankoh, was captured and the government made clear that it considered that with the violation of the agreement the reprieve that had been granted to the RUF was no longer valid (Kandeh 2003). Sankoh’s arrest weakened the RUF, especially its political wing (Francis 2000). Despite

59 This aspect of the accords was highly controversial and the government was heavily criticized for agreeing to the accord.
the setback to the peace process, at the end of 2000 the new RUF leadership agreed to return to the negotiating table. The result was the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, which eventually led to the disarmament of RUF and the return of complete control of the national territory to the central government (Commonwealth Secretariat 2006).

The ties that the RUF had with civil society during the conflict were weak. According to Kandeh (2003), even the control that the RUF had over its members was weak, as combatants were reported to have voted against the new party in the first election. Unlike Renamo, which built ties with local authorities, the RUF throughout the conflict generated instability and chaos in the countryside by targeting local authorities in rural areas, especially chiefs (Abraham 2001; Bellows and Miguel 2006). During the transition the RUF took no steps to counter its history or create ties with social movements, even in those areas that it still controlled.

The RUF’s strategy during the transition was also not focused on procedural matters or creating a party organization. Although the accord signed between the government and the RUF gave the latter a great deal of access to the state and its resources, until the capture of its leader in 2000 the movement continued to work to undermine the transition and establish itself as the military winner of the conflict (Abraham 2001). In other words, the RUF wasted the opportunity to use the available resources to create a national organization that could later be used to mobilize voters. During the Lóme negotiations the RUF had a strong bargaining position, which explains the wide amnesty that was granted to the movement, yet the lack of attention that the RUF gave to building ties with civil society and a national organization, as well as
creating a reputation as a potential government force ultimately explains why the RUF did not use the opportunity the transition created to build a political party.

The result of this inattention was a resounding electoral defeat in the 2002 election. Bangura (2000) argues that although the transition gave the RUF a higher level of legitimacy as a national actor with control over sections of the state, it did not provide the RUF with the possibility to using resources and territory to cleanse its record and establish ties with civil society. This, he argues, was a mayor hindrance to a commitment to an electoral process. Although it is tempting to attribute the RUF’s poor electoral performance on its violent past, as Kandeh (2003) rightly notes other rebel movements in Africa with equally bloody pasts have gone on to perform well in their first post-conflict election, including Renamo. The poor electoral performance of the RUF was the result of its weak ties with social movements and its transition strategy, a strategy that did not seek to build a national party organization (despite the advantages the accord initially provided).

In South America, the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) was created in 1972 as a guerilla movement that opposed the Colombian government (Bergquist, Peñaranda, and Sánchez 1992). It provides an example of an organization that was initially successful in competing in the 1991 election, only to quickly lose its electoral advantage, similarly to the URNG. Although the conflict in Colombia cannot be considered resolved, a brief look at the negotiations between the M-19 and the government does provide an example of a new political party with important ties with civil society, but a strategy that failed to focus on the importance of strengthening the national organization to ensure future electoral success (Pizarro Leongómez 1997).
On becoming a political party at the end of 1989, the M-19—renamed the Alianza Democrática M-19 (AD/M-19)—had the advantage of existing ties with social movements (Boudon 2001; Vergara 1994). The interests of the M-19 were for the most part political. At the center of its demands was the creation of a new constitution, and at the core of this was breaking the dominance of the Conservative and Liberal parties and the creation of spaces for alternative parties (Koth 2005; Boudon 2001). However, although M-19’s strategy can be classified as procedural in its negotiations, outside of the negotiations it did not focus on the organizational needs that the new party would have, including the creation of a national organization (Bergquist, Peñaranda, and Sánchez 1992)—or strengthening its ties with those that had supported the guerrilla movement (Boudon 2001). The M-19 instead chose to focus on creating broad electoral alliances rather than strengthening the new party’s ties with civil society and binding voters to the party. It was only after the first legislative election in late 1991, when the party’s vote share had already dropped significantly from what it had received in the election for a constitutional assembly, that the party made an attempt to create a national organization and to strengthen its ties with mass movements. These attempts, however, came at a time when the party no longer enjoyed the legitimacy its role in the transition had given it, and in the midst of a new electoral process when the majority of the party’s members were focused on creating electoral alliances with other parties rather than a national organization (Boudon 2001). Because the new party did not focus on building a national organization and strengthening its ties with social movements, two of the most important resources a new opposition party has, the new party lost its initial levels of electoral support.
Lastly, in Central America the fate of the Contra, created with the help of the U.S. government to overthrow the Sandinistas, provides one last example of an armed movement that fails in its attempt to become an electorally strong political party in the post-transition period. After finally signing a number of agreements with the new UNO government after the 1990 election, the different factions that created the Contra demobilized and eventually formed a new political party, the Partido de Resistencia Nacional (PRN) in preparation for the 1996 elections. The party has now participated in three elections, but has failed to establish itself as a relevant electoral party, surviving elections only because of the electoral alliances it has formed, rather than its own electoral pull.

While there are vast differences between the URNG in Guatemala and the Contra in Nicaragua, the two had some important similarities during the transition that explains the PRN’s lack of electoral success. The Contra was a loosely organized movement with weak ties with social movements and a transition strategy was not was focused on procedural changes. In part, this was due to the particular nature of the Nicaraguan transition, which meant that the Contra negotiated its final agreements not with the FSLN, but with the new UNO government, although earlier negotiations between the Contra and the FSLN had not included a political agenda. The negotiations between the

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60 Not all of the factions joined in this new party, some had already made electoral arrangements with other parties, including the FSLN.

61 The first negotiation between the Contra and FSLN, the “Acuerdo de Sapoá para el cese al Fuego Definitivo,” was signed in March of 1988 as part of the framework of Esquipulas II (the full text of the accord can be found in Envío (1988)). In 1999, a follow-up agreement was also signed that established the rules of demobilization, but only some sporadic demobilization took place prior to the 1990 elections by small groups that moved into the designated demilitarized zones (Horton 1998; Ortega 1996). After the Chamorro government took power there was a remobilized movement as discontent Contra members argued that the new government was ignoring their needs. At the same time, there was also an armed
different factions of the Contra, which splintered after the 1990 elections, and the UNO government only dealt with issues of disarmament and demobilization (Spalding 1999). None of the agreements dealt with a potential future for the Contra as a new political party.

Like the URNG, the Contra made no real attempt to build stronger ties with civil society during the transition to bolster their claims as the representatives of legitimate forces of discontent. While the Contra never enjoyed the prominence that the URNG, FMLN, or FSLN had during the transition, it nevertheless included groups with real grievances against the state and during the transition it was in a stronger position than afterwards. At the time, however, the Contra was much more interested in securing goods and material resources than a political place for itself in the emerging regime. As a result, when the PRN was created, long after the transition had taken place, it quickly faltered electorally. Today, it no longer has the attention or resources it had during the transition to undertake the task of creating a political organization at the national level that could compete with the national organizations of the FSLN or the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC).

This brief overview of the experiences that other ex-guerrilla movements have had as they emerged from dual transitions demonstrates the critical nature of a national organization that has ties with civil society and a strategy for the electoral future of these new parties. These variables can explain the difference in electoral performance that we find, as both play an important role in establishing the foundation for new political

mobilization of ex-members of the ESP that were demanding recompense after having been discharged from the army as part of the transition agreements between the FSLN and UNO.
parties. Figure 2.1 maps the movements discussed and shows the importance of the “winning combination,” the bottom right-hand quadrant. That is, that while the organization is an important antecedent condition that affects its success in the post-transition period the left’s strategy is what determines its long-term success as a political party. Without a focus on strengthening this organization and securing an electoral base, the left’s pre-transition strengths do not automatically translate or last beyond the first election. Those parties that started out on the bottom left-hand quadrant but did not focus on strengthening or building a national organization did not perform well in the long run. In the next section I examine alternative explanations that might provide a better explanation of how ex-guerrilla movements perform in the post-transition period.
Figure 2.3: Determining Electoral Success
2.8 Alternative Explanations

My argument for why some ex-insurgency movements transform into electorally strong parties while others struggle to survive elections can be compared to other explanations of post-transition performance that give emphasis to different explanatory variables. Alternative arguments have pointed to the strengths of the FMLN, FSLN, and URNG during the conflicts to account for their electoral performance in the new regimes. Allison (2006) examines four Central American cases, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and argues that there is a positive relationship between the organizational strength of the revolutionary left, operationalized as the number of combatants and level of popular support the left had during the conflict, and how well the left performs electorally in the post-transition period.

As Allison correctly notes, the leftist parties in Central America that perform well in elections today are the same organizations that were strong actors during the conflict. However, examining the left’s strengths during the conflict only provides an explanation for the left’s performance in its first election. We cannot assume that the organizational strengths that the left has during the conflict will automatically endure in the post-transition period, independently of the left’s choice of strategy. Incorporating an element of agency is necessary because the strength of the left’s organization is not fixed and its maintenance depends on what strategy it chose during the transition. In post-conflict Central America, the left’s transition strategy is just as important to understanding how the left goes on to perform electorally in the new regimes. While the organization and ties with civil society that the left had during the conflict can explain why the FMLN and
FSLN performed better than the URNG in the first post-conflict election, they cannot explain the continual electoral success of these two parties more than two decades after the transitions. As occurred with the Chilean Communist Party, the organizational strength of the FMLN and FSLN could have disappeared in the democratic period (Roberts 1998). These two parties continue to perform well in elections, long after the conflicts have drawn to a close because of the strategy they adopted. Their strategy effectively used the opportunities the transition created to secure resources for the party. The URNG, on the other hand, did not begin focusing on its electoral needs until the resolution of the conflict. Had it adopted a procedural strategy and focused on creating a national organization during the transition, when for the first time in many years it once again enjoyed a place of prominence in the country’s national politics, the movement could have capitalized on this opportunity to overcome its organizational weaknesses.

Just as differences in resources during the conflict cannot explain electoral performance, neither can organizational differences explain electoral performance. During the conflict the three organizations resembled each other. Each was centralized in a hierarchical structure with very similar goals (Martí i Puig 2006). And although after the transition some differences have developed between the three parties, these are relatively slight and cannot explain the continually strong electoral performance of the FMLN and FSLN, and the weak performance of the URNG. For instance, although the FMLN had some early attempts at internal democratization, attempts that are now over, both the FSLN and URNG have maintained to a larger extent their centralized structures (Figueroa Ibarra 2006; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006; Martín Álvarez 2006; Zamora 2003).
Another alternative argument that could be constructed is that it is the post-transition strategy by itself that explains how the parties perform electorally in the new regime. From the beginning, the FMLN has pursued a confrontational strategy vis-à-vis the government, refusing to negotiate with ARENA on almost all issues. The FSLN, on the other hand, when it was in opposition, was much more willing to work with the government and other parties, despite the confrontational and populist rhetoric it uses. Despite these differences, both the FMLN and FSLN are electorally strong parties (Martí i Puig 2006). The URNG’s post-transition strategy more closely resembles that of the FSLN, willing to negotiate with other parties and participate in some government coalitions, yet this has not helped the party secure a stronger electoral base of support.

Other alternative arguments can be constructed around institutional variables to explain the electoral performance of the left in post-conflict Central America. It is possible that it is the type of electoral institutions in place that explains why the URNG has faltered in elections, while the FMLN and FSLN continue to perform well. But the various institutional similarities between the three countries and the relatively minor differences make an institutional argument unconvincing (see Table 2.5). The three countries are presidentialist with unicameral legislatures that are elected through proportional representative (PR) formulas and closed lists that tend to favor smaller parties. In the first post-conflict election, this might have been particularly relevant to the FMLN and URNG, both new to the electoral game. Yet despite the PR formula in place, the URNG failed to gain a lasting foothold in the electoral arena.
TABLE 2.5:
INSTITUTIONAL RULES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Presidential Elections</th>
<th>Legislative Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Election Rules</td>
<td>Reelection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>Majority formula, where the winner needs 50% + 1 to win. If no candidate reaches this threshold a second round election takes place between the two candidates with the most votes.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Majority formula, where the winner needs 50% + 1 to win. If no candidate reaches this threshold a second round election takes place between the two candidates with the most votes.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Plurality formula in 1990. After the 1995 reforms a majority formula, where the winner needs 45% to win in the first round, if no party receives 45% a second round election takes place between the two parties with the most votes. Reforms in 2000 lowered the threshold to 40%, or 35% if the first place candidate had at least a 5% advantage over the second place candidate.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NOTES: 1) The cases are coded according to Carey and Shugart (1995). Possible values for Pool and Votes are 0, 1, or 2; as the score increases, incentives to pursue personal reputations increases.

2) In El Salvador District Magnitude is calculated on the 14 districts, excluding the National List; in Guatemala District Magnitude is calculated on the 23 electoral districts, excluding the National List; and in Nicaragua District Magnitude is calculated on the 9 electoral districts under the 1990 electoral rules, and 17 districts under the 1995 electoral rules, excluding the National List.
It is also hard to credit the significant difference in electoral performance between the URNG and FMLN and FSLN, to the slight differences in electoral formulas (see Table 2.5). In Nicaragua and El Salvador, the counting formulas are similar: in Nicaragua, prior to the 1995 electoral reforms the Hare formula was used to count votes and since the reforms the Hagenbach-Bischoff (Droop quota) formula has been used. In El Salvador the Hare formula is used. In Guatemala, the D’Hondt formula is utilized, a formula that tends to favor larger parties (IDEA 2005). Yet, the differences in electoral performance between the URNG and the other two leftist parties are so large that it is hard to imagine that the slight difference in counting rules can be solely responsible. The difference in counting rules also does not explain why the URNG became a smaller party, whereas the FSLN and FMLN are two of the larger parties in their respective party systems.

Another difference between the countries is the timing of legislative elections. In Guatemala and Nicaragua, legislative elections are held concurrently with presidential elections, while in El Salvador legislative elections and presidential elections only overlap every fifteen years. This has the expected effect in El Salvador, helping the FMLN as the opposition in legislative elections for many years (Shugart 1995). Yet, the absence of this rule does not explain why the FSLN has also performed well in legislative elections, even when it failed to win the presidency or why the URNG has struggle to survive electorally.

A last alternative argument that I explore is one that examines the impact of social cleavages on the party system (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Comparing the percentage of people that self-identify as left (3 or more on a 10-point ideological scale) in 2004 is very
similar across the three countries. In El Salvador 15.43% of respondents placed themselves on the left side of the scale, compared to 15.21% in Guatemala and 19.13% in Nicaragua.\(^\text{62}\)

It is possible that the emergence of a new dimension created by the conflict is what explains the success of the revolutionary left in post-transition elections. There is some evidence to support the idea that the armed conflict created a new dimension around which political competition now takes place. In Nicaragua, for instance, political competition since the 1984 election and more clearly since the 1990 election, revolves around opposition to the FSLN. Programmatic differences within the anti-FSLN group have been much less important than their opposition to the FSLN, and until the last election, anti-FSLN sentiment drove most of the electoral campaign. Similarly in El Salvador, differences within ARENA have for the most part been less important than their opposition to an FMLN victory, although the anti-FMLN coalition has not been as effective as in Nicaragua in drawing all of the parties from the center-right to the right together. The lack of clarity in the programmatic proposals of the FSLN and FMLN is also evidence that their current policy positions are often less important than the symbolic position of these two parties as the revolutionary left, and their role in the armed conflict. In Guatemala, there is less evidence that the conflict created a new dimension, although this was the longest armed conflict in the region. Elections in Guatemala tend to revolve much more around personalities than the ambiguous positions of the parties, or their roles in the armed conflict. While the initial degree of electoral support that the URNG

\[\text{\footnotesize\(^{62}\) Unfortunately, earlier survey data is not available. For 2004, the mean self-placement in El Salvador was 6.89, with a 3.02 Standard Deviation (SD); in Guatemala the mean was 5.90, with a 2.36 SD; and in Nicaragua the mean was 6.18, with a 2.93 SD.}\]
received in 1999 can be taken as evidence of a new dimension, by the 2003 election this level of electoral support no longer existed. While there might have been an initial post-conflict dimension, it was not one that the URNG was able to sustain.

Thus, although it seems reasonable to expect that the armed conflicts did indeed create a new dimension in these countries—after all, the conflicts were events that took place over a long period of time and affected large sectors of the population—for this new dimension to remain salient, political parties have to continue to use the rhetoric of the armed conflict. A new dimension born out of a conflict cannot survive in a post-transition period unless it is in the interest of national parties to keep the dimension relevant (Torcal and Mainwaring 2003). In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the dominant parties on the right and left side of the ideological spectrum continue to benefit from the existence of a conflict dimension, which explains why both actively utilize the duality of this dimension to reach voters and maintains the relevancy of the dimension in elections. In Guatemala, the URNG has been unable to maintain such a dimension salient, although it might have benefited from its existence.

The alternative arguments I examined that are focused on organizational variables, institutional rules, and social cleavages, cannot provide a wholly satisfactory explanation for why the FMLN and FSLN perform well in elections in the post-transition period while the URNG has struggle to survive. It is in the fluidity of the transition process that leftist actors had an opportunity to shape their future.
2.9 Conclusions

The transition period was a critical juncture for the party systems and leftist parties in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, particularly. A leftist organization that focuses on a procedural strategy in the negotiations and strengthening its two main resources, its organization and its ties with civil society, from the beginning of the transition was better prepared to tackle the transformation it would have to undergo.

During the transition, the FSLN and FMLN were the stronger movements, both in terms of their military capabilities and the organization capabilities. It was therefore hardly surprising that the FSLN and FMLN performed better in the first inclusive election than the URNG, which was the weakest of the movements. But while this initial success is less surprising, the continual strong electoral performance of the FSLN and FMLN was not a foregone conclusion. If the FSLN and FMLN had followed a substantive strategy during the transition period, their electoral performance in the post-transition period would have suffered in the long run. They would have let their organizations and ties with civil society decline, and rebuilding these after the transition had ended is a much harder endeavor.

At the same time, the URNG’s poor electoral performance in the post-transition period was not a foregone conclusion. Initially, the URNG garnered a not unsubstantial level of support with 12% of the vote in its first election. And while this was a weak performance compared to the FMNL’s and FSLN’s, it still placed the URNG in third place in Guatemala (see Table 2.3). Given this first electoral performance, it is necessary to explain why the URNG was unable to sustain it in later elections. The URNG’s strategy during the transition damaged the new party’s electoral prospects. Choosing a
substantive strategy meant that the URNG was not concerned with the need to strengthen its links with mass movements or the need for a national organization. Had the URNG adopted a procedural strategy during the transition period, it could have taken advantage of the status that the process gave the organization to build and strengthen its ties with mass movements, as well as begin the job of creating a national organization.

An early focus on a national organization and ties with civil society made it possible for leftist parties to compete effectively against better-financed parties. A continuous reinvestment on these resources ensured that the early momentum that the transition gave leftist parties lasted longer than the transition process. If a leftist party adopted a different strategy during the transition, it would find itself without the national organization or the roots in society it needs to compete effectively in elections. It would also be unprepared to use early victories to reinvest in the party to sustain its initial electoral performance. Building a national organization or ties with civil society after the transition is much harder for the new left because it no longer has a central place in the country’s political arena and it no longer has the negotiations, where it could claim to represent the progressive agenda, as a means of forging ties with mass movements. The opportunities for accessing the state and its resources also diminish over time and because the party was not focused on the needs of the organization it lost the opportunity to use the results of the first election to reinvest in the party organization. When the new party did not use the transition to build or strengthen a national organization, it lost the opportunity to bind in those that had supported the organization to the new party.

Both the FSLN and FMLN used their strategies at the time of the transition to build or sustain a national party organization, making it possible for the parties to
continue to mobilize voters and supporters. By capitalizing on their initial success at a
time when the reality of the country made each a central protagonist in the transition,
both parties were able to claim representation of the progressive agenda in their countries,
shutting out other leftist parties that might compete with them in later years. They have
also continued to use their role in government, at the national and local level, to
strengthen the party’s ties with mass movements and state institutions to keep other
parties out of the party system. For example, the reforms that the FSLN and PLC agreed
to prior to the 2001 election made it impossible for the vast majority of parties to
maintain or reach the prerequisites for legal party status. As a result, in 2001 only three
parties contested the elections, whereas in the previous election twenty-three parties had
contested the presidential election and twenty-five the legislative election (Rojas Bolaños
2005). In El Salvador, the FMLN has also used its position in the TSE to block or slow
down the registration of competing parties. In addition, both the FSLN and FMLN use
state resources that their victories give them access to, at the national and local level, for
partisan purposes, for instance using state employment to hire party activists who then
perform two roles: that of public servants and party organizers.

In Guatemala, the story has been very different. Jonas and others have argued that
the Guatemalan peace accords and their process are model accords in the substantive
issues that they address and because the process included the participation of civil society
(1999) notes “one of the most remarkable positive changes that occurred in Guatemala as

63 Author’s interview with former FMLN member and ex-TSE magistrate for the FMLN (in 2005
col-founder of the FDR), Julio Hernández (June 2004), San Salvador, El Salvador.
a result of the peace negotiations and the process of democratization was that a national
debate was held on issues never before discussed in the country, particularly the
indigenous question, the socioeconomic structure, human rights, and the role of the
army” (117). I do not disagree with this position. The participation of civil society,
especially indigenous groups, was a positive experience that pushed numerous citizens to
organize and participate. In a traditionally conservative society such as Guatemala’s this
was indeed a jump forward. My point is more that the URNG’s neglect of procedural
issues was costly for the movement in its transformation into a political party. If the
URNG had included these types of reforms and focus with a substantive strategy, it could
have benefited from the increasing mobilization of civil society and its prominent role in
the transition process. While the URNG took advantage of the strengths it had in the
negotiation process to pursue wide ranging socio-economic reforms, the organization did
not focus on a procedural agenda at a time when it could have capitalized on its strengths
and prominence to build a party organization with a national presence.

One possibility would have been for the party to demand, as part of the
negotiation process, registration as a political party by decree, which would have allowed
it to use its resources and time to build an organization. But the weakness of the strategy
goes further than this. The URNG’s failure to focus on or identify what the new political
game required meant that it let opportunities to build a party organization and to mobilize
support for a progressive agenda pass it by at a critical time when such growth was
possible and patterns were being established, for example, ignoring the opportunity of
mobilizing along the indigenous issues or the 1999 referendum. Today, the URNG no
longer enjoys a prominent position in the political arena and its weak electoral presence gives it very limited access to the state.

The URNG’s strategy made it impossible for the party to retain the initial electoral support that it received. The electoral consequence of ignoring the formation of a party organization or the creation of ties with social movements during the transition was evident by the URNG’s second election. Today, for this party to build an organization with active affiliates who are committed to the party organization and can mobilize voters is almost impossible because of the party’s scarcity of resources. And while other parties in Guatemala can win votes and even elections without having strong party organization, the left in Guatemala cannot. The URNG does not have access to the kinds of resources that are needed to finance the type of media campaigns that have thus far won elections in Guatemala. For the left, a national party organization is critical for electoral survival.

It is harder for leftist parties to undertake the tasks of building a national organization after the transition. After the transition, leftist parties no longer have a central position in the country’s political arena that they can use to attract resources, such as members and ties with mass movements. If a leftist party does not use the momentum that the transition builds and that culminates in the first election to bolster or build a party organization, it will not be in position to use the initial electoral results to maintain this momentum. Parties have to maintain their focus on its organization at this time because ignoring it undermines the two critical resources that leftist parties have to compete. Only with a substantial monetary investment would a leftist party be able to build a national organization; securing such an investment is difficult for a leftist party unless it already
has a winning track record. The only other alternative is a big increase in state financing. Thus, a party that did not establish a foundation for itself during the transition period is unable to “catch-up” easily by adopting a post-transition strategy that focuses on building a national organization. For these reasons, the transition period is a critical juncture for party development.

The importance of a national organization for leftist parties is such that if the FMLN and FSLN were to change their strategy today it could very well have an adverse affect on the electoral success both parties have enjoyed. Thus far, this change has not taken place and both parties continue in the path adopted during the transition, using the state to continue investing in the party organization.

In sum, the transition process in Central America was a critical period with long-lasting consequences for leftist parties and therefore the party systems. It was a time that gave leftist actors prominence in the political arena that could be used at a time when the organization needed to undergo a critical transformation. Parties that took advantage of this time and the possibility of reforms to protect or build a national party organization and ties with social movements were able to secure future access to resources and institutions that could be used to protect a position as a relevant political party. This pattern can be found in other cases in other regions, as my discussion of other transformations from guerilla movements to political parties highlights.

The chapter’s finding also highlights the importance of state resources in the party system. While public funding is important, it is not enough to sustain the national organization that these parties need to compete with the better-funded conservative
parties. The result is a dependency on the state for partisan purposes, a finding that will also be relevant in Chapter Three.

The importance of the transition process underscores how regime changes can affect party system formation. During this critical juncture actors’ early choices have had long lasting consequences for the new parties. Early choices establish patterns that make changes in the future less likely (Collier and Collier 1991; Pierson 2004; Thelen 1999). Grzymala-Busse (2002) argues, for another set of cases, that after the transition “legacies are then less likely to influence decision making directly. Instead, the patterns they initially set into motion, now translated into organizational and institutional choices, would begin to structure politics” (22). The path-dependent argument identifies the critical juncture that shaped the post-transition party system. I demonstrate how the left’s organization and its ties with civil society as well as its transition strategy set the left on a particular path in the new party system, determining the extent to which it would continue to have access to the resources it needs to compete electorally.

This chapter examined the role of the left in the transition and how its actions during this critical process shaped its electoral future. In the next chapter, I analyze the next sequence in the argument, how conservative forces reacted to the left’s choices during the transition.
CHAPTER 3:
INVESTING IN PARTY SYSTEMS, CONSERVATIVE PARTIES IN POST-CONFLICT CENTRAL AMERICA

3.1 Introduction

Historically, the right has played an important role in shaping—sometimes through force—the party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. In the post-transition period this continues to be the case, but conservative forces have undergone a critical change in their pattern of political participation. In the 1980s conservative parties that demonstrated a commitment to elections as the process through which political power is sought began to emerge.\(^64\) In Central America, this change demonstrates an unprecedented commitment to elections.\(^65\) This new strategy from the right has proven to be successful. In the three countries, conservative parties have performed well electorally since the establishment of free and fair elections. From the post-transition period until the 2006 Nicaraguan election, conservative parties had controlled the national governments of the three countries. The electoral dominance of the right in Central America is

\(^{64}\) Gibson (1996) argues that this development took place throughout Latin America in the 1980s: “conservatives “discovered” party politics in many countries during the 1980s” (230). For an alternative argument see Bartlett and Hunter (1997) who argue that the economic elite in Latin America has been reluctant to support participatory democracy.

\(^{65}\) These conservative parties have, for the most part, refrained from obstructing or subverting electoral results. While there have been some attempts to subvert the democratic process in the three countries, especially in Guatemala and Nicaragua, these attempts have thus far been unsuccessful in large part, because of a lack of support from all relevant actors.
particularly striking given that during much of this same period, conservative parties in other Latin American countries were being voted out of office.

It is also noteworthy that in two of these countries, El Salvador and Nicaragua, the same conservative party has controlled government more than once. In Nicaragua, conservative coalitions dominated by the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) won both the 1996 and 2001 elections. In El Salvador, one conservative party has dominated the right with even greater electoral success: the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA). Before its electoral defeat in the 2009 presidential election, ARENA won four consecutive presidential elections, one of them during the conflict. This is an unprecedented record for a conservative party in Latin America. Although there are important differences between ARENA and the PLC, one characteristic that the two parties have in common is what I call durable organizations: organizations that have a national presence with a party apparatus that is active between elections. This characteristic highlights one of the most interesting similarities and differences across the three systems. By focusing on the durability of the organizations rather than whether these parties are cadre or mass parties, I avoid the difficulty of distinguishing between different “pure types” (Puhle 2002:63) since parties exhibit a number of characteristics from both categories, while also missing a number of important traits from them.

In Guatemala, the experience of conservative parties has followed a different pattern. No conservative party has won a reelection in the post-transition period nor has any conservative party been able to establish itself as the relevant party in the system.

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66 The PLC was also a member of the Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO), which won the 1990 election. At the time of the election, however, the PLC was a small, relatively weak party. It is not until after the election that its status changed and the PLC became the leader in the anti-Sandinista opposition.
Unlike their counterparts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, conservative parties in Guatemala are little more than electoral machines. None of Guatemala’s conservative parties have built organizations that have the capacity to extend their organizational reach across the national territory in a non-electoral year.

This variation highlights one important difference between the three party systems. Conservative parties perform well electorally in all three, but the type of conservative parties that exist in these systems varies. We know that the return of democracy fostered the formation of conservative parties in Latin America (Gibson 1996, 1992), but are less clear about what factors influence the types of conservative parties that formed. Why did the conservative parties of El Salvador and Nicaragua develop along similar lines, establishing durable party organizations, while in the same period a different kind of conservative party, active only as an electoral machine, emerges in Guatemala? This is the central question that I address in this chapter.

I argue that the transition period influenced the type of conservative parties that came to exist in the post-transition party systems. More precisely, the balance of power between the transition’s negotiating actors—the conservative political elite, the economic elite, the military, and the armed opposition—is critical in determining what type of conservative party forms during the transition. The balance of power is important because the right has an incentive to create a conservative party with a durable organization only under certain circumstances: when the presence of a strong leftist party in the system threatens its privileged position and when the right cannot rely on a third actor (the

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military or U.S. government) to protect its agenda. The right needs these incentives to create a durable organization that emulates the left’s because building such an organizations is a costly endeavor. Durable organizations require a continuous investment of resources both for elections as well as between elections, when resources are harder to secure. For this reason, the right attempts to build durable organizations only when it feels it is necessary to compete successfully.

Alternatively, if during the transition period there is no electoral threat from the left, the right develops a different pattern of involvement in the party system. In the absence of a viable leftist threat, the right can implement a less demanding electoral strategy, one that avoids the costs of creating a durable party organization. Instead of incurring these costs, the right can win elections by adopting a cheaper electoral strategy, investing in electoral campaigns rather than political parties.

The balance of power is also important for the type of conservative parties that form during the transition because the possibility of a leftist victory also creates an incentive for the right to combine forces. There is a strong motivation to pool resources to win against the left and avoid (or at least ignore) internal divisions that might undermine the right’s position and simultaneously strengthen the left’s. As a result, when the right believes that the likelihood of a leftist electoral victory is high, the probability that the right will fragment diminishes.

The relationship between the transition actors is also significant because where parties get the resources that they need to finance their electoral strategy shapes the type of party structures that forms. Previous research supports this assumption. For instance, the work of Katz and Mair (1995; 2002) has shown the impact that state financing had in
changing the organizational structures of political parties in older party systems. In a similar vein, I argue that the source of funding that the conservative political elite can access impacts the extent to which a party is institutionalized or personalistic because resources from the economic elite come with strings. These strings force parties to institutionalize and move away from more charismatic forms of leadership.

To support my argument about the critical nature of the transition period for the type of conservative party that the right will create, I collected data from interviews conducted in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. I interviewed members of the transition teams, members of conservative parties, and members of the economic elite. In interviews with the protagonists of the transitions, I was particularly interested in establishing what strategy actors had adopted and the rationale behind these strategies. This involved asking interviewees about their sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the other actors involved in the transition and what choices they believed were available to them during this critical period of time. To establish the position and strategy of the economic elite during the transition process I used interviews with prominent members of this social group that were active politically during the process, through public positions or leadership roles inside lobbying groups.

In interviews with members of conservative parties, I focused on outlining the organizational characteristics of their parties. I was especially interested in the extent to which conservative parties had an organizational presence outside of the national capitals or were interested in establishing such a presence. For those parties that did have organizations with a national reach, I established the reach of the organization across the national territory, especially during non-electoral years, and examined how these
organizations were funded. To gather this information I interviewed party members that were directly involved in the maintenance of the party organization, which included politicians and regular staff members. Staff members were a particularly valuable resource since they had information on the organizational characteristics of their parties and tended to be less protective of this information.

I also discussed my findings with local experts on political parties who corroborated the information I received from party members. It was not possible to verify the information I gathered with data from the electoral institutions in these countries because these tend to record very little information on the organizational characteristics of political parties. The organizational data electoral institutions do track is unfortunately unreliable since they rely solely on the information that political parties provide with no verification process and parties know that this information is used by the media. One possible explanation for why party members were more forthcoming with the true organization status of their parties in my interviews is that I was able to assure them that the information they provided was not for public consumption.

3.1.1 Why Study Conservative Parties?

There are several compelling reasons for studying the conservative parties of these three countries. First, by analyzing these parties this chapter seeks to address various gaps in the party system literature. Important works have explored the formation of conservative parties and the role that these play in third wave party systems (Middlebrook 2000; Gibson 1996). But overall, conservative parties have received little attention in the literature despite their influential role in party systems and policy development. As a result, a number of central questions about these parties remain
unanswered, including an explanation for organizational differences among conservative parties.

This chapter seeks to advance our knowledge of conservative parties by exploring the differences and similarities between conservative parties and provide an argument about what factors influence the kind of organization that conservative politicians decide to create. This is a vital question because of the broader implications that party type has on the party system. Exploring the right’s decision can shed light on patterns of party system development in the three post-conflict cases. For example, as I will argue in the next chapter, the type of conservative parties that function in a party system has a direct influence on the stability of that system.

Another important relationship that needs more attention is the one between conservative parties and the economic elite. This chapter expands on Gibson’s (1996; 1992) work by providing an explanation of the type of linkages that the economic elite chooses to build with the party system. In the three countries I examine, the economic elite has traditionally avoided participating directly in political parties. In some countries, this pattern has changed and the economic elite has become directly involved in the party system. Part of my purpose in this chapter is to explain this deviation from the historical norm in the region.

This chapter also contributes to the literature on the decline of party structures (Toole 2003; Biezen 2000; Puhle 2002; Sartori 1970; Kopecký 1995; Roberts 2002). One of the observations from this literature is that prominence of mass media campaigns and their cost gives conservative parties a distinct advantage over other parties in the system (Epstein 1980; Samuels 2001). This literature has also often made a causal argument that
links the increasing importance of the mass media in elections to the declining relevance of party structures and membership (Toole 2003; Gibson 1992; Puhle 2002; Epstein 1980; Kopecký 1995) because political parties now have the ability to reach a wider audience through a mass media campaign. As a result, the idea that “successful political parties require extensive organizational capabilities” (Strøm 1990) (575) has become less true.

In Central America, there is an interesting deviation from this expected relationship. While parties in other systems have increasingly moved towards what Puhle (2002) calls the “catch-all party plus,” in this region the more successful conservative parties have invested significant resources into building and maintaining durable organizations. How can we explain this choice? By providing an answer to this question, this chapter sheds light on what factors influence the decisions parties make over organizational structures.

Because of the relationship between conservative parties and democracy, a closer examination of conservative parties is also warranted. The finding in the literature is that a greater commitment to political parties and party systems from the right is positive for democracy (Gibson 1996; Middlebrook 2000; Reuschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Bartlett and Hunter 1997). In those systems where the right is committed to investing in conservative parties, this influential constituency is more likely to support the democratic process and increase the stability of the regime:

“[C]ountries with center-right and rightist parties capable of mobilizing substantial support in open electoral contests … have experienced restricted or

68 Margit Tavits (2008) makes a similar point about Central and Easter Europe.
full political democracy for a significantly greater portion of the time since their initial democratic transition than countries with traditionally weak conservative parties” (Middlebrook 2000:6).

If this relationship holds today, an examination of conservative parties in these post-conflict party systems is relevant and can contribute to understanding when the right will invest in the institutionalization of conservative parties and democracy.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows: In the next section, I briefly describe the post-transition electoral performance of conservative parties in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua to establish the similarities and differences between the three systems. In Section Two I present my argument, positing that the balance of power during the transition shaped the conservative parties of the post-transition period. I also outline my expectations for the three party systems, given the left’s organizational strengths and weakness that Chapter Two described. Section Three examines the evidence and analyzes the impact that the balance of power had in shaping the type of conservative parties that exist in these countries in the post-transition period. To assess the type of conservative parties that exist today and the impact that the transition had on these parties, I examine whether conservative parties built and maintain durable party organizations and the extent to which authority within the party rests on personalistic leaders or internal rules. I explore potential alternative explanations in Section Four and lastly in the Conclusion, I discuss the long lasting impact that the transition process had in these three countries and the broader implications that different types of conservative parties can have for party systems and democracy.
3.2 Outlining the Puzzle: The Electoral Performance of Conservative Parties

To identify the electorally relevant conservative parties of these systems I follow Mainwaring, Meneguello, and Power’s (2000:165-7) suggestion and use the ideological and policy position of the political parties. I also use a second criterion, parties that have won presidential elections, to narrow the group to the electorally relevant parties. With this second criterion, because the presidency continues to be the supreme prize of politics in these countries, I assume that presidential winners are the most successful conservative parties in their respective systems, with organizational successful strategies. Parties that have held the presidency had an opportunity to build a durable organization after they had access to the state, even if they were unable to do so before the election. By using the “winners” in the systems, I can assume that if these parties do not have a durable organization, it is the result of a deliberate choice rather than a lack of options or opportunities.

To identify the conservative parties, I use data from the *Elites Parlamentarias de América Latina* (PELA). The survey includes a question that asks non-members to identify parties along the ideological spectrum (where 1 is left and 10 is right). I consider those parties that are given a mean score of 7 or more by non-members to be conservative parties. Using this rule, there are 2 conservative parties in El Salvador.

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69 Pomper (1990) correctly notes that the relationship between organizational strength and party electoral success is a testable and not inherent relationship. Despite this valid point, I am taking as given that those parties that have won presidential elections will have the most successful type of party organization in the system. At the very least, it seems fair to assume that these parties do not have a losing organizational strategy.

70 I want to thank Manuel Alcántara and the Instituto Interuniversitario de Iberoamérica at the University of Salamanca, Spain for use of these data.

71 For the exact wording of the question see the Appendix for this chapter.
between 1994 and 2006; 4 in Nicaragua between 1996 and 2006;\textsuperscript{72} and 5 in Guatemala between 1995 and 2008 (see Table 3.1).\textsuperscript{73}

TABLE 3.1:

IDEOLOGICAL RANKING OF CONSERVATIVE PARTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Party Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>El Salvador</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>8.24 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
<td>7.20 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>8.89 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>9.33 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLN</td>
<td>9.4 (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GANA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicaragua</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>9.16 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
<td>8.32 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRONAL</td>
<td>7.53 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRN</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: PELA survey, various years.

NOTES: 1) Placement is on a 10-point scale, where 10 equals Right and 1 equals Left. Only those parties that were placed 7 or higher on the scale by non-members are included.

2) The number of respondents is in parenthesis.

I also examine a second question that asked respondents what role the state should play in the economy, using a 5-point scale where 1 was that the state should regulate the economy (Statism) and 5 that the market should regulate the economy (Market). This is a

\textsuperscript{72} Unfortunately, the data for the 1990-1996 Nicaraguan legislature is not available.

\textsuperscript{73} Using a second question, one that asks party members to identify the ideological position of their own party produces similar results, although party members tend to place their own party in a more centrist position.
significant policy issue that has been used to differentiate the policy preferences of political parties and their ideological position (Mainwaring, Meneguello, and Power 2000:165-7).\footnote{For the exact wording of the question see the Appendix.} I consider a party to be conservative when at least 40\% of its members preferred the market to regulate the economy (4 or more on the 5-point scale).\footnote{I use 40\% as my cut-off point because most party members tend to place themselves in the center (3 on the 5-point scale).} Using this criterion, there are 3 conservative parties in El Salvador between 1997 and 2006; 3 in Nicaragua between 1996 and 2006, and 9 in Guatemala between 1995 and 2008 (see Table 3.2). There is considerable overlap between Tables 3.1 and 3.2; members from those parties that were identified as being conservative (7 or more on the 10-point left-right scale) consistently hold a promarket economic preference over time. Table 3.2 does identify more conservative parties, but this is in large part due to how the survey was constructed where since non-members are not asked to place smaller parties on the left-right ideological spectrum. There is one interesting difference between the two tables for Guatemala. Non-members consistently identify the Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE), a relatively new party and the winner of the 2007 presidential election, as a centrist party, yet party members tend to prefer more promarket policy position.\footnote{I do not include the UNE because both members and non-members identify the party as a centrist one.}
TABLE 3.2:

VOTE SHARE FOR CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>49.03</td>
<td>57.71</td>
<td>57.71</td>
<td>48.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
<td>19.31</td>
<td>30.32</td>
<td>30.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9.69 (4)</td>
<td>2.71 (2)</td>
<td>2.71 (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>58.72</td>
<td>54.65</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>48.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: 1) Only those parties that received 10% or more of the vote are listed individually.
2) The PLC is taken to be the continuation of the coalition UNO.
3) “Others” include all other conservative parties that receive a percentage of the vote. The number of parties included is the parentheses.
From this larger pool of parties identified as being conservative, I focus my analysis on the five conservative parties that are, or have been, important in the party system by analyzing those that have won presidential elections in the post-transition period. These five parties are ARENA in El Salvador; the PLC in Nicaragua; and the Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN), the Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG), and the Gran Alianza Nacional (GANA) in Guatemala. These five conservative parties have had considerable advantages compared to the other parties in the systems. For this reason I work with the assumption that if parties benefit from having a durable national organization in the three party systems, these are the parties that should have such organizations.

Examining the vote share of the conservative parties in these three countries, which includes the five parties under consideration, makes clear the electoral strength of the right. Figure 3.1 presents the results for first round presidential elections between 1984 and 2009. In all three countries, conservative parties have done well electorally. In two of the three systems, El Salvador and Nicaragua, the same party accounts for the majority of this vote share. In Nicaragua, the conservative alliance—dominated by the PLC since the 1990 election—won two presidential elections in the first round of voting (the 1996 and 2001 elections). Even in 2006, when the FSLN won the presidency, the total vote share of all of the conservative parties that participated in the election was

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77 I exclude the Guatemalan party Movimiento de Acción Solidaria (MAS), winner of the 1990 presidential election, from the analysis because the party no longer exists. While some ex-MAS members remain active in politics, it was not possible to collect enough data on the party to include it in the analysis.
57.39% of the vote, 19.19% more than the FSLN’s. There is a similar pattern in El Salvador. ARENA received a majority of presidential votes and won three consecutive presidential elections in the post-transition period (the 1994, 1999, and 2004 elections).

![Electoral Results for Conservative Parties, Presidential Elections](image)

Figure 3.1: Electoral Results for Conservative Parties, Presidential Elections


NOTES: 1) Only the First-Round elections are included.

2) In El Salvador: First election 1984; Second election 1989; Third election 1994; Fourth election 1999; Fifth election 2004; and Sixth election 2009.


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78 In 2006, for the first time since 1984, the right did not unite behind one presidential candidate. In all probability, had the two largest conservative parties—the PLC and the Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense (ALN)—formed such an alliance, the right would have once again triumphed over the FSLN. Since losing this election, the right has moved towards their more traditional electoral alliance, setting aside important differences over leadership to contest the 2008 municipal elections.

79 ARENA also won the 1989 presidential election, the last transition election, which means that the party has won four consecutive presidential elections and was in power twenty years before losing the 2009 election to the FMLN. Of the four presidential elections that ARENA won, it faced a runoff election only in 1994.
Figure 3.1 also shows the strong electoral performance of conservative parties in Guatemala since the beginning of the transition, receiving in the 1999 election close to 80% of the vote share. There are three noteworthy differences between the Guatemalan party system and the other two. First, in Guatemala no conservative party has won reelection in the post-transition period. One consequence is that there is a substantially higher degree of alternation of power between conservative parties. Second, in Guatemala conservative parties have consistently performed well, but in the post-transition period no conservative party has won a presidential election in the first-round. In this system, second-round elections are the norm. Lastly, in this party system two of the second-round elections that have taken place have been competitions between conservative parties, in the 1995 and 1999 elections. In the other four second-round elections (in 1985, 1990, 2003, and 2007), the runoff was between a conservative and a centrist party. In comparison, in both El Salvador and Nicaragua the second largest political force has always been the left, although second-round elections are rare in these systems.

At the legislative level, conservative parties have also been strong electoral contenders in the three systems. Figure 3.2 presents the vote share of the conservative parties in the three countries. In these elections, conservative parties have received more than 40% of the vote since the second free and fair election. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the same parties that have dominated presidential elections have also been the most important conservative parties at the legislative level. In El Salvador, a third conservative party—the Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN)—has also consistently
received a significant number of votes.\textsuperscript{80} In Nicaragua, because of electoral reforms and alliances, conservative parties, other than the PLC, have fluctuated in their electoral participation and performance.

\textbf{Figure 3.2: Electoral Results for Conservative Parties, Presidential Elections}


\textbf{NOTES:} 1) For Guatemala and Nicaragua results include only the National Lists.


\textsuperscript{80} The PCN was the official party of the military dictatorship from 1961 to 1979, created to maintain the military in power (Zamora 1998). This is the only party created during the 1960s that survived the democratic transition and still has a significant quota of power. The Christian Democrats, the other important party of that time, has almost entirely disappeared (Williams and Seri 2003), although it retains a small vote share.
While there are some important differences between the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems, the comparison with the Guatemalan system highlights the more dramatic system-wide difference. In this system, as with the presidential elections, which conservative party received the highest vote share has changed consistently. Usually, the party that wins the presidency also receives the highest share of votes in the legislative election, but in subsequent elections previous winners lose a substantial percentage of their electoral support. As a result, in Guatemala there is little continuity in terms of which conservative parties are the most important actors in the system. The PAN provides a representative example of this pattern. Figure 3.3 presents the PAN’s vote share in legislative elections and presidential elections. The figure shows that the PAN reached its height of electoral support in 1995 when it won the presidency; since then the party has steadily lost its electoral support. In 2007, the party received only 2.5% in the presidential election and 4.5% in the legislative election, rendering it a minor party with only three of 158 seats in the legislature.
As both Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show, conservative parties are electorally strong in the three countries, but there are also differences between them. In both El Salvador and Nicaragua, one conservative party has received the vast majority of conservative votes in both presidential and legislative elections, dominating their party system in the post-transition period. As a result, there has been a higher level of stability in these two systems. In Guatemala in the same period, numerous conservative parties have risen to power and then promptly lost their electoral relevance, as the PAN example illustrates.

As I noted in previous chapters, this pattern of similarities and differences amongst the three countries is unexpected given their recent history. In the pre-transition period, there were vast differences between El Salvador and Nicaragua. Because of these differences, it is surprising that after the transitions the party systems of these two
countries most resemble each other. At the same time, taking into account the similarities between the El Salvador and Guatemala before the transitions, the differences between the conservative parties of these two countries today are striking. Why do the conservative parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua resemble each other, while conservative parties in Guatemala differ? In the next section, I put forth my explanation for this unexpected pattern of party system development.

### 3.3 Explaining Patterns of Investment

The brief description of the electoral performance of conservative parties revealed two different patterns. One of the central characteristics that distinguish the party systems is the level of alternation amongst conservative parties. In the first, a dominant conservative party does well electorally in the post-transition period. In the second type, at different periods of time different conservative parties have done well electorally, but no conservative party has done well consistently. To provide an explanation for this variation, I concentrate on explaining what *type* of conservative party the right creates to compete in the new regime. I focus on type of party organization because it is an important part of a party’s strategy to survive and win elections (Duverger 1954; Epstein 1980; Janda 1980; Kirchheimer 1966). At the core of my argument is the proposition that what takes place during the transition process, roughly between 1984 and 1996 for the three countries, will go on to shape the post-transition party system, including conservative parties.

During the transition, the right’s assessment of what type of conservative party will be electorally competitive is determined by the left’s position during the transition
and its potential future role. The left’s role impacts the right’s organizational strategy because of the dual nature of the transitions. The combination of democratization with conflict resolution raises tensions and the stakes of outcomes, including future elections in which the left would compete. The left has a critical influence on the organizational choices of the right because the left’s strengths depend in large part on its organization. Competing against organizations that have the capacity to mobilize citizens during the critical transition processes represents a serious challenge to the right, during a period of uncertainty and heightened tensions. This creates a necessary condition for the right to decide to construct a similar type of organization that it believes can compete against the left’s strengths. This contagion from the left (Duverger 1954) leads to the creation of conservative parties that copy important organizational characteristics from the left, including the durable nature of its organization. In the alternative scenario, when the left does not represent a threat during the transition, the right has no incentive to create a political party with a durable organization. Without the need to compete against the left, the right invests minimal resources into the organization of conservative parties, avoiding the costly endeavor of creating and maintaining durable organizations, without paying an electoral price for this decision.

This argument resonates with the work of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s (2001:43-44; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2008:324-6) who explain mobilization and collective action in social movements by focusing on the attribution of opportunity and threat as a causal mechanism. The authors make the case that:

Few potential actors will engage in collective action in the absence of either the opportunity to mobilize, a threat to their interests or values, or a combination of the two (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). But an emerging group-level account of
threat or opportunity is hardly sufficient to ensure a movement. For collective
attributions of threat or opportunity to produce emergent action the actors must
command sufficient resources and numbers to provide a social/organizational
base for mobilization (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2008:325)

In the three countries I examine, depending on the extent to which the left was
seen as a relevant actor, conservative forces felt a threat to their interests and values. In
reaction to this threat, the right mobilized and used its access to resources to create a
particular type of political party. The threat from the left was sufficient to mobilize the
right because of the dual nature of the transition process, which differentiates these post-
conflict countries substantially from most other post-1978 party systems. When it existed,
the fear that the left would take power pushed the conservative forces in these countries
to adopt a strategy that required high levels of investment in conservative parties and the
party system. Despite the added costs of a durable organization, since conservative forces
would need to invest in the organization as well as electoral campaigns, this type of
organization was created to respond to the left’s strengths. This pattern of investment
deviates considerably from the organizational development of parties in other post-1978
party systems. For the most part in newer party systems, the norm has been for parties to
create “thinner” organizations that depend almost exclusively on their access to the state
and media campaigns to survive and win elections.

These patterns of development established during the transitions have had
enduring effects on the three party systems long after the resolution of the transitions,
unlike the experiences of other post-transition countries where transition effects proved to
be short-lived (Cavarozzi 1992; Hagopian 1993; Hartlyn 1998; Przeworski 1991). These
patterns remain relevant today because of three mechanisms. The first is the continual
presence (or absence) of the attribution of threat from the left. As long as conservative
forces continue to frame political discourse in terms of what we can label a “conflict cleavage” the same incentives to mobilize against the left continue to exist. A second mechanism that has ensured the continuation of patterns established during the transitions is elite learning. The conservative political elite has learnt which are the winning formulas from those patterns established during the transition, whether this is the continual investment in durable organizations and the maintenance of the conflict cleavage or securing enough resources from the economic elite to finance electoral campaigns that revolve around individuals rather than parties. The last mechanism is power reproduction. The winners of the patterns established, from the right and the left, have preserved power by promoting institutional change (or inertia) that enhances their power, using institutions and their dominant position on each side of the ideological spectrum to discourage challenging actors.

Before outlining the five propositions that explain how during the transition the right’s strategies shaped the type of conservative parties that emerged in the new regimes, a brief overview of the actors involved is necessary.

3.3.1 The Actors

As I described in Chapter One, four transition actors shape the post-transition party systems: the conservative political elite, the economic elite, the left, and the military. The conservative political elite includes those politicians that began participating in the party system as members of rightist parties during the transition. Because the transitions of the three countries were prolonged and included electoral processes, conservative politicians participated in relatively free and fair elections throughout this period. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the conservative political elite was
the incumbent political actor, although the military continued to play an important political role throughout the transition. In Nicaragua, the left held the advantage in the transition elections, and the conservative political elite formed the opposition.

Throughout the chapter, I use the term conservative political elite as a unitary actor, but this actor is composed of numerous conservative politicians. Because of this, one of the questions that this chapter explores is the choice to cooperate or compete amongst the conservative political elite.

The second actor that is influential in shaping conservative parties is the economic elite. This group is composed of those individuals that are owners of the large private holdings that dominate the national economy. In Central America these large corporations have tended to be under the control of prominent families active in the agro-export markets (Vilas 1994; Paniagua Serrano 2002). In the late twentieth century this investment pattern began to undergo important changes, although not at the same speed or depth, across the region (Segovia 2005; Wood 2000; Palacio Prado 2002).

The economic elite in these countries has always had a substantial interest in politics, but the tools that this actor uses to influence political outcomes has varied considerably across cases and time. As other authors have noted, this social group has at its disposal a number of different modes of representation (Middlebrook 2000; Gibson 1996). In Latin America, historically the economic elite tended to protect its interests through direct linkages with the state rather than through close ties with political parties. Gibson (1996) observes that when it comes to the members of the economic elite, their

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81 Paniagua Serrano (2002) provides a revealing analysis of the Salvadoran economic elite, demonstrating the close ties between this group and their control of the country’s financial system, as well as substantial influence over other sectors of the economy.
“control over economic influence, and the privileged access they enjoyed to state power, raised doubts about their need to participate in democratic institutions, as well as about the advantages of devoting resources to the tasks of party building and electoral mobilization” (213).

In the history of Central America this is the pattern that prevailed. The economic elite of this region long avoided direct participation in political parties (Artiga González 2001; Palacio Prado 2002; Segovia 2004; Paige 1998). Instead, this actor has worked to secure its policy preferences through appointments to important political posts (such as Ministry positions); extensive personal relationships with government officials; financial contributions to electoral campaigns; and lobbying groups. In all three countries, lobbying groups have been an important tool through which the economic elite promoted its policy preferences (Palacio Prado 2002; Segovia 2004).

The economic elite’s ability to influence the type of conservative party that is created rests on its ability to finance political parties. In countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua where there are high levels of poverty and inequality and low levels of state financing for political parties, no other social group has a similar capacity to invest in the party system. This economic reality gives this actor an important influence over conservative parties, including their organizational type.

The other two actors involved in the transition are the left and the military. The left, as Chapter Two described, refers to the ex-guerrilla organizations: the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) in El Salvador, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG) in Guatemala, and the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) in Nicaragua. The first two are guerrilla organizations that waged unsuccessful wars against the state and in beginning in the mid-1980s began negotiating peace agreements. The FSLN, also a guerrilla organization, took
power in 1979 and remained in control of the state until 1990. As the representative of the Nicaraguan government, the FSLN began negotiating a transition in the mid-1980s. As I argued in the previous chapter, the FMLN and FSLN were strong organizations with extensive organizational, political, and military capabilities. The FSLN already had a good electoral record and the FMLN quickly moved to prepare its organization for elections when a political solution became the only viable one. The URNG was the weakest of the three organizations and the one with the lowest probability of winning an election.

The left’s strength is an important part of explaining the type of conservative parties that formed because it influenced the right’s strategic calculations about its own optimal strategy. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the right considered the FMLN and FSLN to be serious threats. As members of both the political and economic elite made clear in interviews, conservative forces thought of the left as a formidable opponent during the transition and expected the left to do well in elections, in large part because of their organizations. In comparison, the right in Guatemala saw the URNG as a weak actor during the transition. As the transition process unfolded, conservative forces

82 Author’s interviews in San Salvador, El Salvador: Armando Calderón Sol, ARENA member and president of the legislature during the peace negotiations (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani, ARENA member and president of El Salvador during the peace negotiations (November 2005); Oscar Alfredo Santamaria, government negotiator during the peace negotiations (May 2005); and Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso, founding member of ARENA (May 2005). Author’s interviews in Managua, Nicaragua: Bonilla Madrigal, Yamilet, ex-PLC member in charge of organizational development in the early 1990s (October 2005); Antonio Lacayo, Chief of Staff for President Chamorro (September 2005); José Adan, Aguerri Chamorro, prominent member of the economic elite (September 2005); and Virgilio Godoy, PLI member and presidential candidate for various elections, party leader during the 1990 election (September 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.
expected the left to enter the party system, but did not expect it to do well in elections. The different perceptions of the strength of the left during the transition and how it was likely to perform in elections influenced the type of conservative parties that the political and economic elite believed would be needed to win elections.

The last transition actor is the military, the state’s coercive apparatus. The military also has an important impact on the right’s calculations of its strategy, more specifically the relationship between the military and the economic elite. The existence of an alliance between the military and the economic elite affects the right’s decision to involve itself in the party system. In Nicaragua, the military was part of the FSLN’s structure and did not provide the right with any guarantees in the political arena. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the military was a more autonomous organization that was in charge of “defending” the state against the guerrilla organizations. Both institutions also had close ties with the economic elite, although in El Salvador this changed dramatically as a result of the conflict (Wood 2000).

3.3.2 Five Propositions: Investing in Organizations and Electoral Campaigns?

I begin with the premise that the preference of the conservative political elite is to win elections. Even if politicians have different goals, such as pursuing policy, winning elections is still necessary to secure such goals (Strøm 1990; Sartori 1976; Perkins 1996). In most representative democracies political parties are a requirement for winning

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83 Author’s interviews in Guatemala City, Guatemala: Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen, president of Guatemala and signatory of the Peace Accords (March 2005); Richard, Aitkenhead Castillo, prominent member of the economic elite and government representative in the final peace negotiations (November 2005); and Peter, Lamport, prominent member of the economic elite and former member of CACIF (November 2005).
elections, but what characteristics parties have varies considerably across party systems. I focus on two organizational characteristics to analyze party type. The first characteristic is whether the conservative political elite will decide to build a durable party organization, one with a national level organization that remains active between elections, or an electoral machine, a party that has little national life outside of the electoral campaign. The second party characteristic is the degree to which conservative parties revolve around charismatic leadership, or whether authority within the party rests more on institutional structures. In the rest of this section, I outline the five propositions that I posit explain the development of these two characteristics.

*Unity*

P₁: When the conservative political elite faces a leftist actor that can potentially win the presidency, there is a strong incentive to collaborate and refrain from fragmenting the party system with numerous conservative parties.

The choice over organization type is a deliberate one that depends on the preferences and strategies of the economic and conservative political elite during the transition process. In older party systems the conservative political elite is constrained in the organizational changes it can implement because of the structures it inherits. During regime transitions institutions are in a state of flux. In these three party systems, the decisions taken during this process established future patterns of political participation for the right in the post-transition regime. The dual nature of the transition process means

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that the right’s strategies are greatly affected by what competition it faces from the left. The possibility of a leftist victory mobilizes the right because of the internal conflicts, which were resolved as part of the transition process and had a strong ideological component. The dual nature of the transitions meant that the possibility of losing to the “enemy” increased dramatically the stakes of elections. If it lost to the left, the conservative political elite would find itself out of power and would have to face the victory of its conflict adversary, one it vehemently opposed.

This threat directly affects the levels of unity among the conservative political elite. The need to maintain unity to face a common opponent shapes the electoral strategy of the conservative political elite. When threatened by the left, it is in the interests of the majority of its members to pool resources and avoid splintering the right. In the absence of this threat during the transition, the costs of splintering conservative parties are lower and members of the conservative political elite have few incentives to pool resources or ignore internal divisions.

My expectation from this proposition is that in both El Salvador and Nicaragua the conservative political elite has a strong incentive to collaborate and pool resources because the likelihood that the left can win in the two countries is high. There should be a tendency toward electoral cooperation rather than competition amongst the conservative political elite. No such incentive exists in Guatemala; the weakness of the left means that the conservative political elite does not fear competition from the left. Without the need to pool resources and cooperate, there should be a higher tendency for the Guatemalan conservative political elite to fragment and compete electrolytically against members of this same group.
Durable Organizations

P2: When the conservative political elite faces a leftist actor with a durable organization that can potentially win an election, it has a strong incentive to invest its resources into creating and maintaining a similar type of organization.

A second decision that the conservative political elite faces is whether to build durable organizations or choose to rely on electoral machines, a decision that depends on this actor’s calculation of the benefit of the different types of organizations (Epstein 1980; Pomper 1990; Biezen 2005). This elite will try to build the type of organization that is most likely to do well: “the organization must be considered useful for party purposes if it is going to be created and maintained” (Epstein 1980:101). Because resources, both time and money, are finite commodities the conservative political elite has to reach a balance between needs and resources. It will therefore invest into a partisan organization only as many resources as it needs to win elections (Pomper 1990; Strøm 1990). As Strøm aptly states: “party leaders build up organizations to the point where the expected marginal returns equal the marginal costs” (Strøm 1990:575).

The calculation of what type of organization is needed to win elections has shifted in recent years with the growing use of the mass media in electoral campaigns. In general, the observed trend has been a greater reliance on mass media to win elections, and a decreasing role for party organizations (Toole 2003; Sartori 1976; Middlebrook 2000; Gibson 1996; Biezen 2005; Kopecký 1995). Arguably, this new trend gives an advantage to conservative parties, which have an easier time securing the funds necessary to pay for mass media campaigns (Gibson 1996).

Media campaigns have become an indispensable part of the electoral process. Following the general trend, in the three countries media campaigns have become a
necessary component of any electoral process. The use of the mass media is appealing to the conservative political elite for various reasons. Campaigns can reach a wide audience effectively. Media campaigns also have the advantage of giving more control to political leaders (Kopecký 1995). There are a number of prominent examples of politicians who have purposefully avoided the creation of party organizations to avoid power struggles. In addition, while campaigns are expensive they have to be financed only during electoral processes, when interest in politics is at its peak. For these reasons, I posit that when possible the conservative political elite will prefer to rely exclusively on media campaigns to win elections.

The conservative political elite will assume the costs of building durable organizations only if it feels it needs this type of organization to win popular support and win elections. The conservative political elite prefers to avoid the costs of durable organizations because they are expensive organizations, requiring a continuous investment of resources (both time and money). Financing durable organizations, in comparison to media campaigns, requires that the conservative political elite secure access to the necessary resources regardless of the electoral calendar and the level of interest in politics. For this reason, I posit that the conservative political elite prefers to rely solely on media campaigns to win elections and will avoid the cost of also maintaining a durable organization whenever possible.

The conservative political elite only decides to build and maintain durable organizations when it needs them to win elections. This added incentive exists during the transition process depending on the competition that the conservative political elite expects to face. If it faces a leftist party that can potentially win an election, it has an
incentive to invest in a durable party organization. The conservative political elite will choose this type of organization, seeking to emulate the left’s advantage to secure a favorable electoral outcome.\textsuperscript{85} The left’s reliance on durable organizations for its electoral performance, prompts the conservative political elite to try to match its opponent’s strategy. The expected competition from the left is therefore the added incentive that sways the conservative political elite’s decision over type of party organization. When this incentive exists, the conservative political elite will still use media campaigns but will also choose to build and maintain durable organizations. In the absence of such a threat, the conservative political elite will be able to pursue its preferred option, which is to rely solely on mass media campaigns and the less costly organizational type, an electoral machine, to win elections.

An alternative possibility is that there is a strong leftist actor that can potentially win, but does not have an extensive durable organization with which it mobilizes voters. This leftist party could have an alternative organizational type or be a populist left. In such cases the logic of my argument would remain the same. I would expect the conservative political elite to strive to copy the left’s model, whatever this may be, as long as the conservative political elite considers the left to be a viable electoral threat.

In the three cases, I expect the following patterns from this second argument. Given the strength of the left in both El Salvador and Nicaragua during the dual transition, especially the extensive reach of the left’s organization, the conservative political elite has an incentive to create a durable organization that is similar to the left’s.

\textsuperscript{85} As I argued in Chapter Two, the left’s electoral success rests on its ability to create the type of organization that can mobilize citizens across the national territory for elections, in large part by keeping citizens engaged with the party between elections.
The conservative political elite should see the benefits of creating conservative parties with durable organizations to use in conjunction with media campaigns to win elections. The conservative political elite should seek to create a durable party structure with which it can keep the electorate engaged to ensure that voters remain loyal to the party label. In Guatemala, the same incentive is not present. During the transition, the conservative political elite in Guatemala faced a weak left, one that lacked a durable structure with national presence. In the absence of such a threat, the conservative political elite had no incentive to invest valuable resources into the creation of a durable organization. As a result, the conservative political elite had no incentive to deviate from its preferred strategy: media campaigns and electoral machines.

As the first two propositions outline, the presence (or absence) of a strong leftist actor during the transition influences the organizational decisions of the conservative political elite. This is not, however, the only factor that shapes the kind of conservative party that the right creates during the transition process. Even when the incentives to unify and create a political party with a durable organization exist for the conservative political elite, this actor requires resources to execute its preference. There are two possible sources of funding available to the conservative political elite: the economic elite and the state. Both sources of funding can be used to build and maintain organizations and for campaign purposes. When the decision to build a durable party organization is made, the source of financing available to the party will shape the type of organization that forms.
3.3.3 Investing in Parties: The Economic Elite

P_3: When the economic elite faces the potential victory of the left and lacks a strong ally, the military or U.S., that can protect its interests, it has a strong incentive to invest in a conservative party that can triumph over the left.

There is a great deal of variation in the extent to which the economic elite supports conservative parties. In Latin America the tendency has been to withhold support (Gibson 1996; Middlebrook 2000). Gibson (1996) argues that only under certain circumstances is the economic elite willing to invest heavily in political parties:

Strong incentives must therefore exist to induce organized business to shift its political strategies and resources to party politics. If its interests in a democratic society can be guaranteed without resort to this somewhat messy task, it will tend to be unwilling to devote energy and capital to the support of conservative party politics (217).

I take this as my starting assumption: the preference of the economic elite is to avoid investing heavily in political parties, including their organizations. Given the costs of creating and maintaining a durable party organization and the availability of alternative forms of influence, the economic elite prefers to limit its investment to electoral campaigns. One of the reasons behind this decision is the scarcity of resources. The economic elite has finite resources and faces numerous demands for them. Unless a strong incentive to use these resources for organizational purposes exists, the economic
The economic elite prefers to invest only minimally in political parties, choosing instead to invest in electoral campaigns.\textsuperscript{86}

In a dual transition process, the strong incentives that Gibson (1996) refers to are the threat of a potential leftist victory and the absence of a strong actor willing to guarantee the interests of the economic elite. As it is for the conservative political elite, for the economic elite a leftist victory represents a threat to its privileged position within the context of an armed conflict where the potential winner is also the enemy.\textsuperscript{87} For this reason, the existence of a leftist threat creates for the economic elite a strong incentive to invest in the type of conservative party that can defeat the left. As is the case with the conservative political elite, the economic elite’s preferences are shaped by the left’s strengths. The presence of a left that has a strong organizational structure prompts the economic elite to see a durable organization as necessary for winning elections.

The second condition that creates such an incentive is the absence of a strong actor willing to guarantee the economic elite’s interests. In Central America, two actors have historically played this role of guarantor for the economic elite: the military and the U.S. government. If either of these actors is aligned with the economic elite and is willing to prevent the possible victory of the left, then the economic elite can avoid incurring the costs of investing in the creation and maintenance of a conservative party.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{86} The economic elite continues to use other forms of representation, including lobbying groups and interests associations, to influence political outcomes, but has also used campaign contributions to secure access to the winners of elections.

\textsuperscript{87} In Nicaragua, the economic elite during the transition was interested in returning to its privileged position.

\textsuperscript{88} The military’s ability to guarantee a complete victory was limited during the transition due to changing international circumstances in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yet, this actor still retained an important reserve of power.
to invest in party organizations rather than electoral campaigns only exists in the absence of such an actor. If there is a viable electoral threat from the left and no other actor willing to protect the interests of the economic elite, then this elite has an incentive to finance conservative parties.

In El Salvador and in Nicaragua, the economic elite faced the credible possibility of a leftist victory; the left had the ability to mobilize citizens and could claim the loyalty of numerous citizens. The second condition, however, did not hold for both countries. The Salvadoran economic elite, unlike its counterpart in Nicaragua, did not have the backing of a strong third actor during the transition that was willing to protect its interests. Prior to the conflict, the economic elite had counted on its alliance with the military to protect its interests in the political arena. One of the outcomes of the conflict, however, was the breaking of this alliance. The military’s decision to support the Christian Democratic government and its policies, at the behest of the U.S., led to a rift between the economic elite and its traditional ally (Wood 2001; Segovia 1996; Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998). With a viable left and in light of the absence of the military or U.S. as a strong ally, the economic elite had an incentive to invest in the party system by building and maintaining a conservative party that could compete with the left and protect its interests.

The economic elite in Nicaragua did have the support of a strong third actor that opposed a leftist victory. This third actor was not the military, an institution that was loyal to the Sandinistas and the Revolution, but the U.S. government. The U.S. government adamantly opposed the continuation of the FSLN in power. Throughout the transition, the U.S. willingly funded the military aggression against the FSLN and
opposed the 1984 election, certain that the right could not win. U.S. opposition to the left also meant that the American administration committed late to the idea of a political resolution to the conflict, but once it did, the U.S. government funded the right’s electoral campaign for the 1990 election (Walker 2000; Weaver and Barnes 1991; LeoGrande 1992). With the U.S. willing to invest the resources needed, the economic elite should have no need to extend its own investment beyond campaigns. I also expect the economic elite in Guatemala to refrain from investing extensively in the party system, but in this case because of the absence of a credible leftist threat. Without this threat, the economic elite can limit its investment to campaigns to secure an influence over the electoral winners. It does not need to extend itself and invest in the more demanding durable organizations to keep the left out of power.

*Investing in Parties: State Resources*

\[P_4: \text{The conservative political elite will use state resources to imitate the left’s organizational structures and build a durable party apparatus when it feels threatened by the possibility of a leftist victory.}\]

When the economic elite does not have an incentive to invest in durable organizations, the conservative political elite has to rely solely on state resources to finance its party project, whether this is an electoral machine or a durable organization. The state does not provide substantial public funding for political parties in these countries. Casas and Zovatto (2004) estimate that in El Salvador between 1999-2004 parties received US$0.5 annually per voter; in Guatemala between 1999-2003 parties received US$ 0.2 annually per voter; and in Nicaragua between 2001-2006 parties received US$ 1.2 annually per voter. Amounts for earlier elections are not available, but
given the lack of reform in this area, the amounts should be similar. The lack of public funding means that only those parties that win elections have access to state resources that can be used for partisan purposes, including salaries, offices, etc. Whether a winning party will use these state resources for the purpose of creating and maintaining a durable party organization depends on the level of competition that the conservative political elite expects to face from the left and its organization (proposition two). When competition along the left-right axis is high, the conservative political elite will use state resources to duplicate the left’s organizational strategy, creating a durable organization. If the level of competition is low, the conservative political elite will not have an incentive to use state resources for creating or maintaining a durable organization. This is not to say that the winning conservative political elite will refrain from using state resources, only that these will not be used for a durable party organization.

Given the strength of the left in the three countries, we should see the following: The Salvadoran conservative political elite should have an incentive to use its access to the state to help fund a durable organization. In Nicaragua the conservative political elite should also have an incentive to use its access to the state to finance its party project, but the economic elite will not be heavily invested in the party system (proposition three). In the absence of a viable leftist threat, it is only the Guatemala conservative political elite that should have little incentive to use its access to the state to create a durable party organization.
Controlling the Party Apparatus

P₅: The type of funding that the conservative political elite has access to will determine the degree to which a charismatic leader can control the party apparatus.

In newer party systems the predominant position of the party leadership tends to be the norm and leads to high levels of intra-party instability (Biezen 2005). The economic elite’s decision to invest in conservative parties affects the extent to which authority within the party rests on institutions or charismatic leaders. When the economic elite invests in a partisan organization, rather than just individual’s electoral campaigns, this actor has an incentive to take a more active role in the organization and to oversee the party to protect its investment. The economic elite has an incentive to push for more internal accountability in the use of its resources and to push for an institutionalized leadership. The economic elite uses its influence in the party to demand that the organization be run like a business enterprise and making it harder for charismatic leaders to control the party apparatus.

When the economic elite does not invest in conservative parties directly, the party lacks this oversight. As a result, parties that rely almost exclusively on the state to finance party organizations will be organized around those leaders that control access to the state. With no external actor demanding accountability from the party’s leadership and with weak states that are easily captured this leadership has an incentive to secure its control of the organization through the use of state resources. The fifth proposition presents this argument.

The expectation from this proposition is that in El Salvador, where the economic elite has an incentive to become involved in the party system, authority within the party
should rest on party structures rather than charismatic leaders. The pattern in the other two countries is different because neither the Nicaraguan or Guatemalan economic elite has an incentive to invest in the party system. In these two systems, authority within conservative parties should tend to rest on leaders rather than party structures. Conservative parties in both systems should have strong personalistic leaders and weak internal institutions.

The five propositions outline what type of conservative party the right will create during the dual transition. Figure 1.2 from Chapter One outlines the different decision choices that are available to the conservative forces, departing from their original reaction to the left’s position during the transition. The threat of a leftist victory is a powerful motivation that shapes the electoral strategies of both the political and economic elite. The influence of the left rests on the ideological component of the conflicts, the end of which was decided during the transitions. In the three cases, the fervor and grievances associated with the conflicts ran deep, was ideological, and was emphasized by all sides throughout the transition process. As a result, the balance of power during the transition is critical for understanding what type of conservative parties the right will create, because the left’s strength and viability as a potential winner creates a strong incentive for the right to organize in order to defeat the left. The balance of power is important because the strength of the military and its alliance also influences the right’s strategy. Lastly, the source of funds that the conservative political elite can access helps shape the organizational characteristics of conservative parties.
3.4 Organizational Type: Examining the Evidence

In the previous section, I presented the argument that the presence (or absence) of an electorally viable left explains the electoral strategies that the right will develop during the transition. The strategy that the right chooses during this period of time, when the system is in flux, has long lasting implications for the party system. In this section I examine electoral results and data collected through interviews to evaluate this argument. First, I outline the perception that conservative forces had of the left to establish in which cases the right considered the left to be a credible threat. I then examine the evidence, considering the extent to which the conservative political elite cooperates or competes with members of the same group; the types of organization conservative parties have; and how conservative parties are financed.

3.4.1 The Left as a Credible Threat

Of the three cases, the right considered the left to be serious threat during the transition in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In both cases the left was both a formidable military and political adversary. Throughout the transition process, the conservative political elite had an understanding of the left as a serious opponent, as well as an understanding that its incorporation into the political system challenged the right’s position. In contrast, by the time the transition process began in Guatemala, the left was no longer considered a military or political threat.

89 Author’s interviews in San Salvador, El Salvador with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); and Ana Cristina Sol Midence, member of the Salvadoran Foreign Service during the peace negotiations (1989-93) (June 2005). In Guatemala City, Guatemala interviews with Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Richard, Aitkenhead Castillo (November 2005); Peter Lamport (November 2005); Bernado, Arévalo de León, academic and
For both the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan right, the threat from the left was from the beginning of the transition an electoral one. In El Salvador, although a political solution to the conflict that included the incorporation of the FMLN into the party system did not become a serious option until late in the transition process, the electoral participation of the PDC at the beginning of the process and the policies the PDC adopted during its term in power (1984-89), including an agrarian reform and the nationalization of financial institutions that directly affected prominent members of the right, already represented a serious challenge well before the FMLN’s electoral incorporation (Paige 1998).  

For example, the families of ARENA’s first two presidents, Cristiani and Calderón Sol, were personally affected by the PDC’s nationalization policies and cited this as one of the most important incentives behind their decision to become directly involved in ARENA. As the transition process progressed and the incorporation of the FMLN in the party system became only a matter of time, the conservative political elite

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90 Author’s interviews in Guatemala City, Guatemala with Gen. Julio Balconi, military representative in the peace talks from 1991 to 1996 and Minister of Defense under President Arzú (March, 2005); Col. Benjamin Godoy, Commander various military zones and Military Attaché to the Guatemalan Embassy in Washington, D.C. (1993) (March, 2005); Alvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Benardo, Arévalo de León (March 2005); Richard, Aitkenhead Castillo (November 2005); Peter Lamport (November 2005); Fritz, Gallont García, legislator, member various political parties (PAN, Secretary General PU) (March 2005; and Estela Alba, Maldonado, combatant URNG (February 2005).

91 Author’s interview with Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Ana Cristina Sol Midence (June 2005); and Gloria, Salguero Gross, founding member ARENA (June 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

92 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005) and Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005).
believed that the electoral potential of this party was significant.\textsuperscript{93} President Cristiani, for example, stated that ARENA’s leadership thought that the FMLN once it became a political party “would become the owner of the leftist opposition.”\textsuperscript{94}

In Nicaragua, the FSLN controlled the state for most of the transition and relinquished its control only at the end of the process in 1990. Moreover, the FSLN had already demonstrated its electoral strength in the 1984 election. As the right prepared to contest the 1990 election, most of the advantages the FSLN possessed in the 1984 campaign remained. Until the final results were in, even the more optimistic on the right had serious concerns that the left would remain in power even among the more optimistic on the right.\textsuperscript{95} Yet although there was no doubt about the electoral strength of the left in Nicaragua, relations between conservative forces and the left were much more nuanced than in El Salvador (Vilas 1992; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006). Among the right there were two distinct sectors. The first had close ties, including familial ones, with the FSLN and had a much higher tolerance for the left. The second, the weaker of the two groups, vehemently opposed the FSLN and all of its previous policies (Vilas 1992; Weaver and Barnes 1991; Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006).\textsuperscript{96} There was dissension

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\textsuperscript{93} Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005), Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); and Gamerro, Quintanilla, prominent members of ARENA and member of the economic elite (April 2005).

\textsuperscript{94} My translation. Original text: “Nosotros creímos que ellos se iban a adueñar de la oposicion del lado izquierdo” (Author’s interview with Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005)).

\textsuperscript{95} Author’s interviews with José Adan, Aguerri Chamorro (September 2005); Virgilio Godoy (September 2005); Antonio Lacayo (September 2005); Arturo José, Cruz Sequeira (October 2005); and Alfredo Cuadra, member of the economic elite, ex-president of COSEP (October 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

\textsuperscript{96} Author’s interviews with two prominent members of this faction confirmed, Virgilio Godoy (September 2005) and Arturo José, Cruz Sequeira (October 2005), confirmed this position.
\end{flushleft}
within the right existed about what approach should be taken toward the FSLN, but there was also a growing mistrust of the FSLN and agreement on the desire to see the FSLN removed from power (Paige 1998; Spalding 1994).

In contrast to El Salvador and Nicaragua, the conservative forces in Guatemala did not face a leftist threat during the transition. Earlier in the conflict the URNG had been a considerable military and organizational force, with an organizational presence in important regions. By the time the transition process began in 1984, all of the transition actors had concluded (as they reported to me) that the left’s force had diminished drastically, which was a direct result of the military’s counterinsurgency strategy (Brockett 2005:194-229).97 While the right needed to resolve the armed conflict, the very weakness of the left made the transition process possible. As the transition progressed, the URNG’s position did not improve. The organization received substantial support from the international community, but the right considered the URNG’s national position and support to be precarious.98

3.4.2 Unity as an Electoral Strategy

The first proposition states that members of the conservative political elite will tend to display a higher degree of unity when its members feel threatened by the possibility of a leftist victory. The electoral data presented in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 provide

97 In interviews, members of the URNG, the military, and government during this time period agreed with this statement (author’s interview with Gen. Julio Balconi (March, 2005); Col. Benjamin Godoy (March, 2005); Rodrigo Asturias (January, 2005); Alba Estela Maldonado (January, 2005); and Bernado, Arévalo de León (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

98 Author’s interview with Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Richard, Aitkenhead Castillo (November 2005); and Peter Lamport (November 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
evidence for this argument. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, as anticipated, there is a strong tendency for the conservative political elite to ban together electorally to compete in elections. As a result of this strategy, one party has dominated elections since the transition period, avoiding any serious challenges from alternative conservative parties.

The Guatemalan electoral results also fit the expectation for the first proposition. In the absence of a leftist force that poses a credible threat, the conservative political elite has had a limited incentive to cooperate among themselves. Instead, electorally relevant conservative parties routinely competed against each other for political power.

The importance of adopting a strategy of unity to win is not only the result of a lack of alternatives for the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran conservative political elite. During the transition, the conservative political elite in both countries mobilized around the need to defeat the left, a strategy that party leaders have consistently emphasized as a critical for their party’s electoral future (Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998). ARENA’s leadership has always gone to great lengths to promote a vision of the party as an organization that has a *unidad granítica* (Artiga González 2001) and a capability to renew itself. The party uses this image to compare itself to the FMLN, which often has difficulties on both these fronts.

Prominent party leaders, such as ex-president Alfredo

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99 Author’s interview with Bonilla Madrigal, Yamileth, ex-PLC member in charge of organizational development in the early 1990s (October 2005); Wilfred, Navarro, PLC leader, (July 2005); and Carlos Noguerra, leader PLC, (July 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

100 The FMLN, as Chapter Two outlined, has tended to suffer from very public divisions. Many of the party’s leaders played a prominent role in the armed conflict.
Cristiani, also recognize that the threat from the left has helped ARENA maintain this unity “the fear of the extreme left also binds a lot around ARENA” (my translation).\footnote{Author’s interview with Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005). I asked Cristiani why ARENA was able in the 1980s to gather a strong base of support. He first mentioned the charismatic leadership of D’Aubuisson he then went on to talk about the impact that the fear of the left had in the party building project. His original statement was that “El proceso democratico y probablemente en algunos aspectos el temor a la extrema izquierda, que es ahorita la opcion mas fuerte de la oposicion, tambien aglutina bastante alrededor de ARENA.”}

ARENA’s focus on the importance of internal cohesion has been prominent since the party’s conception, with the party’s leadership arguing that unity was critical for the party to triumph over the party’s main political rival: the left (Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998).\footnote{Author’s interview with Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005 and Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005).} Roberto D’Aubuisson, the party’s founder, referred to this as a strategy of \textit{unidad de acción} (Artiga González 2001; Hernández Pico 1995), critical for the party to triumph over communism, embodied by the guerrillas as well as the PDC government.\footnote{For example, D’Aubuisson talked about the biggest threat facing El Salvador, communism (Paige 1998; Zamora 1998). He made direct references to the guerrilla organizations, as well as the PDC, arguing that these groups were a threat to the country and citizens well being, and that he and his supporters were working together to rid the country of this threat. His references to solutions were always violent in their language even as he was courting voters (Paige 1998). For instance, various members of ARENA proudly related the story that D’Aubuisson would often split a watermelon with a machete to show that what was green outside (the PDC’s official color) was red inside (author’s interview with Ricardo Orlando Valdívieso (May 2005); Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (July 2004); and Orlando Cocar, Romano, manager of the D’Aubuisson Institute (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador). Samples of D’Aubuisson speeches can be heard through ARENA’s official web site <http://www.arena.com.sv/>.}

Two critical moments in the party's history demonstrate the importance that the party’s leader placed on unity and cooperation for a greater good, winning against the left. The first arose with the electoral results for the 1982 constitutional assembly and exemplifies the importance that ARENA’s leadership attached to keeping the left from power. ARENA, in alliance with the PCN, held a majority in the constitutional assembly and would have named D’Aubuisson as interim president. However, his unsuitability for...
the presidency was made clear by the U.S. government through the Salvadoran Armed Forces. D’Aubuisson, fearing that holding fast to his position would result in the U.S. cutting its military aid to the armed forces, and fearing the possible repercussions this would have in the conflict, agreed to back the armed forces’ preferred candidate (Zamora 1998). As Cristiani explained, rather than destabilize the situation, D’Aubuisson preferred to maintain the conservative forces together to prevent a leftist victory.

A second incident also demonstrates the importance that D’Aubuisson placed on maintaining the conservative forces together in the battle for power. This was his agreement to support Alfredo Cristiani as ARENA’s public voice and the party’s presidential candidate in 1989, as well as the decision to pursue a political solution to the conflict, a solution many within the party strongly opposed. D’Aubuisson worked to convince the hardliners in the party, a faction that had been critical in building the party’s base and organization, to remain in the party. He argued that to triumph, it was critical that the conservative forces remain united against their common enemy (Norton 1991; Cristiani 1989).104

Most members of ARENA remain committed to a strategy that emphasizes the importance of party cohesion, especially cohesion within the party’s leadership. Members are often wary of even discussing or admitting that factions exist. Prominent party leaders admit to the existence of internal “groups,” but are quick to note that there is more holding the party together than dividing it. They emphasize the party’s unity and its

104 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); Ana Cristina Sol Midence (June 2005); and Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon, prominent ARENA member and leader (July 2004 and April 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
ability to “renew” itself, arguing that these are the reasons behind the party’s electoral
success.  

Although ARENA tries to promote an image of a party without factions, there are
a number of important factions inside the party, which is to be expected given the size of
the party and the wide-ranging interests from the right that it seeks to represents (Farah
1996). What is interesting about these factions is not their existence, but that they have,
despite substantial policy differences between them, continued to commit themselves to
cooperating within the party for over twenty years. At various times these factions have
sought to maneuver around each other to control the party’s top leadership body, the
Consejo Ejecutivo Nacional (COENA), especially when the party experiences an
electoral setback. However, only a small groups have splintered from the party and most
of these in time have returned to it (Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998; Farah 1996;
NotiCen 2000; Proceso 2000).

The leadership of the party believes that those times when internal divisions have
become public the party has suffered electorally. This widely held belief among the
party’s members reinforces the idea that it is important that the party remain united

105 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November
2005); Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (April 2005); and
Donato, Vaquero, prominent ARENA member and leader (June 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

106 Divisions within the party were originally organized around two groups: the hard liners and
more moderate faction. One of the central differences distinguishing these two groups was the approach
that they advocated towards the end of the war, positions that were shaped by the economic interests of
these groups (Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998; Wood 2000). Since the resolution of the conflict, the
underlining characteristic differentiating these groups has become the more prominent one: economic
interests (Farah 1996; Proceso 2000). Today, the central divisions rests between those groups benefiting
from government policies and those left out of this benefits. Discussions with regional scholars, such as
Alexander Segovia, Álvaro Artiga González, and, Luis Armando González, who have studied ARENA
extensively agree with this assessment (author’s interview conducted between April and July 2005).
For example, Salguero Gross, a founder and prominent member of ARENA, left the party briefly to compete unsuccessfully against it in the 2003 legislative election. When she returned to the party, in preparation to the 2004 presidential election, she cited as the main reason the need to come together to defend the country against a possible FMLN victory (Calderón and Bonilla 2003).

Another example of the importance that the party places on unity is the more recent response to the 2009 presidential election. Since its defeat, the party’s leadership has reorganized, calling for a strengthening of ties between the party and citizens. It argued that the party’s lack of cohesion during the campaign led to the electoral defeat. Prominent leaders within the party argue that the party primaries promoted divisions within the party and that these did not heal before the general election (Martínez and Arauz 2009; Silva Ávalos 2009). There is a strong sense inside the party that the differences among party members and its constituency are (and should be) less important than the differences between ARENA and the FMLN.

In Nicaragua the experience has been similar, with the conservative political elite

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107 ARENA’s internal factions are not necessarily the reason behind a decrease in the party’s vote share. There are numerous alternative explanations that might better explain a decrease in votes, including a growing discontent with the party’s performance or an increasingly sophisticated electorate that prefers a divided government. Yet the explanation that the conservative political elite consistently emphasizes is the party’s internal divisions (author’s interview with Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (July 2004 and April 2005); Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Gloria, Salguero Gross (June 2005); Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); and Donato, Vaquero (June 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador).

108 Author’s interview with Gloria, Salguero Gross (June 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

109 This was the first time the party held such primaries.

110 Author’s interview with Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (July 2004 and April 2005); Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005); and Donato, Vaquero (June 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
consistently adopting a strategy of unity to win against the left, with the 2006 elections as an important exception to the pattern. The strategy of unity was evident in the very creation of UNO. This coalition included a diverse range of political parties, but was controlled by three conservative factions, all seeking to displace the Sandinistas from power (Vilas 1992; Walker 2000). Following this example, the PLC leadership also placed a great deal of importance on unifying the conservative forces in the country. After its victory in the 1996 election, the party developed its “PLC Strategy 2000,” which called for unity as a stratagem for retaining power (Envío 1997).

Unlike the Salvadoran experience, the numerous conservative parties that made up UNO did not merge to form one ARENA-like party. This was in large part a reflection of the two most important sectors that made up the conservative forces, those willing to negotiate and compromise with the FSLN and those who sought to dismantle the entire revolutionary project (Spalding 1994). Despite the serious differences within the right, at least for electoral purposes, the major factions of the conservative political elite came together to compete against the left for sixteen years (1989-2005), choosing to form a

111 Author’s interview with Arturo José, Cruz Sequeira (October 2005); Virgilio Godoy (September 2005); and Antonio Lacayo (September 2005).

112 UNO included a total of fourteen parties and almost all politicians who were anti-Sandinista. The Members of the coalition were: Alianza Popular Conservadora (APC); Movimiento Democrático Nicaragüense (MDN); Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN); Partido de Acción Nacional Conservadora (PANC); Partido Comunista de Nicaragua (PCN); Partido Conservador Nacional (PCN); Partido Demócrata de Confianza Nacional (PDCN); Partido Integracionalista Centroamericano (PICA); Partido Liberal (PL); Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC); Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI); Partido Popular Social Cristiano (PPSC); Partido Social Demócrata (PSD); and Partido Socialista Nicaragüense (PSN). The three main factions in the coalition were Chamorro’s group; a group aligned with Godoy and the Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI); and a group that included Enrique Bolaños and had the support of COSEP.

113 Spalding (1994) distinguishes five different groups among the economic elite, depending on their level and type of opposition to the FSLN and revolution. Interviews with members of the economic and political elite confirmed this divisions (Virgilio Godoy (September 2005); Antonio Lacayo (September 2005); and Arturo José, Cruz Sequeira (October 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.
dominant alliance rather than divide the conservative vote among competing parties.\textsuperscript{114}

After the 1990 election, under the leadership of Arnoldo Alemán the PLC rose to prominence in the electoral arena. In some respects this experience was similar to ARENA’s. The leadership also emphasized the importance of unity. By 1996 it was the largest alternative to the FSLN, yet despite this distinct edge, the party’s strategy was to form electoral alliances with smaller parties that add little electorally. Even though the participation of these parties in the alliance was unnecessary for winning, to promote the idea of the existence of unity against a common enemy, as well as the idea that the PLC umbrella can accommodate differences, the leadership continued to pursue a strategy of unity.\textsuperscript{115} Those parties that did not participate in the PLC led coalitions, with the prominent exception of the ALN in 2006, are at best minority parties.\textsuperscript{116}

In both El Salvador and Nicaragua, the conservative political elite’s strategy of coming together to win elections has had favorable results, especially in presidential elections (see Table 3.3). In El Salvador, this strategy of unification has been reinforced over time as ARENA has strengthened its position and the FMLN has retained its capacity to win elections. Since the transition period, a majority of the members of the conservative political elite have chosen to join ARENA, which quickly grew to dominate the conservative vote. After its first election in 1982, the party became the second largest

\textsuperscript{114} In El Salvador, among the conservative forces, there has been a distinct lack of willingness to cooperate with the left.

\textsuperscript{115} Author’s interview with Bonilla Madrigal; Yamileth (October 2005); and Carlos Noguerra, leader PLC, (July 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

\textsuperscript{116} These parties are often so small that in Nicaragua they tend to be described as “family parties” because only family members vote for them. These parties include very few members of the conservative political elite.
political force in the system; by 1988 when the party participated in its fourth election, it had become the largest. In Nicaragua, after the UNO, the PLC quickly rose to prominence and became the dominant conservative force in the country, a position it retained for sixteen years, which led to two electoral victories. The consolidation of the electoral strength of these two parties has had a corresponding negative impact on the future of other conservative parties. In contrast, during the same process a different pattern of conservative competition developed in Guatemala. In this system, new conservative parties have done well electorally.
TABLE 3.3:

VOTE SHARE FOR CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

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<td>36.04</td>
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<td>21 (9)</td>
<td>18.02 (9)</td>
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<td>79.97</td>
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<td>58.37</td>
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<td>53.23</td>
<td>26.47</td>
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<td>0.54 (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>53.31</td>
<td>57.87</td>
<td>53.19</td>
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</table>


NOTES: 1) With the exception of the PCN, only those parties that received 10% or more of the vote are listed individually. “Others” includes all other conservative parties that receive a percentage of the vote with the number of parties in the parentheses.

2) (1) Results are for the National Lists.

3) The PLC is taken to be the continuation of the coalition UNO.
Tables 3.4 and 3.5 present data on the number of new conservative parties that have contested elections since the transition, while Tables 3.6 and 3.7 present data on the electoral strength of challenging conservative parties in presidential and legislative elections, respectively. While the number of new conservative parties contesting elections is comparable across the three systems, the electoral performance of these parties varies significantly. In both El Salvador and Nicaragua, a small number of new conservative parties have contested elections after the creation of ARENA and the PLC; almost none of these have done well in elections. These parties have been unable to attract the resources necessary, including members of the conservative political elite, to move beyond a limited existence as a group that revolves around a leader and fades quickly from the political arena after an election.117

117 Author’s interview with Héctor Dada, academic and center-left politician, member of the Centro Democrático Unido (CDU) in 2005 (May 2005) and Ana Cristina Sol Midence (June 2005), in San Salvador, El Salvador; and Lester Flores, member PLC in charge of organizational development (October 2005) and Zúñiga Gutiérrez, Aníbal, member and president of the Partido Conservador (PC) (October 2005), in Managua, Nicaragua.
TABLE 3.4:
NEW CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Parties</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Parties</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Parties</th>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Average</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NOTES: Only those parties that received some percentage of the vote are included.
TABLE 3.5:
NEW CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.5</strong></td>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NOTES: 1) Only those parties that received some percentage of the vote are included.
2) (1) To select the new parties the national lists were used.

In El Salvador, between 1984 and 2009, an average of one new conservative party has contested presidential and legislative elections (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5). A number of these new parties are factions that left ARENA, but as the electoral results in Tables 3.6 and 3.7 show, leaving ARENA has a high electoral cost. A new conservative party that competes against ARENA for the conservative vote tends to perform poorly in elections, receiving on average less than 1% of the vote in presidential elections and 1.34% of the vote in legislative ones. As a group, these parties captured an average of 2.54% of the presidential vote and 4.71% of the legislative vote. These averages increase when we include the PCN’s vote share, although only in legislative elections.
TABLE 3.6:

VOTE SHARE RECEIVED BY CHALLENGING CONSERVATIVE PARTIES,
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Votes Received</th>
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<td>El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDCN</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
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<td>PAN</td>
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<td>FRG</td>
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<td>GANA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
</tr>
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<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES: Azpuru (2008), IFES (2009), and Payne et al. (2007).

NOTES: 1) Only new political parties are included, since there is no dominant conservative party that challenging conservative parties can compete against.

2) (1) Average does not include the PCN.

3) (2) Average does not include the ALN.

4) “Others” includes all other conservative parties that receive a percentage of the vote. The number of parties included is in parentheses.
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>4.64 (1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.34</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>26.47</td>
<td>8.81</td>
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|       |       |       |       |       | 2.85 (3) |

**SOURCES:** Luciak (1997) and Payne et al. (2007).

**NOTES:** 1) Only those parties that received more than 10% of the vote are included individually.

2) (1) Average does not include the PCN.

3) (2) Only new political parties are included, since there is no dominant conservative party against which alternative parties compete.

4) (3) Average does not include the ALN.

5) “Others” includes all other conservative parties that receive a percentage of the vote. The number of parties included is in parentheses.
The experience of new conservative parties in Nicaragua has been similar. Between 1990 and 2006, a slightly higher number of new parties participated in presidential and legislative elections, on average an increase of 2.5 new parties per election (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7). In Nicaragua new parties have been discouraged by the electoral reforms that the FSLN and PLC adopted in 2001, which made maintaining a party’s legal status and registering new parties exceedingly hard (Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000). The electoral performance of new conservative parties has on average been better than the electoral performance of their Salvadoran counterparts. Between 1990 and 2006, the challenging conservative parties received about 7.45% of the vote in presidential elections and 8.88% in legislative elections (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7). When we exclude the vote share that the ALN alliance captured in 2006, this number drops dramatically to less than 1% of the vote in both types of elections. Since the 1990 election, challenging conservative parties that did not join the dominant conservative alliance received on average 8.09% and 8.88% of the vote in presidential and legislative elections, respectively. If we exclude the results from the 2006 election, this number also drops to 2.85% of the vote in presidential elections and 2.17% in legislative ones.

These electoral results show that both ARENA and the PLC have avoided, almost entirely, significant challenges from their own ideological camp. The two exceptions to this trend are the PCN in El Salvador and the much more recent ALN in Nicaragua. These two parties are an important aberration from the conservative political elite’s general pattern of competition. The data in Tables 3.6 and 3.7 also present the PCN’s vote share, which has been relatively consistent. Between 1984 and 2009, the PCN received on average 9.14% of the vote in legislative elections. In presidential elections,
the party’s electoral performance has been much weaker, receiving an average of 5.9% of the vote, a percentage that has steadily decreased over time. The PCN has survived electorally by creating an electoral space for itself regionally rather than nationally. Using its access to the state, the party has retained its position in a few strongholds. It is noteworthy that in the last election, the closest contest yet between ARENA and the FMLN, the PCN was willing to cooperate with ARENA to try to secure a conservative victory. Early in the campaign process, the PCN leadership suggested a formal coalition between the two parties (Valencia and Baires Quezada 2009). This alliance failed to materialize, yet the PCN was still willing to withdraw its candidate from the presidential race when it became apparent that ARENA was going to need every vote that it could marshal to win (Castillo 2009; Alemán 2009).

In Nicaragua, until the 2006 election, conservative parties that sought to challenge the PLC’s hegemony failed to present a serious threat to the dominant conservative bloc. Instead, the majority of the conservative political elite cooperated in challenging the FSLN. In 2006 there was an important deviation from this strategy of unity. In the lead up to the election, an important conservative faction under the leadership of Eduardo Montealegre broke away from the PLC. The reason for this rupture was the party’s presidential nomination; Alemán refused to endorse Montealegre as the PLC’s

\[118\] Politically, the PCN has almost always cooperated with ARENA, although it has formed alliances with the FMLN to secure state positions.

\[119\] The agreement between ARENA and the PCN has not been made public; speculation in the media suggests that in exchange for withdrawing from the election the PCN was promised control over particular state institutions (Castillo 2009; Alemán 2009).
presidential candidate (Envío 2006). The new conservative alliance was relatively successful in challenging the PLC’s conservative hegemony. It attracted a number of prominent PLC members, co-opted some of its organization, and secured an important share of the vote (O’Grady 2006).

While the ALN performed well in the election, for the right the decision to contest the election with important factions of the conservative political elite competing against each other proved to be a losing strategy. The lesson that the conservative political elite seems to have learned from this experience supports the argument that with an electorally viable leftist party, the right has a powerful incentive to unify and cooperate. Since losing the presidential election, the conservative political elite in Nicaragua has returned to its strategy of unity against the left. For the 2008 municipal elections, despite suggestions from the smaller leftist party, the Movimiento Renovador Sandinista (MRS), that an anti-pact coalition form between the MRS and ALN, Montealegre decided to renew the conservative political elite’s traditional electoral alliance (DiarioCoLatino.com 2008; El Nuevo Diario 2008). The renewed strategy of electoral unity held throughout the election, as the fight for control of the dominant conservative bloc continued (Envío 2008; El

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120 Not surprisingly, the question of who will be the right’s one presidential candidate has always been contentious in both party systems. In Nicaragua the U.S. has often had an important influence in this decision, especially when no conservative leader can impose his will on the other factions. For instance, in the 1990 election the U.S. was instrumental in securing the Chamorro candidacy. In 2006 the unwillingness of the U.S. to deal with Alemán led to the viability of Montealegre as the ALN’s candidate, although the U.S’ preference had been for Montealegre to run under the PLC label (Envío 2006).

121 This is not the first time that a faction left the PLC to form a new party (Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000), but it is the first time that this strategy was successful. Bonilla Madrigal, who had played a critical role in establishing the PLC’s organization in 1990 and was in charge of the new party’s organization, credited the ALN’s success to this strategy (author’s interview Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005)).
Nuevo Diario 2008). In all probability, this electoral alliance will compete against the FSLN in the next presidential election, to avoid another electoral loss to the left.

Given that ARENA and the PLC are the most likely conservative winners since the transition, it is not surprising that a majority of the conservative political elite in El Salvador and Nicaragua joined these parties to seek an electoral victory. The preference of the majority of the conservative political elite in both countries has been to unify under one party label, something that is evident in the small number of challengers that this elite has created to contest the conservative vote.122 The alternative conservative parties that have formed, not including the PCN in El Salvador and ALN in Nicaragua, have tended to revolve around a small number of leaders who failed to establish a wider network of politicians (Grimaldi 2007; Zamora 1998).123

In Guatemala, where the left did not represent a threat to the conservative political elite during the transition, a very different pattern emerged. The partisan right has not seen a need for unity. Prominent members of the conservative political elite, active in the party system during the transition, focus on their own personal connections with the electorate and view competition among members of the conservative political elite as the norm. While most members of the conservative political elite envy the success of ARENA in El Salvador and its ability to dominate the party system, none of them saw the

122 This is a general pattern in El Salvador, true across the ideological spectrum. Very few new parties emerge in this system and of those that do, few survived more than two elections.

123 Author’s interview with José, Estebas González, legislator and member of Cambio (September 2005); David R., Dye, political analyst and affiliated with the Carter Center (July 2005); Orlando, Terdencilla, member of the legislative faction Azul y Blanco (September 2005); and Rene Oscar Vargas, political analyst (October 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.
feasibility of such a project in Guatemala. Most of those who were interviewed, including politicians with long trajectories in the political arena, such as former president Álvaro Arzú (now PU), and long time members of congress Anabelle de León (various parties), Mario Taracena (PAN), and Fritz Gallont (PU), when asked about the reasons behind the lack of unity in the party system among conservative parties, almost exclusively pointed to personal differences between party leaders as one of the main reasons behind party splintering in Guatemala.

The data in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 illustrate this lack of unity. Between 1984 and 2008, an average of 3 new conservative parties entered the electoral arena to compete in presidential elections and 2.5 to compete in legislative elections. This number itself is not striking and is comparable to the number of new conservative parties that contest elections in the other two systems. What is noteworthy is the combination of this number with the electoral results in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. In Guatemala, a new conservative party captures on average 6.92% of the vote in presidential elections and 7.86% in legislative elections. The percentage that new conservative parties receive as a group in a typical election is high, 22.3% in the presidential elections and 19.2% in legislative ones. These numbers are considerably higher than the averages for the other two systems. New conservative parties in Guatemala have a good chance of capturing a significant share of

124 It is ironic that D'Aubuisson’s inspiration for ARENA came from Gutemala’s MLN (Artiga González 2001; Zamora 1998), a party that quickly disappeared during the transition period.

125 Interviews conducted between January and April of 2005.

126 The total number of new parties that enters the system in each election is higher. On average seven new political parties entered the electoral arena for election. Most of these new parties do not survive their first election. In total, forty-four new parties have formed in Guatemala since 1983. In contrast, between 1991 and 2007, the electoral tribunal cancelled twenty-three parties.
the vote. Unlike their Nicaraguan and Salvadoran counterparts, these new parties in Guatemala attract a significant number of members from the conservative political elite before and after elections.

In three of the five elections, those of 1990, 1995, and 2003, a conservative party that was competing in the presidential election for the first time won. The conservative political elite has competed for power against members of the same group in half of the presidential elections that have taken place since the transition process began. In three of the six presidential elections, the two most serious contenders—those that participated in the run-off election—were conservative parties. The three elections when this competition did not take place are the 1985, 2003, and 2007 elections. In these the Unión del Centro Nacional (UCN) and Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE)—both centrist parties—were important forces. In the latter case, the UNE lost the 2003 election to the newly formed conservative GANA, and in 2008 it won the run-off election.

While new parties are able to win an impressive percentage of the vote, none of the conservative parties have been able to sustain these high levels of support beyond the winning election. After winning a presidential election, parties begin to lose their electoral support and become (disappearing) minority parties. This has been the experience of the four conservative parties that were elected to the presidency since the transition process began, MAS, PAN, FRG, and GANA. This is a very different pattern

127 The FRG competed in its first presidential election in 1995, but it had competed before in the 1994 legislative election, that was held in response to Serrano’s 1993 autogolpe.

128 The pattern is not limited to conservative parties. The one center-right party that has held the presidency, Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca (DCG), began to lose a steady percentage of its vote share since it took office. After the 2007 election, the party lost its legal status because it failed to receive the minimum number of votes required for maintaining its registration.
from the one that developed in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In these systems conservative parties have been able to maintain a relatively stable vote share.

The lack of unity among Guatemala’s conservative political elite is also evident in the levels of factionalism in this system, mostly driven by personal struggles for power (Sánchez 2008; Azpuru 2006). These struggles for power have created numerous party splits, since factions that fail to gain control of a party’s organization respond by leaving to form a new one or join an existing party. For example, all of Guatemala’s presidents, with the exception of DCG’s Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, have been members of more than one party, some more than two. In the legislature, this phenomenon is also rampant, with members of the conservative political elite changing party membership throughout the legislative term (Azpuru 2008).

The PAN is perhaps one of the most illustrative examples of this splintering (del Cid 2005; El Periodico 2007). The party’s historical records contain a list of its founding members, almost all of who remain prominent political leaders in the system, including two ex-presidents. Today, however, most of these members have left the party and have gone on to form new organizations or have joined other projects. The general view among members of this elite, including prominent ex-PAN members, such as President Arzú (PU) and legislators Gallont (PU) and de León (PP), is that by creating a new organization or joining another, members can secure control of the party apparatus or a

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129 In interviews with party members, across the ideological spectrum, when asked what the central differences were between those parties that tend to vote together in the legislature, leadership rivalries was one factor that was consistently mentioned. Author’s interview with Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Fritz, Gallont García, Legislator, ex-PAN member, Secretary General of PU in 2005 (March 2005); Annabella de León, legislator, member of various political parties (April 2005); and Mario Tarancera Díaz-Sol, legislator and member of PAN (January 2005).
better distribution of power for themselves within the new party. Electorally, the conservative political elite faces no real repercussions for adopting an exit strategy.

While the dominant conservative parties in the two other systems have also experienced some of this splintering, only in the Guatemalan party system do exiting factions stand a good chance of performing well in elections. In the other two countries only one of the factions that has left the dominant conservative party has been substantial in size and has gone on to perform well electorally. Yet its performance fell short of winning the election, and the experience of splitting the conservative vote seems to have reinforced the need for a strategy of electoral unity.

The electoral evidence provides evidence for the first proposition that the presence of a leftist party capable of winning the presidency creates an incentive for the conservative political elite to unify to win elections. In those countries where the left performs well, and was expected to do so during the transition, the conservative political elite cooperates to defeat the left. This strategy of unity has created hegemonic conservative parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua. These parties include the majority of the conservative political elite and in both systems, with only one exception, decisively overshadow any other conservative challengers. The electoral results, however, do not provide insight into the type of organization, durable or electoral, that the right creates in response to the left.

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130 Interviews with politicians in Guatemala revealed that this understanding of political parties as organizations that belong to individuals is widely held by politicians across the ideological spectrum.
3.5 Building Durable Organizations or Electoral Machines

The second proposition states that the conservative political elite will build durable organizations only when the left, with its focus on organizational strength, is a serious contender for power. In the absence of this threat, the conservative political elite will prefer a more limited investment of its resources, building electoral machines that are active only during elections. The expectation, supported by the evidence examined in the previous section, is that the conservative political elite in El Salvador and Nicaragua have an incentive to build durable organizations, but that the Guatemalan conservative political elite confines its investment to creating electoral machines. To provide support for this argument, I present data on the number of members and offices that conservative parties cultivate during electoral and non-electoral years.

Since the transition both ARENA and the PLC have placed a great deal of importance on maintaining an organization with national presence that remains active after election day (Artiga González 2001; Santiuste Cué 2001). ARENA’s founder, D’Aubuisson, was known to travel throughout the country building the party’s network (Nelson 1982; Norton 1991). Alemán adopted a similar strategy starting in 1990. Under his leadership, the party began to emphasize building local organizations across the country, copying the left’s strategy (Santiuste Cué 2001).

\[\text{\textsuperscript{131}}\] Author’s interview with Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (July 2004 and April 2005); Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); and Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005).

\[\text{\textsuperscript{132}}\] Santiuste Cué(2001) quotes Eusebio Núñez, a prominent PLC member during the party’s period of growth, as describing the party’s organization strategy as being “Tácticas comunistas” (506). Members of the PLC that were critical in the early growth of the party reaffirmed the importance of this strategy and credited it for the PLC success (author’s interview with Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005) and Carlos Noguerra (July 2005).
Both parties have emphasized the importance of maintaining close ties with citizens at the local level between elections and responding to the local needs of the citizenship for ensuring the party’s electoral future. There is a strong sense among the leadership of both parties that the local offices of the organization and its local governments are the first link between the party and voters. Interviews with members of both parties revealed that in both cases there is a sense that a durable organization is necessary precisely because the left employs just such a strategy. For this reason, maintaining offices is an important part of a successful electoral strategy.

The importance that both these parties place on a durable organization is evident when examining the organization of ARENA and the PLC. Although the parties employ slightly different strategies in the construction of their organizations, the similarities across both are striking. In both cases, the conservative political elite has created durable organizations rather than electoral machines. In El Salvador, González Rivas (ARENA’s national manager) estimates that the party has some 4,500 members, many of who are not regularly active within the party. Because parties in El Salvador do not have to maintain or register its members with the electoral authorities, the party has only an estimate of its membership. While ARENA has the capacity to maintain a national registry, there is little interest in the party to do so, because it does not emphasize membership as part of its growth strategy. Members play a limited role in the party because of the party’s centralized and hierarchical structure (Zamora 1998; ARENA 2001). While membership is not discouraged, and those interested in running under the party’s label need it, the party is much more interested in maintaining an effective national structure with a small active membership. As Gónzalez Rivas made clear, the goal of this structure is to sustain
an outreach program with the population rather than build a mass party; ARENA is much more interested in voters than in members.\textsuperscript{133}

Party members do play an important role during elections when the party needs volunteers to represent the party at the official counting tables.\textsuperscript{134} At this time ARENA draws heavily from its members, especially those with higher levels of education, to defend the party’s interests during this critical process as Gónzalez Rivas (ARENA’s general manager for 10 years, 1997-2007) explained.\textsuperscript{135} While the party is less interested in its membership base, it is very focused on maintaining its durable party organization. According to Gónzalez Rivas, outside of an election year the party maintains offices in at least 200 of the country’s 262 municipalities. These include the most populous and important ones. During an election year the party opens more offices, expanding to cover almost all municipalities.\textsuperscript{136} The type of offices that the party maintains varies, usually in relation to the size of the municipality and the party’s presence there. In San Salvador, the party has several offices, all large and well staffed, but in smaller municipalities, the house of the party’s local leader might serve as the party’s office. Regardless of the size of the office, the party keeps them open and active between elections so that it can keep in touch with and work to solve the problems of the population. In the Salvadoran party system, only the FMLN has a similar capacity to extend itself nationally. According to

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{133}] Author’s interview May 2005, San Salvador, El Salvador.
\item[\textsuperscript{134}] In El Salvador political parties play an official role in the counting of votes. The larger political parties need to recruit enough volunteers to work at the counting tables.
\item[\textsuperscript{135}] A number of important party leaders, members of the country’s economic elite including Cristiani, began their militancy in ARENA as party representatives during election day.
\item[\textsuperscript{136}] These numbers provided by the party reflect the general trends that the media reports about the party’s organization, which often note the party’s national reach, as well as the perception of the members of other parties, journalists, and political analysis who I asked to describe ARENA organization.
\end{itemize}
the leaders of the smaller parties in the system, such as the PDC’s Secretary General Rodolfo Parker, or legislative leader for the CD Héctor Dada, and even legislative members of the PCN, Arévalo Pineda and Moreno Niños, their parties have offices in the capital and in some municipalities, but this is usually limited to the municipalities these parties control.137

In 2003, ARENA also opened a political institute, the Instituto Mayor Roberto D’Aubuisson. Its role is to diffuse the party’s ideas across the country as well as work to strengthen the links between the party and the citizenship. The institute holds regular meetings with members of the party and sympathizers to explain the party’s work and its political positions.138 Through this work, the party seeks to strengthen the ties between it and its supporters, as well as attract new supporters. The institute places a great deal of importance on emphasizing the critical nature of winning against the FMLN.139

137 Author’s interview with José Orlando, Arévalo Pineda, legislator and member PCN (June 2005); Héctor, Dada (May 2005); Ramón José, González Rivas, ARENA member in charge of the party’s national organization (April 2005); Julio E., Moreno Niños, legislator and member of the PCN (June 2005); Rodolfo, Parker (May 2005); Luis Roberto, Angulo Samayoa, party leader PCN (May 2005); Héctor Silva, legislator, member of CDU and ex-FMLN presidential candidate May 2005); and Ruben Zamora, academic and prominent politician member of various center-left parties and FMLN-FDR presidential candidate in 1994 (April 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

138 These meetings are held both in San Salvador and across the country. The meeting usually begins with a formal presentation by the Institute’s manager, who is in charge of the day-to-day operations. In this presentation he explains the history of the party and what it has achieved for the country. Throughout the presentation, an exaggerated description of the threat that the FMLN, most often referred to as the rojos or communistas, represents for the country is continuously emphasized. For instance, one of the examples given to depict the threat that an FMLN victory will mean for the country is that the party will regulate and limit all personal effects, from the number of clothes they will be allowed to own to land ownership (author’s interview with Orlando Cocar, Romano (May 2005); and Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador).

139 Author’s interview with Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalon (July 2004 and April 2005); Orlando Cocar, Romano (May 2005); and Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
In Nicaragua, the PLC’s organization has some important similarities to ARENA’s. The PLC’s organization experienced a period of rapid growth at the end of the transition. According to Lester Flores who was in charge of the party’s organization commission, within a very short time span, from 1990 to 1996, the PLC went from having a small inconsequential membership to having some 150,000 members (Santiuste Cué 2001). During this period the PLC adopted the FSLN’s strategy of building a durable national organization (Santiuste Cué 2001; Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000), reviving the old patronage networks of Somoza’s party (Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000). Yamileth Bonilla, involved with the PLC’s organization in its early years of growth and until she left the party, from 1990 to 2005, made the point that building a national durable organization was a deliberate strategy. The PLC leadership came to the conclusion that only by creating this kind of organization would it be able to compete successfully against the FSLN in the long run. The PLC leadership continues to see the maintenance of this organization as important for the party’s electoral future. Before the 2006 election, there was a strong sense within the party that if its members could sustain the party’s organization through that difficult time, the organization and its leader would help the party to its regain power. Once the party returned to power, the organization would once again prosper.

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140 Author’s interview with Lester Flores (October 2005) and Miguel Rosales, member of the PLC and its organizational commission (August 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

141 Author’s interview October 2005, Managua, Nicaragua.

142 Author’s interview Lester, Flores (October 2005); Orlando, López Selva, political consultant (September 2005); Wilfred, Navarro, member and faction leader PLC (August 2005); and Miguel Rosales (August 2005); Managua, Nicaragua.
In an interview in 2005, Lester Flores (general manager of the PLC’s organization) estimated that the party had some 245,000 members and that it counts on some 200,000 volunteers on election day who represent its interests through the official electoral process in an official capacity. The PLC places greater importance than ARENA on building a large membership. The leadership sees the process of recruiting members as important for the party’s future and a process through which ties between the party and its supporters can be reinforced. The party also receives some funding from its members. Its statues decree that members have to make contributions to the party, but the party organization has always done a poor job at collecting these contributions (Santiuste Cué 2001). As legislative representatives of the party made clear in interviews, after the party found itself with limited access to the state they were asked to cover more of the party’s expenses from their own salaries. For instance, legislators were being asked to cover the needs of local offices and their activities, as well as make contributions to the maintenance of the national headquarters.

In terms of the party’s presence across the national territory, in an interview with Flores (PLC’s national manager) he calculated that during an electoral campaign the party has offices opened in most, if not all, of the country’s 153 municipalities. Flores, and Bonilla (prominent ex-PLC leader in charge of the building the party’s organization) stated that since the party began to organize for the 1996 elections it had sought to

143 At the time, Flores was in charge of conducting the party’s second affiliation drive to update its registry. For the first time the party had decided to centralize the process under the national office, to ensure a more accurate count and more control (author’s interview October 2005, Managua, Nicaragua).

144 Author’s interview with Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005); Lester, Flores (October 2005); Orlando, López Selva (September 2005); Wilfred, Navarro (August 2005); and Miguel Rosales (August 2005); Managua, Nicaragua
maintain offices in all of the country’s municipalities in preparation for the electoral process. In the interview Flores also noted that the type of offices varies, depending on the size of the municipality. In Managua, the party’s office is extensive—although smaller than when the party was in power—while members in smaller municipalities meet regularly at the house of the local PLC leader. In non-electoral years, Flores estimates that the party keeps about 80% of its offices open, making this a durable organization. As is the case in El Salvador, in Nicaragua the only other party in the system with a similar organization and the capacity for maintaining an organizational presence at the national level in non-electoral years is the FSLN.

The only other conservative party in Nicaragua that came close to winning an election, the ALN, also recognized the importance of building a national durable organization for winning elections against the left. The party’s leadership sought to build such an organization as the party began preparing for the 2006 election. Yamileth Bonilla, who had played a critical role in building the PLC’s organization and who left the party in mid-2005 to join the ALN project, made the argument that the ALN leadership was convinced that only with this type of organization would the party be successful in mobilize enough citizens to compete against the FSLN and the PLC.

In sum, in both El Salvador and Nicaragua, the conservative political elite has constructed durable organizations. Interviews with prominent members of Guatemala’s

145 By asking other contacts, such as other PLC members, the members of other parties, political analysis, and journalists, to describe the PLC’s organization, I verified this estimate.

146 The new party sought to bypass some of the costs inherent in building this type of organization by focusing on infiltrating and capturing the PLC’s organization. The argument was that the weakness of the PLC, due to the corruption charges against Alemán, the restrictions these placed on him, and the party’s limited access to the state, had weaken the organization, which made it possible for the new party to absorb the organization away from the PLC leadership (author’s interview October 2005, Managua, Nicaragua).
conservative parties revealed that in this system, the conservative political elite has a very different understanding of what type of organization wins elections. In this system, conservative parties do not have durable organizations. Just as importantly, interviews with leaders in these parties, such as PU leaders Gallont Garcia and Arzú Irigoyen, the PAN’s legislative leader Tarancera, or GANA’s González in charge of the new party’s organization, made clear that there is little interest in building such organizations. In a limited way, the FRG is an exception to this pattern since it does maintain a more durable organization. This presence, as leaders of the party such as Eduardo Quej Chen recognize, is limited to those departments that have been the party’s traditional strongholds.

Instead of building durable organizations, Guatemala’s conservative political elite has relied exclusively on electoral machines and media campaigns to win elections. The lack of attention that the conservative political elite gives to durable organizations makes it difficult to ascertain the number of members conservative parties have. Legally, political parties are required to have a national presence, with members registered in 12 of the country’s 22 departments, and 50 of the country’s 331 municipalities. While the legal requirement means that the electoral tribunal maintains an official register of party members, this registry provides only a limited picture of the presence conservative parties have outside of the capital for two reasons. The first presents a limit in establishing the

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147 Interviews conducted between January and April of 2005.

148 In this characteristic, the FRG closely resembles the PCN in El Salvador. Author’s interview with Eduardo Genis, Quej Chen, closely involved with the FRG’s organization and legislator (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

149 Author’s interview with Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
national presence of parties that are in decline. As is expected, often the number of members a party has in a municipality and the number of votes that a party receives in that municipality do not match, but parties in decline consistently report a higher number of members than the votes they receive. One explanation for this discrepancy is that to register a member, a party only needs a signature, making it easy to gain members but not necessarily supporters.\textsuperscript{150}

The second restriction with the official registry concerns all other parties. Political parties consistently underreport their membership base. As members of the parties made clear, they register only slightly more members than are necessary to satisfy the legal requirements and make a distinction between legal and formal members, reporting only the former.\textsuperscript{151} Both of these problems mean that official membership records provide only a general idea of the organizational reach of conservative parties. Ideally, using internal records that include legal and formal members would have solved this problem, but these were not accessible. Interviews with various party leaders provided little information beyond the description that parties have a larger base than the one registered with the TSE.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{150} One of the more dramatic examples of this lack of overlap between members and those willing to vote for the party is the experience of the DCG. This party consistently registered the largest number of members in the system even while its vote share dropped. In the last few elections, the 2003 for instance, it is possible to find municipalities where the party received less votes than the number of members it had registered in that municipality.

\textsuperscript{151} Parties underreport because members organized officially through the TSE have to follow the legal procedures that the law establishes for candidate selection. By not registering members, the party leadership maintains a firmer control over the party apparatus and avoids having to spend resources on local meetings (author’s interview with Felix, Castillo, members and president of the TSE (1996-2002); Fritz, Gallont García (March 2005); and Carlos, Reyes, member PAN and manager of the party’s national organization (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

\textsuperscript{152} The reason for not providing the registry did not seem to be a question of secrecy, as was the case with parties’ financial records.
The information that party members provided did make clear that as election campaigns begin, parties start to mobilize their bases. Prominent conservative leaders confirm that outside of the campaign most of the time local organizations are dormant. This is not to say that the conservative political elite has no contact with citizens outside of the electoral campaign, but the party organization is not the vehicle for this interaction. Instead, the conservative political elite focuses its energy and resources on building personal ties with the electorate, creating a mobile base of support that can travel with individual politicians across party lines, diminishing the value of party labels.

According to the TSE’s official records, in 2004 the PAN had 40,913 registered members; of these 11,750 were registered in the Department of Guatemala. In 2002, in preparation for the party’s internal election for a presidential candidate, the leadership registered some 238,304 members. While this was a record in the party system, by 2007 the party’s registered members had dropped to 38,020. Unfortunately, because the PAN differentiates between legal and formal members, it is hard to get a true sense of the party’s base of support. In terms of offices, the party expands its organization during an election when it activates its electoral machine. In a non-electoral year, the party’s departmental or municipal leaders do not have regular contact with the national leadership. In this, the PAN is very much like other Guatemalan parties whose activity

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153 Author’s interview with Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Fritz, Gallont García (March 2005); and Carlos, Reyes, member PAN and manager of the party’s national organization (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
during non-electoral years centers exclusively around the party’s legislative branch and its national leadership.\textsuperscript{154}

Another conservative party that has won the presidency with a small electoral machine is GANA. This party was originally created as an electoral coalition between three small and relatively new parties, and an ex-PAN faction that left the party with Berger when he was denied the party’s presidential candidacy.\textsuperscript{155} The three smaller parties were the \textit{Partido Patriota} (PP), registered in 2002; \textit{Partido Movimiento Reformador} (PMR), created in 1995; and \textit{Partido Solidaridad Nacional} (PSN), legalized in 2002. It was only after the alliance won the 2003 election that it was officially registered as a political party, and only after losing one of its coalition’s members, the PP.\textsuperscript{156} Despite the different way in which GANA was created, in many other ways it is a very typical conservative party, including its emergence as an electoral machine for an individual seeking the presidency.\textsuperscript{157}

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154 Author’s interview with Carlos, Yat Sierra, member and leader in the PAN (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

155 For the first time in its history, the PAN ran a primary election to select its presidential candidate in preparation for the 2003 general election. While the goal of the exercise was to avoid costly internal divisions, the outcome was the exact opposite. After publicly accusing the party’s Secretary General of manipulation and corruption, Berger, the candidate who was widely recognized to have been the winner of the primary, left the PAN, taking an influential group of supporters and members with him.

156 The PP left the coalition because of differences between its leadership and the leadership of the coalition. Officially, the PP leadership argued that the party withdrew in response to the demands of the party’s base. At the time, it was widely speculated that the PP’s Secretary General, Pérez Molina, was preparing for his own presidential bid in 2007. In this election, his party placed second in the run-off against Colom’s UNE (author’s interview with Pérez Molina, Otto, Ex-military, leader and founder of the Partido Patriotico (February 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala).

157 This was Berger’s second attempt at this office. In 1999 he was the candidate for PAN and lost in the run-off to the FRG’s candidate. Before this, Berger had been elected mayor of Guatemala City in 1995, replacing Arzú when he moved to the presidency.

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Similar to other conservative parties, GANA’s organization is small and centered around the country’s capital. After its first election in 2003, few efforts were made to create a national organization that could remain active between elections. At the time of the 2003 election, the three parties that formed GANA had a combined legal membership of 25,940 (PP 12,060; PSN 7,565; and PMR 6,315). This placed GANA as the third largest party in the system, at least in terms of legally affiliated members. To legalize the new party, the organization was required to hold general assemblies across the country as outlined by the electoral law. After these assemblies the party registered organizations in 128 municipalities and 19 of the country’s 22 departments. Little attention was given to sustaining these organizations, however. Between the 2003 and 2007 electoral processes, the party’s numbers did not grow significantly. Mid-way through 2007, an election year, the party had only 24,236 legally registered members, which made it the sixth largest party (INCEP 2007; Mirador Electoral 2007). In terms of offices, the party maintains only its central office in the capital between elections. Activities at the local level are entirely at the discretion of the party’s members.158

Discussions with leaders in the new party about its organization confirmed that there was very little interest in creating a durable organization. The party’s leaders never mentioned the possibility that the leadership could use the party’s position in government to build such an organization. When asked directly about the desirability of a durable organization, party members exhibited little interest beyond general statements about this

158 Author’s interview with Eduardo González, Secretary of the Executive Coordination for the Presidency, ex-PAN member, belonging top Berger's faction and in charge of the new GANA organization (April 2005).
type of party.\textsuperscript{159} In 2005, GANA was in position to take advantage of its electoral victory to create a party with a durable organization, similar to the PLC’s strategy. In an interview with González (Secretary of Executive Coordination for the Presidency in 2005 in charge of founding GANA’s new organization) he made little mention of the party as an organization, beyond what was required and needed to register the party. Much of the discussion about the goals of the new party centered on the importance of maintaining the party’s cohesion in the legislature, to secure the votes the government needed to pass its programs. There were no plans to move the party towards building a durable organization.

The only conservative party in Guatemala that deviates somewhat from the preference for electoral machines among conservative parties is the FRG, which has a more stable organization. This organization, however, has a regional concentration in departments such as Quiché and Sololá, where the party tends to do well in elections. According to Haroldo Quej Chen, a long-time member of the FRG (for over 15 years) and a member of the party’s Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN) as the Secretary General of the Organization (1996-2001) and later as Secretary General of Doctrine (from 2001-2005), including the party’s formal organizations (those not registered with the TSE) the party has presence in about 80% of the country’s municipalities and has some kind of office in about 95% of the 331 municipalities throughout the electoral process. The party,

\textsuperscript{159} Asking Guatemala’s conservative political elite about what are ideal parties or what type of party should exist in the system can often be complicated. The reason for this is that there are a large number of international organizations, such as the OEA, UNDP, and NIMD, that run programs whose aimed at strengthening the country’s party system. As a result, Guatemala’s conservative political elite has become very good at adopting the language of these organizations. Asking party members about concrete actions was often the best way of gaining a real sense of the organizational structure and priorities of the conservative political elite.
however, does not keep the majority of these offices open in non-election years, although it does work to ensure that there is at least one office open in each of the country’s departments. Quej estimated that the party has about 50 offices open across the country in total in a non-electoral year. Those offices that remain open have different levels of activity; members meet at least once a month in the less active departments and once or twice per week in those departments where it maintains a more prominent presence. This level of organizational reach, while significantly smaller than the reach of conservative parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua, is the highest in Guatemala.160

The FRG membership base has remained fairly constant throughout the years, but because the FRG also makes a distinction between legal and formal members it is difficult to form a clear picture of what the party’s base of support is and how it has changed over time. In 2003, according to the TSE’s figures, the FRG had 44,833 members and was the second largest party. In 2007, this number dropped slightly to 41,321 members. Although the FRG still had the second largest number of registered members, its growth during the electoral year was less than that of other important parties (INCEP 2007).

As the electoral results shows, in Guatemala no conservative party has reached the status of a dominant conservative force in the party system. Given the weakness of the left in Guatemala, the expectation was that just as the conservative political elite had little incentive to unify to avoid competition among the members of this group, the conservative political elite would also have little incentive to build durable party organizations. The leadership of the conservative parties exhibits little interest in building

160 Author’s interview with Haroldo, Quej Chen (April 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
durable organizations. Not even those parties that had the benefits of holding the presidency have used this opportunity to establish a national organization. Instead, the conservative political elite has focused its energy in building electoral machines, and successful politicians have ensured that these electoral machines can travel across party lines. Conversely, in the two countries where the left represented a viable electoral threat, conservative parties built durable organizations to compete with the left’s mobilization strategy.

3.6 Financing Parties and their Campaigns

In the previous two sections I explored evidence that supported the argument that a viable leftist threat creates an incentive for the conservative political elite to cooperate to win elections and avoid competition. In this next section I analyze the last three propositions, in which I argued that how political parties are financed has important implications for the organization of conservative parties. How parties are financed shapes the internal structure of parties. In large part, this last organizational characteristic is determined by the role that the economic elite plays in the party system. When the conservative political elite can count on resources from the economic elite, conservative parties will be more institutionalized. When the conservative political elite relies on its access to the state to fund its party, parties tend to be more personalistic. The economic elite’s decision depends, much like the conservative political elites, on how threatened this group feels during the transition by the possibility of a leftist victory.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Ideally, to evaluate the level of financial involvement of the economic elite in political parties, the financial records of parties, list of donors and the frequency of their contributions, would be examined.
The usual pattern of similarities and differences that this chapter has explored, with the conservative parties of El Salvador and Nicaragua sharing most characteristics, shifts when we examine the role that the economic elite plays in the party systems. In El Salvador, the country’s economic elite abandoned its traditional pattern of abstention from party politics during the transition process (Paige 1998; Wood 2000). The economic elite became directly involved in one party, ARENA. In the other two countries, the economic elite has demonstrated a much more limited commitment to conservative parties. While some members of this group join and even run for public office as members of political parties, there is no concentrated effort among the majority of this elite to support one conservative party. This level of involvement varies according to the economic elite’s perception of the likelihood of a leftist victory and the presence of alternative guarantees of their position and preferences.

In El Salvador, the ascent to power of the Christian Democrats (1984-89) and the military’s support of the new civilian government began the unraveling of the economic elite’s traditional ambivalence about political parties. No longer benefiting from its traditional ally in the political arena, the economic elite began to seek its own form of representation in politics in response to the growing sense of threat the political events of the time were creating (Paige 1998; Wood 2000; Gibson 1996; LeoGrande and Robbins 1980; Norton 1991). The traditional elements of this social group led this process by

Unfortunately, it was not possible to gain access to this information. Until very recently, none of the systems had laws that required political parties to disclose their financial records and parties are unwilling to share their financial records for any purposes, most often citing security reasons for their reluctance. The party leadership and the individuals in charge of party organizations were, however, willing to discuss general patterns of private donations, if not specificities. With this information it was possible to put together a general picture of party financing with which parties and systems could be compared.

162 Author’s interview with Alexander Segovia, academic (July 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
supporting D’Aubuisson’s new party and were followed by the more moderate factions, which began to take an active role in the party when Cristiani became the party’s public leader. Representatives of this social group were consistent in arguing that their forces had to join the political arena in order to protect its interests from the existing civilian government and the increasing threat of a leftist victory. Presidents Calderón Sol and Cristiani, for instance, both note that one of the main reasons behind their decision to become involved in ARENA in the mid-1980s was because of the increasing threat from the left, both from the policies of the PDC—which affected both of their family holdings—and because of the radicalization of the extreme left in the conflict.

The economic elite was willing to finance ARENA to gain control of the state and has since that point continued to invest in the party. Party members that were interviewed were unwilling to share any specifics of the party’s financial situation. All of the party members that were interviewed, however, including prominent leaders such as Cristiani and Calderón Sol and the party’s general manager, Gónzalez Rivas, were willing to confirm that the party did receive funds from the country’s economic elite. ARENA has also had access to the state almost since its creation in the three levels of government: municipal, legislative, and national levels. Like the other parties in El

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163 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); David R., Huerzo, member economic elite and president AmCham (April 2005); Gamerro, Quintanilla, member of the economic elite and active in ARENA (May 2005); Gloria, Salguero Gross (June 2005); Alexander Segovia, academic (July 2005); Ana Cristina Sol Midence (June 2005); and Ricardo Orlando Valdivieso (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

164 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005) and Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

165 Author’s interview with Armando Calderón Sol (April 2005); Alfredo Cristiani (November 2005); Gamerro, Quintanilla (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
Salvador, it uses this access to further its organization, for instance, to hire party members with important positions within the organization for public posts. These individuals perform both public and partisan work. The party also uses its access to the state for patronage purposes, providing jobs and benefits to its electoral base. ARENA uses state facilities for party meetings and state resources to advertise the party’s label.166 Other indirect resources from the state are party members that hold public positions. As I outlined in Chapter Two, these members can be an important source of funding for the left. ARENA, however, does not require any of its members to make financial contributions to the party. As members of the party in the legislature, such as Walter Rene, Araujo Morales, Juan Miguel, Bolaños, Miguel Francisco, Bennett Escobar, and Renato Antonio, Pérez, confirmed in interviews, they are asked to volunteer only a minimal contribution, one that they decide on.167

While these state resources are important for the party, they represent only a small fraction of what it needs to fund its organization.168 ARENA receives the majority of its financing from the economic elite. As Zamora (1998) observes, ARENA has the most

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166 In El Salvador, municipal governments paint all of the state’s property—using state resources—with the party’s label and colors. In particular, new projects are closely linked to the party to facilitate credit claiming and advertisement. Given that ARENA was in power for twenty years (1989-2009), public works tended to benefit ARENA’s local governments. It was common to hear, for instance, non-ARENA mayors complain about the difficulties of securing national projects, such as road maintenance, for their municipalities (author’s interview with Héctor Dada (May 2005); Ramón José, González Rivas (April 2005); Rodolfo, Parker (May 2005); and Héctor Silva (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

167 Author’s interview with Walter René, Araujo Morales (member ARENA, president TSE (2004-06); Miguel Francisco, Bennett Escobar, legislator and member of ARENA (May 2005); Juan Miguel, Bolaños, legislator and member of ARENA (May 2005); and Renato Antonio, Pérez, legislator and member of ARENA (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador. Zamora (1998) also makes a note of this in his discussion of ARENA.

168 Author’s interview with Fritz, Gallont García, legislator, ex-PAN member, Secretary General of PU in 2005 (March 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
extensive national organization in the party system, without having to rely on the state to finance it. The party general manager Gónzalez Rivas in an interview explained that the party has two donor lists. With one group of sympathizers and members, the party has long-standing arrangements or contracts. These donors support the party’s organization and its regular activities. In the contracts between the party and the donor, an amount that is to be donated in regular intervals as well as the use of these funds is agreed upon. The party uses such funds to distribute resources across the party, from the national organization to all fourteen departments to maintain offices, staff, etc.169

“A group of people makes monthly contributions with a smaller amount of money for the maintenance of the party’s offices, the rents, vehicles, and employee salaries … for example, before someone would give us fifty thousand for the campaign, now they gives us a thousand or two thousand monthly, which gives us the opportunity to plan our activities” (my translation).170

A second set of sympathizers and members are approached only as the party gears up to compete in an election. These donors are asked to make contributions to help finance the party’s campaign. These funds are also directed to the central office, which manages the party’s national campaign and distributes the funds as necessary.171

ARENA’s close relationship with the country’s economic elite has privileged this party in comparison to the others in the system, including the PCN. This conservative party does not receive any substantial funds from the economic elite. While the party

169 Departmental offices are in charge of distributing the funds they receive to their corresponding municipalities.

170 Author’s interview with Ramón José, González Rivas (April 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

171 Individual candidates have to make substantial contributions to their own campaigns, but the national party finances the national media campaign and helps individual candidates, if necessary, in important races (author’s interview Ramón José, González Rivas (April 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador).
might receive some small contributions from members of the economic elite, especially in those departments where the party does well electorally, the PCN relies almost exclusively on its access to the state to maintain its party apparatus (Granados 2005; Giralt 2002; Portillo and Aguilar 2009).\footnote{172} The PCN’s limited access to the economic elite highlights the advantages that ARENA has, as well as the commitment that the economic elite has towards the party. This coordination between members of the economic elite to finance only one conservative party is not a pattern that is repeated in the other two countries. This access to resources gives ARENA a considerable edge over its competitors across the political spectrum. The party can easily pay for elaborate and expensive media campaigns, as well as finance a national organization that remains active regardless of the electoral calendar, dissuading potential conservative challengers from forming.

In Nicaragua, the economic elite has had a more complex relationship with the left than its Salvadoran counterpart. Sectors of the economic elite cooperated to varying degrees with the Sandinista regime, a pattern that continued through the transition process (Martí i Puig and Santiuste Cué 2006; Spalding 1994; Vilas 1992; Paige 1998).\footnote{173} As a result, unlike the economic elite in El Salvador, Nicaragua’s elite lacked cohesion in its strategy toward the left and its perception of the threat it represented. Those sectors of

\footnote{172} The PCN uses its access to the state to bolster the party’s electoral machine and clientalistic networks. The party’s importance as the legislative third force gives it added access to the state through bargaining power. The PCN uses this to secure access to other state institutions, including the Corte de Cuentas, which is a government body that audits the national treasury and federal budget, as well as local budget (author’s interview with José Orlando, Arévalo Pineda, legislator PCN (June 2005); Julio E., Moreno Niños, legislator PCN (June 2005); and Luis Roberto, Angulo, Samayoa (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

\footnote{173} Author’s interview Antonio Lacayo (September 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.
the economic elite that strongly opposed the left tended to turn toward the U.S. for a resolution to the Sandinista problem (Paige 1998; Vilas 1992; Weaver and Barnes 1991).

Because the economic elite in Nicaragua lacked cohesion in its response to the left, the relationship between the economic elite and conservative parties has remained more ambivalent. The economic elite has never committed itself to the party project to the extent that its Salvadoran counterpart has. During the transition, Nicaragua’s political parties had weak organizations and this did not change in the lead up to the 1990 election (Robinson and Norsworthy 1985; Weaver and Barnes 1991; Williams 1990; Santiuste Cué 2001; Shugart 1992; Dye et al. 1995). In the aftermath of this election, as the data examined show, the only conservative party that set out to create a durable organization is the PLC.

The economic elite did participate in the UNO coalition that formed to challenge the left, but the financial contributions that UNO received—national and international—were destined for the electoral campaign, not an organization-building project (Williams 1994). Most of the money for the 1990 campaign came from the U.S. giving the American embassy a great deal of influence over the coalition (Walker 2000; Weaver and Barnes 1991; Williams 1990; LeoGrande 1992). Since the 1990 election, the economic elite has continued to limit its investment to electoral campaigns rather than the creation

174 Author’s interview Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005).
175 Author’s interview Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005); Virgilio Godoy (September 2005); and Antonio Lacayo (September 2005).
176 LeoGrande (1992) calculate that the U.S. contributed some US$ 11.6 million through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Weaver and Barnes (1991) provide a higher estimate, somewhere between US$ 15 to 20 million including funds dispersed through the NED as well as other methods.
of the PLC’s durable organization or its upkeep. Even at this level, the economic elite is not exclusive in its support of the PLC. Members of the economic elite distribute funds across the party system during elections.\textsuperscript{177} The fifth proposition argues that the economic elite’s preference is to avoid costly investment in the party system, preferring more limited investments in electoral campaigns. I posit that this preference changes only when the economic elite feels that it has no alternative if it is to protect its interests. In Nicaragua those sectors of the economic elite that felt threatened by the left relied on the U.S. to coordinate and fund a response to the problem. This long-established pattern continues to exist, so that the U.S. embassy retains an active role in how conservative forces react to the left. For instance, in 2005 as parties were deciding on their presidential candidates, the U.S. played an important part in dividing the right by throwing its support behind Montealegre.\textsuperscript{178} As a result, the economic elite has been able to avoid the costly endeavor of financing a durable party organization and has relied instead on distributing campaign funds.

The limited assistance from the economic elite means that the PLC has relied almost exclusively on its access to the state to fund its organization.\textsuperscript{179} The PLC’s small party organization did not grow until after the 1990 victory. At this time, Alemán took

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\textsuperscript{177} Author’s interview Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005); Gen. Joaquín Cuadra Lacayo (October 2005); Lester, Flores (October 2005); José, Estebas González (September 2005); Carlos Noguerra (July 2005); and Orlando, Terdencilla (September 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

\textsuperscript{178} Representatives of the U.S. embassy in Nicaragua and the State Department made numerous remarks to the press in support of Montealegre as the candidate that should represent the right rather than the PLC’s choice. As well as these common statements in the press, Alemán, his family, and those close to him had their U.S. visas revoked during this period. Although hard to verify, the PLC leadership consistently accused the U.S. embassy of weakening the PLC organization by pressuring members of the conservative political elite to support the ALN (Sandoval 2006).

\textsuperscript{179} The other source of funds seems to have been illegal ones co-opted by Alemán.
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over the leadership of the party and began to build a national organization and positioned itself as the opposition to the FSLN, using its access to the state to fund this project (Santiuste Cué 2001; Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000; Rohter 1995; Hoyt 2001). Once Alemán had access to the state as Managua’s mayor (1990-1995), he was able to use state resources to begin building the PLC’s durable organization (Santiuste Cué 2001; Caster 1996). After Alemán was elected president in 1996, he continued to use the state to strengthen the party’s organization. The result is an organization highly dependent on the state for sustaining its organization at both the national and local levels. This dependence became problematic when the party’s access to the state, because of electoral results and Alemán’s legal problems, was restricted. Yet despite these challenges, the party leadership continues to make efforts to sustain the party’s national organization.

In Guatemala, by the time the transition process was underway (after the 1984 constitutional assembly was elected) the left did not represent a threat to Guatemala’s economic elite. As members of the economic elite discussed, while it was important to

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180 Adopting this role in the post-1990 period was relatively easy because of UNO’s divisions. UNO’s government, the faction surrounding Violeta Chamorro, often collaborated with the FSLN, perhaps not surprisingly given this party's hold in the state and its large block in the 1990-96 legislature. Yet other UNO factions, in particular the Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI) under the leadership of Virgilio Godoy, vehemently opposed the government’s cooperation with the FSLN. Godoy’s ability to voice the discontent with the government and its policy of collaboration suffered however, when his faction lost control of the legislature. Alemán, with the advantage of having a national platform as the mayor of Managua, as well as the resources of this office and his successes at the local level, bolstered his national popularity and used it to oppose the FSLN and a collaboration strategy.

181 Author’s interview Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005) and Lester Flores (October 2005).

182 Author’s interview Lester Flores (October 2005); Orlando, López Selva (September 2005); Wilfred, Navarro (August 2005); and Miguel Rosales (August 2005); Miguel Rosales (August 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.
decisively finish the conflict the left as an organization had lost by the mid-1980s. The relationship between the economic elite and Guatemala’s political parties resembles the pattern prevailing in Nicaragua, with the economic elite investing only minimally in the party system with financial contributions to the most likely winners. All of the politicians interviewed, including prominent party leaders, agreed that almost all of the funding that the conservative political elite receives from private donations are made during the electoral processes. The lack of threat from the left meant that in Guatemala the type of conservative parties that were built during the transition were electoral machines without durable organizations.

Because of the absence of durable party organizations in Guatemala, conservative parties rely exclusively on electoral machines and media campaigns to win elections. National experts estimate that of the funds that political parties spend in an electoral process, at least half are used on media expenses, the rest are used on logistics for election day, such as mobilizing party personnel and voters (INCEP 2007; Mirador Electoral 2007). The importance of media campaigns in Guatemala gives conservative parties a distinct edge over other parties in the system, particularly the left. The latter have a harder time securing the large financial contributions needed to pay for effective national media campaigns. The monopoly of the media in Guatemala under one group

183 This is not to say that Guatemala’s economic elite was friendly towards the left, most were opposed to a negotiated solution through the transition process, but one of the reasons was precisely because in the minds of most of this elite, the left had already been defeated (author’s interview with Richard, Aitkenhead Castillo (November 2005); Peter Lamport (November 2005); José Pivaral Guzmán, member economic elite and ex-CACIF president, Guatemala City, Guatemala).

184 Author’s interview Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Álvaro Colom, prominent politician and member of various parties before creating the UNE (winner of the 2007 presidential elections) (March 2005); Fritz, Gallont García (March 2005); Eduardo González (April 2005); and Carlos, Reyes (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
also favors conservative parties. This is especially true if rumors that media companies charge different rates to different candidates are true (INCEP 2007). ARENA and the PLC also make use of the media for their electoral campaigns, in particular ARENA spends substantially on the media, but in neither of these two systems does the hegemonic party rely exclusively on the media to reach voters. Both ARENA and the PLC use durable organization to maintain citizens’ link to the party and mobilizes voters.185

Regardless of the type of organization that the conservative political elite uses to win elections, resources are still needed to finance any party building project. In Guatemala the reliance of the conservative political elite on the media and electoral machines that are activated explicitly for the purposes of winning elections means that to compete effectively, political parties have to secure access to large financial contributions during the campaign. Party leaders are candid in admitting that to finance electoral endeavors, successful parties, especially the party’s presidential candidate, have to cultivate close relations with the country’s economic elite.186

Similar to the experience of legislative and municipal candidates in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the candidates of conservative parties in Guatemala are also expected to finance their own campaigns. In Guatemala, as members of parties, such as Yat Sierra (party leader PAN), Gallont Garcia (Secretary General, PU) and Quej Chen (party leader, 

185 Author’s interview with Alexander Segovia (July 2005).

186 Author’s interview Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Álvaro Colom (March 2005); Fritz, Gallont García (March 2005); Eduardo González (April 2005); and Carlos, Reyes (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala. Colóm, although not strictly a conservative politician, discussed the importance of forging ties with the economic elite for the political process, both for funding purposes as well as to inspire trust with the group as a critical part of preparting for the 2007 election (author’s interview with Álvaro Colom (March 2005).
FRG) explained in interviews, the national party organization contributes only to the national media campaign and the effort to mobilize voters on election day. For the national electoral effort, parties depend on monetary contributions from the country’s economic elite to finance the national media campaign (Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001; Casas and Zovatto 2004:197-8; INCEP 2007: 15-20; Carter Center Observation Mission to Guatemala 2004:3-6). Data on the amount of money that parties receive from private donations is scarce, but Casas (2004) calculates that in the 1995 electoral cycle private donations covered 94.8% of campaign spending (total campaign spending was calculated to have been US$11.5 million). In contrast, in the 2001 Nicaraguan elections, private donations covered about 52% of total campaign spending and state subsidiaries covered the remaining (total campaign spending was estimated to have been between US$22 and US$24 million) (5). This reliance on private donations gives members of the economic elite a great deal of influence in the electoral process. For example, the backing of Angel Gónzalez, who has a monopoly over the country’s television channels, is considered necessary for a presidential victory (Marroquín Godoy 2001; Casas and Zovatto 2004:217).

Another drawback of this reliance on private donations is that as the electoral strength of a party wanes and more likely candidates enter the system with new parties, less likely winners are unlikely to attract sufficient resources from the economic elite. For instance, the amount of money that the PAN has received from the economic elite has diminished over time. In 1999, it is estimated that the party spent some US$ 9,183,339

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187 Author’s interview with Eduardo Genis, Quej Chen (March 2005) and Carlos, Yat Sierra (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala
dollars in its campaign, almost exclusively financed by private donations (ASIES 2004). For the 2003 election it is estimated that the party spent US$ 7,593,847 (INCEP 2007). In 2007 the party’s access to private donations dropped further, which was to be expected given that the party’s presidential candidate was not considered to be one of the strongest contenders. Despite this, the party was still able to spend an estimated US$ 8,952,229 in the electoral campaign (Mirador Electoral 2007). In this campaign, the party’s campaign expenses were the fourth largest in the country, but there was a substantial difference (about US$ 4,935,802) between its spending and GANA’s, the party with the third largest level of spending.

Interviews with party leaders and the party’s national manager confirmed that for the maintenance of the national organization, the PAN does not receive monetary contributions from the economic elite. Instead, the party’s legislators contribute financially from their salaries to maintain the national organization. These contributions, however, are ad hoc and depend entirely on the individuals. Like most other political parties in Guatemala, the PAN does not have an institutionalized practice of asking members with public posts to give fixed monetary contributions to the party. Departmental or municipal organizations, when active, have the responsibility of local leadership and are usually run out of the private houses of this leadership. Only for special events, such as the selection of candidates, does the party rent space for public meetings. As Representative Carlos Yat Sierra, Secretary General of the department of

188 Mirador Electoral calculates the estimates of campaign spending by keeping track of the amount of time and space that parties buy in the media, as well as posters (vallas) (Mirador Electoral 2007).

189 Author’s interview Carlos, Reyes (January 2005); Mario, Taracena Diaz-Sol, member and legislative leader for the PAN (January 2005); and Carlos, Yat Sierra (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
Alta Verapaz and member of the party’s National Executive Committee (Comité Ejecutivo Nacional – CEN), explained: the level of activity in departmental and municipal organizations depends entirely on the local leadership. Most often this means that in those departments or municipalities where the party’s candidate is elected into office the organization retains a presence between elections. In regions where the candidates did not win, the party’s apparatus ceases to exist until the next election.190

The PAN’s central organization has never sustained a centralized coordination or financing aimed at maintaining the party’s organization, outside of the capital, between elections. As party members and ex-members confirmed, the party leaves such coordinating efforts to the beginning of the campaign period (ASIES 2004). The party’s lack of organization has resulted in a higher dependence on individual leaders for the party’s electoral future. Voters and those willing to make financial contributions are loyal to leaders rather than to the party. As a result, when the party loses its leaders it also loses this link to the resources it needs to pay for the media centered electoral campaigns that win elections.191

This pattern is similar to the one found in Guatemala’s other conservative parties such as GANA. In the party’s first election, it had the second highest spending in the electoral campaign. During this election, a large section of the country’s economic elite financed GANA’s electoral campaign to ensure the displacement of the FRG, which had largely denied this sector access to the government (Carter Center Observation Mission to

190 Author’s interview Carlos, Yat Sierra (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.
191 Author’s interview Álvaro, Arzú Irigoyen (March 2005); Carlos, Reyes (January 2005); and Carlos, Yat Sierra (March 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala
At the time, the party spent a total of US$ 12,461,911 in its electoral campaign, with a difference of US$ 4,375,972 between it and the PAN, which had the third highest level of spending in the election. To finance the party’s 2007 campaign, the party once again worked to secure funds from the country’s traditional economic elite (INCEP 2007). During this election, the country’s economic elite divided its financial contributions amongst numerous potential winners, including the two candidates that participated in the second-round election, reducing the funds available to each party (INCEP 2007; Carter Center Observation Mission to Guatemala 2004).

To finance its organization, the party relies solely on individual contributions from members with public posts. However, there is no centralization of funds and the party has not instituted a quota system. Instead, mayors maintain the party’s organization at the local level, and legislators are responsible for financing their own departmental offices. According to González, in charge of the party’s organization, after the 2003 election only a small number of the party’s economic supporters continued to contribute to the party. This small group provided only enough money to partially maintain the party’s national headquarters in the capital.193

As with the other conservative parties, the FRG relies on private donations to finance its electoral campaign.194 Similarly to the other parties in the system, FRG

192 In this election there was a higher level of cohesion within the economic elite to support GANA than is normally exhibited. As a result, the party received a higher percentage of the economic resources usually split amongst various potential candidates (Carter Center Observation Mission to Guatemala 2004).

193 Author’s interview with Eduardo González (April 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

194 The FRG, more than the other parties in the system, has been accused of accepting contributions from illegal sources (Carter Center 2004).
members seeking election have to secure private contributions for their own campaigns, and to finance the party’s national campaign, the party relies on the country’s economic elite (Ruiz 2000; Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001; INCEP 2007; Mirador Electoral 2007). This party, however, taps into a different sector of the elite. It has closer ties with the traditional landed elite and new midlevel businessmen, rather than those sectors of the economic elite that have larger national capitals (Segovia 2004). The sector of the elite that represents large national capital tends to have closer political ties with parties like PAN or GANA, although in the 2007 election UNE received a significant level of support from them (Mirador Electoral 2007; INCEP 2007; Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001; Segovia 2004).

Unlike the other conservative parties, to finance its organization, the FRG receives fixed quotas from members who hold public posts. These individuals are required to give the party 10% of their salary, a practice that began in 1998. Prior to this fixed arrangement, the party negotiated with each individual the level of their contribution. The central organization redistributes these funds to the party’s departmental and municipal offices, with most funds going to local offices rather than the national office (Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001). These funds are used to cover organizational costs and maintain the FRG’s offices. In an interview, party member Quej Chen (FRG legislator and member of CEN) made the point that when the party formed the government (1999-2003) the party had access to a great deal of funds through this

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195 Author’s interview with Alexander Segovia (July 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.

196 The FRG’s contentious relationship with the country’s traditionally influential economic elite was a serious problem for this sector during the FRG’s government. For the first time in many years, this group found itself marginalized from the sphere of power during important economic decisions, such as the negotiation of CAFTA (Segovia 2004).
fixed quota. With scarcer resource, the party today has a majority of its local headquarters in the houses of the local leadership to avoid costs. The party’s fall from power has meant that its ability to finance the party’s organization has decreased significantly, although this has not meant that the party’s efforts to sustain its organization, concentrated in those departments where the party performs well, has waned.197

One characteristic that the FRG does share with other conservative parties is the importance of a charismatic leader and a hierarchical organization. In this party, however, the same leadership that created the FRG has remained in power. The party’s founder, Ríos Montt, has been elected Secretary General of the party without opposition since the party’s creation in 1988 and has always been considered the first and last authority in the party (Ruiz 2000):198 In a number of ways, Ríos Montt’s role within the FRG is very similar to Alemán’s within the PLC.199

Comparing the types of financing that conservative parties receive also explains the level of institutionalization of a party. As the fifth proposition argues, when the economic elite is heavily invested in a conservative party, there will be a higher level of institutionalization in that party. Alternatively, when the conservative political elite finances its party project through the use of the state, members of the conservative

197 Author’s interview with Haroldo Quej Chen (April 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala.

198 When the party was in power it did face a higher level of public internal divisions. Most of these were due to disputes between the party’s two main factions: one under Portillo, who controlled the presidency, and the other under Ríos Montt, who controlled the legislature (Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001). Despite this internal division, the party’s organization remained firmly in the control of Ríos Montt and his more conservative supporters. At the end of Portillo’s term, most of the party’s internal tensions lessened when those affiliated with the country’s ex-president left the party. For example, in 2004 the party lost 13 legislators who had been aligned with Portillo.

199 Interestingly, both leaders have been able to maintain control over their party despite the legal charges against them, and restrictions that these have brought, including house arrest.
political elite will seek to control the party by controlling resources. In both Guatemala and Nicaragua, the cases where the economic elite has limited its investment in the party system to electoral campaigns, authority within parties rests on charismatic leaders who retain control over the party apparatus through the use of state resources (Santiuste Cué 2001; Ajenjo Fresno and García Díez 2001). The PLC in Nicaragua is firmly under the control of Alemán and has been since he became president of the party in 1990. In Guatemala, the numerous conservative parties that have formed since the transition process have all been under the control of a few key members of the conservative political elite and organized around one individual with presidential aspirations. As a candidate, this individual maintains control of the party apparatus, but if he wins the election the party falls under the hands of another individual within the organization.

There is a distinct lack of institutionalization in Guatemala’s conservative parties, with little regard for the statutes that are supposed to govern their internal life. One prominent example of this is the presidential primary that the PAN organized prior to the 2003 election. When the party’s Secretary General, often referred to as the owner of the party, lost the election to Oscar Berger, the results were discarded. Berger was denied the party’s nomination and went on to form a new political party, which he and his group controlled during the campaign. In sharp contrast, ARENA also organized its first primary election to select its presidential candidate for the 2009 election. Despite sharp divisions within the party about the potential backlash that a primary might have and then divisions over the winner, once established, the rules of the primary were followed and the party nominated the winner of the preliminary.
In sum, the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran systems are the only ones where conservative parties have durable organizations. In both cases, the right considers this type of organization important for winning elections, as are the media campaigns that are inevitably a part of today’s electoral campaigns. The arguments provided for having durable organizations are similar in both systems, with members of the right citing the role of durable organizations in mobilizing voters and maintaining a stable link between voters and the party, keeping voters loyal to the party label, and preventing the left from absorbing their supporters. Alternatively, conservative parties have not built durable organizations in Guatemala, yet these parties have routinely succeeding in winning national elections without needing a more substantial investment in partisan organizations.

Of the three systems, the Salvadoran is the only one where the economic elite has committed itself to a substantial investment in the party system, investing in ARENA’s organization. In the other two systems, conservative parties count on financial contributions from the economic elite only for campaign purposes. These differences impact the level of institutionalization of conservative parties in these systems. In those systems where the economic elite does not invest in party organizations, charismatic leaders control parties. In this, Guatemalan and Nicaraguan conservative parties resemble each other more closely than either system resembles ARENA.

I have argued that the pattern of differences and similarities across the three party systems can be explained if we examine the perception of threat that conservative groups have of the left. This perception has a critical influence on shaping the strategies that the right adopts during the transition to compete. In the following section, I explore some
possible alternative arguments that might better explain the patterns of conservative party formation found.

3.7 Alternative Arguments

The first set of alternative arguments that I examine are derived from the institutionalist literature, which argues that the rules in place create both constraints and opportunities for political actors (Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Cox 1997; Lijphart 1994). I examine two arguments from this literature that might explain the number and type of conservative parties found in these three party systems. A number of scholars have posited that the rules that determine the costs of party formation explain the likelihood that new parties will emerge in party systems (Hug 2000; Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984; Brirnir 2004; Tavits 2006). When rules place a high burden on party registration, forcing politicians to incur a high cost to register new parties, those seeking election are more likely to look for membership within existing parties. Thus, we expect to find an inverse relationship: more restrictive registration rules should discourage new party formation.

Until the 2000 Nicaraguan electoral reforms, it was relatively easy to form a new party in the three systems (see Table 3.8). Although there is some variation across the countries, throughout the transition period and in the early years of the post-transition period new parties faced a low threshold of entry. The Salvadoran system is the easiest in which to register a new party, since parties have no organizational or geographical requirements and can access public funds prior to the first election. The registration threshold in Guatemala perhaps is lower, but parties have to meet some organizational
requirements as they do in Nicaragua, although not burdensome ones. In Nicaragua after the 2000 reforms parties have faced more serious thresholds that place a burden on new and smaller parties (Stahler-Sholk 2003).\textsuperscript{200} The data in Tables 3.5 and 3.6 is surprising given the ease with which new conservative parties can be formed, although the drop in new parties in Nicaragua post-2000 reforms was expected. There are a surprisingly small number of new conservative parties entering the Salvadoran system, given the ease of entry. The pattern has been a steady decrease in new conservative parties as ARENA consolidates its position and discourages new party formation, a possibility that is not included in the institutionalist argument. The number of new entries in Guatemala is slightly higher and more stable. This is perhaps expected since no dominant conservative party in this system creates an added barrier to entry.

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\textsuperscript{200} This reform was part of a larger set of reforms that Alemán and Ortega agreed to with the goal of dividing the state between their two blocs of power and restricting the entry of new actors. ARENA and the FMLN have also tried to restrict new actors through the registration process, since the parties control the electoral institution.
TABLE 3.8:

REGULATIONS FOR REGISTERING NEW PARTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Legal Requirements</th>
<th>Organizational or Spatial Requirements</th>
<th>Financial Viability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>El Salvador</strong></td>
<td>Articles 151 and 158: Signatures from 3% of the total registered voting population are required, based on the previous elections (in 2004: 69,539 signatures; in 2009: 68,324).</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes: Parties can access public funding electoral purposes, including their first election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
<td>Articles 19, 24, and 49. Signatures from 0.30% registered voters required, based on the previous election (in 2007: 15,220 signatures). At least half of the signatures have to be literate.</td>
<td>Yes: Parties have to maintain national, departmental, and municipal organizations (minimum of 50 of 332 municipalities and 12 of 22 departments).</td>
<td>No: Parties cannot access public funding for electoral purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicaragua</strong></td>
<td>Articles 64 and 65: In the 1996 rules, parties needed to register partisan organizations in at least 50% of the country’s municipalities. After the 2000 reforms, parties are required to register organizations in all of the country’s municipalities.¹</td>
<td>Yes: Parties have to have an organization with a national reach.</td>
<td>Yes: Parties can access public funding electoral purposes, including their first election.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES: *Código Electoral* (República del El Salvador 1991); *Ley de Partidos Políticos* (República de Guatemala 1985 and 2006); and *Ley Electoral* (República de Nicaragua 1996 and 2000).

NOTES: 1) (1) Parties also had to provide signatures from 3% of the voting population, but this requirement was deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, decision No. 103 (Alvaréz 2008).

A second possible institutional argument focuses on a variable that is increasingly used to explain variation in party formation, type, and adaptation: the access parties have to financial resources (Biezen 2005; Katz and Mair 1995; Mendilow 1992; Samuels 2001; Roper 2003). The availability of public funding as well as modern technologies that make media campaigns possible encourage parties to avoid the costs of building structural linkages with society. The increase in state funding also changes the
relationship between parties and society, an impact that is expected to be stronger in newer parties because in such cases state subsidiaries not only become one of the main sources of funding for political parties, but they do so in the early stages of party formation (Biezen 2005; Lewis 1998; Kopecký 1995; Katz and Mair 1995). It is possible that the availability of state funding will encourage or discourage the formation of new parties (Roper 2003).

The first argument is that in systems where the state provides higher levels of subsidiaries to parties, these will more likely be entrenched in the state and not have an incentive to establish structural linkages with civil society (Katz and Mair 1995; Biezen 2005; Mendilow 1992). The rules in place to distribute funds in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua are similar, and comparable to other systems in the region. Only those parties that received a minimal percentage of the vote in the last election (between 3 and 5%) are eligible for state funding. Funds are distributed based on parties’ share of the vote (Casas 2004; Casas and Zovatto 2004), giving larger parties an advantage. In two of the systems, El Salvador and Nicaragua, parties can request advances, which should make it easier for newer parties to form.

There is some interesting variation across the three systems in terms of the amount of funds that are distributed. In El Salvador (1999-2004) parties received US$ 0.50 per voter; in Guatemala (1999-2003) parties received US$ 0.02 per vote; and in Nicaragua (2001-2006) the state provided parties with US$ 1.20 per vote (Casas and

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201 Lewis (1995) makes the observation that in Poland those parties that received a higher percentage of state funding, based on vote share, used these funds to support their mass organizations.
According to the literature, given the higher percentage of state financing that Nicaraguan parties receive, they should have less incentive to build durable organizations that link parties with civil society. The pattern observed, however, is the opposite. The dominant conservative party in Nicaragua has purposely established a durable organization, while the two systems where parties receive a lower amount of state funding, El Salvador and Guatemala, developed differently from each other. Guatemala’s conservative parties have refrained from building these organizations, while ARENA has the most impressive durable organization.

Another characteristic of state funding that can shape party organizations is its timing. Public funding given to parties for the explicit purpose of funding elections should encourage electoral machines rather than durable organizations, funding provided for organizational purposes should encourage parties to develop more complex organization, including durable ones. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the regulation stipulates that state funding is to be used to help finance electoral campaigns. Subsidiaries are distributed post-election, although parties can apply for advances to help fund the electoral campaigns. In comparison, the regulation in Guatemala does not explicitly outline how state funding is to be used, yet the ways in which funding is distributed should encourage parties to use state funding for organizational purposes. In this system, funds are distributed in four equal annual payments, regardless of the electoral calendar (Casas 2004). The patterns we might expect from these rules are not the patterns we

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202 The only system that has seen changes in state funding is Guatemala in 2004 when the total amount per vote that each party was to receive rose from Q$2 per vote to US$2 per vote, about an eightfold increase at the time of the reforms.

203 Advances are calculated using the party’s vote share in the previous election.
observe in the data. Regardless of the distribution of state funds, it is the Guatemalan parties that prefer electoral machines to durable organizations. Parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua, despite the lack of incentive from the state, create and maintain durable organizations.

One last characteristic of funding regulations that is expected to influence party system development is whether parties or individuals have access to funds, private or public (Samuels 2001). In those systems where individuals can seek private donations there is an incentive to bypass, and thus weaken, the party apparatus (Samuels 2001). In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, the limited financial regulations in place allow parties and politicians to seek private donations. For electoral purposes candidates for all governmental positions, national or local, are expected to supply the funds necessary for their (re)election. Politicians in the three countries especially, but not exclusively in conservative parties, often report that a candidate’s capacity to secure private funds has a strong influence on securing a party’s nomination. The freedom that financial regulations give politicians has the expected impact in Guatemala with its weak party organizations and personalistic electoral machines. Financial regulation is less helpful in explaining the durable party organizations in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Unlike other new party systems, public funding does not have a significant impact in party system development in the three post-conflict Central American countries. One plausible explanation for this lack of impact is that the total amount of funding that the state provides political parties in these three systems is very small. Although estimates of total spending are unavailable for El Salvador, Casas (2004) estimates that in Guatemala in 1995, public financing accounted for 5% of total spending and in Nicaragua in 2000, it
accounted for 44% of total electoral spending. According to the members of the political parties in these systems, these funds are insufficient for maintaining organizations or paying for electoral campaigns; all parties (regardless of ideology) have to seek alternative sources of funding. Yet, only in some of these systems does the conservative political elite search for additional funds for organizational purposes.

A different set of arguments that might explain party system formation and adaptation in new and older systems focuses on social cleavages (Kitschelt 1989; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Kopecký 1995; Ignazi 1996). Kopecký (1995), for instance, points to a number of factors that have potentially influenced parties in the post-communist period to develop as loose electoral constituencies dominated by party leaders rather than members. One of these factors is that the majority of voters in these cases entered the post-communist period without pre-existing social and party loyalties, making it impossible for parties to opt to represent well-defined segments of society. A second potential explanation is that parties have been unable to identify distinct sectors of society in the post-communist period because these societies are too homogenous and undifferentiated.

In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, it is possible that the conflicts created a ‘conflict cleavage.’ In both El Salvador and Nicaragua, voting has been organized around those actors that emerged during the transition and that represented the two sides.

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204 Author’s interview with Yamileth, Bonilla Madrigal (October 2005); Dora Maria, Tellez, ex-FSLN member and comandante, founding member of the MRS (August 2005), Managua, Nicaragua. Juan Pablo, Cabrera Navia, Secretary General, Transparencia (February 2005); Fritz, Gallont García (March 2005); Haroldo Quej Chen (April 2005); and Carlos, Reyes (January 2005), Guatemala City, Guatemala. José Orlando Arévalo Pineda, legislator and member PCN (May 2005); Edgar Contreras, legislator and member PCN (May 2005); Héctor Dada (May 2005); Ramón José, González Rivas (April 2005); Gónzalez, Medardo, member FMLN and General Coordinator for the national office (May 2005), San Salvador, El Salvador.
of the conflict, a pattern not found in Guatemala, although some transition actors remain active in politics, such as Ríos Montt, Arzú Irigoyen, and Pablo Monsanto, who was one of the URNG’s **comandantes**. The argument can be made that the presence of a conflict cleavage explains the absence of competition among conservative parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and its presence in Guatemala. This argument is not incompatible with my own propositions that the presence of a leftist actor drives the degree to which conservative parties will compete against each other. The strength of the actors involved in the conflict created an incentive for political entrepreneurs to mobilize and organize around this cleavage. The need to keep citizens mobilized around this new cleavage is part of the decision to create durable organizations.

The last alternative argument that I examine is a structuralist one. For the Latin American cases, Bartlett and Hunter (1997) argue that market structures encourage economic elites to pursue non-party strategies, because well-developed markets increase the diversity of incomes and increase factor mobility (95). In such models, the economic elite will prefer to influence state policy via strategies such as disinvestment, than through the use of political parties, which carry higher costs. The authors, however, note that while the structuralist approach helps deduce the strategic preferences of actors, it cannot explain differences between countries with similar economic systems or why actors in similar socioeconomic positions choose different strategies.

To fill the gaps of the structuralist argument, Bartlett and Hunter (1997) posit that institutional models that explore how party and state institutions reshape actors’

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205 Despite this difference between the party systems, the programmatic position of parties is equally ill defined in the three systems.
incentives are necessary (119). The authors incorporate a number of party institutions into their explanation, including type of government (presidential v. parliamentary), electoral systems (proportional representation v. majoritarian), candidate selections (open v. close lists), and levels of party fragmentation. The state institutions that the authors include in their analysis are universal law, national defense, fiscal and monetary regulation, and social welfare. As I discussed in previous chapters, however, in the three post-conflict cases there is little variation across such institutions.

The structuralist part of Bartlett and Hunter’s (1997) argument fails to provide an explanation for the variation in party system development. There is little variation across the three systems and the differences that do exist tend to put El Salvador and Guatemala in the most-similar grouping compared to Nicaragua. This variation also fails to explain the pattern of engagement with party systems that developed in these three cases. In the three systems there has been greater movement toward open markets, which should lead to less reliance on party strategies for the economic elite. Furthermore, examining one of the structural variables that Bartlett and Hunter (1997) put forth to measure open markets, land, leads to the conclusion that the Salvadoran market has experienced the highest levels of change and openness (Segovia 2005, 2004; Wood 2000). In terms of land, where agrarian producers are highly mechanized, capital-intensive, and modernized these producers have alternative methods for reducing uncertainty, giving them leverage over the state. Alternatively, agrarian producers in partial market economies or non-market economies are more likely to use electoral strategies to influence state policy because they lack this leverage. This argument leads us to anticipate that the Salvadoran economic
elite will be the group least likely to adopt party strategies. Yet, it is precisely this group that has demonstrated the greatest commitment to party strategies.

Bartlett and Hunter (1997) argue that structural arguments have to be complemented with institutions that shape the strategies of actors. In these three cases, where there is little variation across institutions, such arguments cannot provide an explanation for the patterns of party system formation. In these cases the transition process, because of the dual nature of the transition, is the factor that best explains the development of these three party systems and the pattern of similarities and differences between them.

3.8 Conclusion

As the evidence that I have presented illustrates, the right does well electorally in all three post-conflict systems. There is, however, considerable variation in the type of conservative parties that have developed in these systems. I focus on one characteristic of the three party systems to highlight these differences: the level of competition or alternation of power between conservative parties. Using this criterion, I found two patterns of development: In the first, a single conservative party dominates competition on the right side of the political spectrum; in the second, there is a high degree of competition between conservative parties. To explain this difference, I analyze the type of party that the right creates to pursue power. I posit that its transition strategy determines how invested it will be in the party system and that the right’s strategy is shaped by the presence of the left during this critical process. Furthermore, I argue that the patterns that were established during the transition process have had a long lasting
effect. Biezen (2005) refers to this as a “generation” effect, arguing that “conditions in which a party first emerges would largely determine its internal structure as well as the nature and strength of its external linkages” (151). Because the transition process determines the shape of the post-transition party system, I argue that the transition process is a critical juncture for party system formation (Collier and Collier 1991; Pierson 2004).

The threat of a leftist victory during the transition has a mobilizing effect on the right because of the dual nature of the transition process. In the three countries, the outcome of regime change was interwoven with the process of conflict resolution, creating a particular set of preferences and strategies (Azpuru et al. 2007; Bermeo 2003; Calvert 1998; Shugart 1992). The presence of the two processes together raised the stakes of the outcome for conservative forces during a period when the outcome itself was unclear (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). And while the conflicts and regime changes were successfully resolved because of international changes, including the “failure” of the left, all three conflicts included a strong ideological component. Adversaries classified themselves along the left-right spectrum and for a substantial part of the transition were both political and military opponents. For the right, a loss to the left placed in danger, or in the case of Nicaragua continued to place in danger, its privileged position. It was because of this exaggerated threat from the left during the dual transition that the right had an incentive to mobilize to avoid the possibility of a leftist victory.

The right’s decisions during the transition period had far reaching implications for the party system, including the levels of competition that would take place among conservative forces. I argue that the threat of a leftist victory was an incentive for the
right to come together, pool resources and ignore within-group difference to compete against a common threat. The more likely it was that the left could win, the less likely it was that the right would fragment because within-group competition carried added costs: the potential displacement of the right from all positions of privilege. As a result, we see that in the two countries were the left was considered a viable threat, an actor that could take power, one dominant conservative bloc formed to compete against the left and avoid within-group competition. In El Salvador, the PCN is the only conservative challenger that ARENA has faced since the transition. Although this party sustains a level of support among the population, it has not been a serious contender for power since the creation of ARENA. In Nicaragua, the same strategy of unity served conservative forces well for sixteen years (from 1989-2005). It was only when this strategy collapsed that the right lost its hold on the presidency.

I argued that the left provided an incentive for mobilization and shaped the ways in which the right mobilized. The strength of the left in these cases rested in large part in its ability to mobilize citizens and make claims on their loyalty. The capacity to extend itself across large sectors of the country and the importance it placed on its own organization influenced how the right responded to the threat of a leftist victory. In effect, the right mobilized by copying important aspects of the left’s strategy. Thus, when the right was threatened by the possibility that the left could win, it set out to invest in the creation and maintenance of a durable organization. As the literature on political parties has argued, the time-consuming, labor-intensive, and resource-demanding strategy of creating parties that have a structural and permanent anchoring within society, through
the active recruitment of members and the expansion of the organization, is chosen only when no other feasible option is available (Biezen 2005).

This is the pattern in both El Salvador and Nicaragua. Despite the added costs of this type of organization, since conservative forces would need to invest in the organization as well as electoral campaigns, this type of organization was created in response to the strengths of the left. This pattern deviates considerably from the organizational development of parties in other post-1978 party systems where for the most part, the norm has been the development of “thinner” party organizations that rely almost exclusively on their access to the state and media campaigns to survive and win elections. The expected pattern, in which the right adopts its preferred strategy for a minimal investment in the party system and a reliance on modern technology to reach voters, is found in Guatemala. In this country, by the time the transition process was underway, the left no longer represented a threat.206 The patterns of development of the conservative force leads to the conclusion that the conditions in which the conservative parties emerged led to the creation of certain types of party organizations.

I also argued that whether or not the economic elite was engaged in the party system, a strategy it adopted only when a threat from the left existed, had a further impact on organizational type. When the economic elite finances conservative parties, this actor creates pressure for the conservative political elite to create and maintain an institutionalized political party. Because no one leader controls access to resources, the party’s structures become more important in dictating decision making within the

206 This was true for both the armed opposition, the URNG, and the Christian Democrats who stayed well within the bounds set out by the military and the economic elite (Schirmer 1999), unlike their Salvadoran counterparts who adopted reforms that threatened privileged position of the economic elite.
organization. When the conservative political elite relies almost solely on the state to fund its party project, controlling access to resources is at the discretion of the party’s leadership. This gives leaders the ability to control the party apparatus. This argument explains the difference between ARENA and the PLC’s durable organizations and explains the prominence of charismatic authority in the conservative parties of both Nicaragua and Guatemala. In this pattern, these three countries deviate from other parties in Latin America, and other regions, that also receive much of their funding from the state but are not necessarily personalistic parties. In Chapter Five, I explore this difference arguing that the explanation for this different pattern rests on the weakness of the state when these conservative parties first emerged.

The patterns established by the right during the transition have been enduring and can still be seen in today’s post-transition party systems. I posit that this endurance can be explained by three causal mechanisms: the continual attribution of threat from the left, learning by the conservative political elite of what formulas lead to victory and the elite’s use of its position to reproduce power. During the transition process the perception of threat from the left was intensification by the dual nature of the transition. Today, it is harder to understand how this perception of threat can continue to act as an incentive that is strong enough to continue to mobilize conservative forces. This reality is understandable if we consider that the conservative political elite has learned that part of the winning formula is the continual existence of this threat. For example, a widely held perception in El Salvador, one that was shared by ex-President Cristiani, was that the “best candidate
for ARENA is Shafik” *(my translation).* In the case of Guatemala, where the left did not represent a threat to the interests of conservative forces, the conservative political elite has learned that to win presidential elections established political parties are unnecessary and might well be a hindrance to presidential goals. To win elections in Guatemala it is more important to secure a critical mass of support from the economic elite to finance electoral campaigns that revolve around individuals rather than parties.

Lastly, in the three cases those in power have used their positions to reproduce this power. The winners of the patterns established during the transition have preserved their power by promoting institutional change (or inertia) and so far have avoided reforms that might change the status quo. The elite in power has used existing institutions and its dominant position on the right side of the ideological spectrum to discourage challenging actors. For example, in Nicaragua the FSLN and PLC have notoriously collaborated on electoral reforms to impede the entrance of new parties that might challenge them. In El Salvador there has been little serious discussion of party finance reform that might even out the playing field and diminish some of the advantages that ARENA, and to a lesser extent the FMLN, enjoy.

The existence of these mechanisms has ensured the continuation of transition effects on the three party systems. Once a strategy for winning elections was established, the likelihood that those actors that benefit from the system will change their strategies or the institutions that make them possible diminishes. This reality does not, however, rule out the possibility of change in the future. One possibility that might lead to change is the ~

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207 Shafik Handal (1930-2006) was the Secretary General of the Salvadoran Communist Party before and during the conflict and was widely regarded to be the leader of the FMLN’s orthodox faction, which controls the party’s organization.
unintended consequence of institutional reforms that might shift the dynamics of the party systems. A second possible avenue for change depends on resources, making them available or withdrawing access to them. The presence or absence of available resources has helped sustain some parties in power, ARENA and the PLC, as well as made competition between conservative parties possible in Guatemala. ARENA’s ability to monopolize the resources from conservative forces keeps the party in a dominant position and discourages any attempts to challenge this position by other conservative groups. Yet the current experience of the PLC demonstrates how changes in the availability of resources can potentially have a dramatic impact on the party system. The PLC’s reliance on the state for resources presents an example of the vulnerability of such a strategy and at least the potential for change. Once the PLC’s access to the state was cut, when in 2002 President Bolaños split from the party and began an investigation into Alemán’s appropriation of state funds, a second conservative party was able to take advantage of the new weakness of the PLC to challenge its dominant conservative position.

The level of investment in the party system that the right developed during the transition had implications for more than just the type of organization that conservative parties adopted. This is because the type of organization has wider implications for the party system. One of these implications is that parties with durable organizations have stronger linkages with civil society; they are also more constant in the system, providing voters with important cues. Parties that more closely resemble electoral machines, relying on media campaigns to win elections, might be less costly for the right to create, but these parties have weaker social linkages. These organizations are unable to fulfill some of the traditional functions of political parties, including providing voters with cues and short
cuts in the political arena (Downs 1957; Gunther and Diamond 2003). In the next chapter, I argue that the configurations of party system formation that developed during the transition and that I explored in this and the previous chapter has further implications for the new party systems, including volatility.
CHAPTER 4:
PARTY SYSTEM CONFIGURATION AND ELECTORAL STABILITY

4.1 Introduction

As the previous chapters have shown, the post-conflict party systems of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala followed one of two distinct paths of development, with the first two closely resembling each other and the Guatemalan system differing significantly. In Chapters Two and Three I argued that to explain party system formation in these three countries it is necessary to examine the dual transition processes that began in the mid-1980s. These processes, which combined democratization and conflict resolution, were critical junctures for party system formation. During this process, a sequence of decisions of four actors (the armed opposition, the military, the economic elite, and the conservative political elite) shaped the party systems. The four actors involved chose their transition strategies based on the balance of power between them and their preferences.

Chapter Two examines the inclusion of the left into the post-conflict party system and argues that when the left used the advantages it had during the transition to begin organizing and mobilizing for electoral purposes, it was more likely to perform well electorally in the post-transition period. When the left began to organize for electoral purposes after the resolution of the transition, it missed a critical window of opportunity for the organization, leaving it in a weak position from which it had to contest
competitive elections. The left’s transition strategy had wider implications for the party system than just the left’s success in post-transition elections. Chapter Three argues that the left’s position during the transition—its strengths and strategy—had an important effect on what strategies the right would choose. When the right’s interests and preferences were under threat from a possible leftist victory, conservative forces were motivated to invest more resources into the party system than when the left did not represent a threat. This choice affected the type of conservative parties that formed, creating in the first case conservative parties with durable organizations and in the second, parties with thin organizations that rely almost exclusively on mass media campaigns to win and survive elections.

In this chapter I posit that the strategies adopted by the left and right during the transition shaped the party systems of the three countries, influencing their level of institutionalization. I focus on explaining why two of the party systems in this study, El Salvador and Nicaragua, have developed relatively stable partisan competition, while the third, Guatemala, has a very volatile party system and is distinctive for its level of fluidity. Comparing the three party systems using electoral volatility reveals two identifiable kinds of systems. I use Pedersen’s (1983; 1979) index of electoral volatility, which measures the extent to which parties retain their vote share from one election to the next, to evaluate institutionalization.\textsuperscript{208} Figure 4.1 gives results for presidential elections between 1989-2009 and illustrates the two types of party systems. El Salvador and

\textsuperscript{208} Electoral volatility is widely used as an indicator of party system stability/instability. It is measured by taking the sum of the net change in percentage votes that are gained or lost by each party from one election to the next and then divided by two. The index yields a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 signifies that no parties lost or gained vote shares and 100 means that all of the votes went to new parties (Pedersen 1983).
Nicaragua have had volatility with averages just below 20%, at 19.08% and 18.81% respectively. Guatemala’s average for the same time period is much higher at 48.73%.  

Figure 4.1: Electoral Volatility 1989-2009, Presidential Elections


NOTES: 1) Only first round elections are included.

   2) The PLC is taken to be the continuation of the 1990 UNO coalition.

   3) Averages: El Salvador, 19.08%, Nicaragua, 22.56%, and Guatemala 48.73%.


The difference in volatility across the three countries is particularly striking when we consider that in El Salvador and Nicaragua, for almost all of the elections under consideration, changes in the vote share of the two dominant parties in the system, one on the left and one on the right, drive volatility almost entirely (see Table 4.1). These

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209 Compared to the regional averages, these numbers reemphasize the differences between the three systems. According to Roberts (n/a:Table 6), presidential volatility in Latin America for the 1980s was 17.4% and from 1990-2000 was 27.2%.
dominant parties have maintained a monopoly over their respective ideological spaces, discouraging challengers.210 The only exception to this pattern is the 2006 Nicaraguan election, when a new conservative party, Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense (ALN), won a substantial percentage of the vote. Prior to this election, Nicaragua had the most stable levels of presidential voting. This is a very different pattern from the one that Reich (2004) finds in his cross-regional analysis of party system stability, which suggests that “parties that capture the largest share of votes in founding elections are likely to experience statistically significant losses in voter support in each of the next three elections” (243).

210 By dominant I mean parties that have secured their corresponding side of the ideological spectrum in the post-transition, using their advantage to discourage competition, i.e., ARENA and the FMLN in El Salvador and the PLC and FSLN in Nicaragua.
### TABLE 4.1:

**ELECTORAL RESULTS FOR THE LARGEST PARTIES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alianza Republicana Nacional (ARENA)</td>
<td>53.82</td>
<td>49.03</td>
<td>51.94</td>
<td>57.71</td>
<td>48.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación de la Nación (FMLN)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.90</td>
<td>29.04</td>
<td>35.68</td>
<td>51.32</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>SUM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>73.93</strong></td>
<td><strong>80.99</strong></td>
<td><strong>93.39</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC)</td>
<td>54.74</td>
<td>50.99</td>
<td>56.28</td>
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<td>26.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frente Sandinista de Liberación de la Nación (FSLN)</td>
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<td>37.83</td>
<td>42.34</td>
<td>38.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense (ALN)</td>
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<td>29.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUM</strong></td>
<td><strong>95.56</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.81</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.07</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.00</strong></td>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
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<td>Unión del Centro Nacional (UCN)</td>
<td>25.72</td>
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<td>Movimiento de Acción Solidaria (MAS)</td>
<td>24.14</td>
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<td>Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN)</td>
<td>36.50</td>
<td>30.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG)</td>
<td>22.04</td>
<td>47.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gran Alianza Nacional (GANA)</td>
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<td>Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE)</td>
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<td>28.20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>58.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>78.04</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.69</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.70</strong></td>
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**NOTES:**
1) The largest parties are defined as those that received the first and second largest vote shares in the election.
2) (1) The PLC is taken to be the continuation of the 1990 UNO.
In Guatemala, a different configuration of parties and stability, with considerably higher levels of alternation, emerged after the transitions. Major contenders for the presidency varied from one election to the next, and only in the 1999 election did the same two parties that won a majority of the vote in the previous election (1995) retain enough electoral support to compete a second time for the presidency. This pattern is more in line with Reich’s (2004) findings, but in Guatemala the loss of voter support is not limited to those parties that capture the largest share of votes in founding elections.

Results for the legislative elections between 1990-2009 reveal the same pattern (see Figure 4.2). Both El Salvador and Nicaragua exhibit relatively high stability while the opposite is true in Guatemala. On average, volatility in El Salvador is 14.62%, and in Nicaragua 22.56%, between 1990 and 2009. Both countries have comparable levels of volatility that are slightly below the region’s average of 25.75%. In Guatemala there is significantly more fluidity in the party system. For the same time period, Guatemala had 40.29% volatility, a dramatic contrast to the other two systems and the region’s average. The country’s high volatility is comparable to levels of volatility found in the Andes, a region that in recent years has been plagued by democratic instability and crisis.\(^{211}\)

\(^{211}\) Guatemala’s volatility falls between Bolivia’s 39.8% and Peru’s 51.9% (legislative elections, 1993-2005 and 1990-2001 respectively) (Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006:Table 1.5, p19).
Figure 4.2: Electoral Volatility 1990-2009, Legislative Elections


What took place during the transition explains why two of the post-conflict countries developed relatively stable party systems while the third continues to be marked by fluidity. When the left adopted an electoral strategy early on in the transition period and the right felt threatened by the possibility of a leftist victory, a party system with high levels of stability emerged. Alternatively, when the left focused on its electoral needs after the resolution of the dual transition and the right did not feel threatened by the left, the party system that developed was one with low levels of stability. These early decisions affected electoral stability because of the high levels of polarization and durable organizations that emerged in the first path of party system formation and are absent from the second path.
In contrast to other studies of electoral stability that have focused on economic and institutional explanations (Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Remmer 1991; Pedersen 1983; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Cox 1990; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lipset and Rokkan 1967), I posit that the types of parties that the transition process created affected the level of institutionalization in these party systems. Two characteristics of the party system, both shaped by the transition, led to high levels of fluctuation in Guatemala and the institutionalization of the party system in El Salvador and Nicaragua. When polarized systems that include parties that have durable organizations are the result of the dynamics of the transition, these systems have tended to be relatively institutionalized. The two characteristics of the system explain institutionalization because they foster a greater degree of partisan loyalty and increase the costs of switching parties.

When the transition process formed a party system that lacked parties with durable organizations and had lower levels of polarization, an absence that can be traced back to the transition process, the parties that emerged had thin organizations. In the absence of a leftist threat during the transition at the system level, a party system with low polarization emerged, encouraging volatility in the system. Parties in this type of system can win elections with the use of mass media communications that make it possible for parties (and candidates) to directly appeal to a large number of voters. At the system level, however, competing parties easily capture the electorate away from each other with small ideological differences between them, fostering higher electoral volatility. This chapter’s argument about the causes of system stability builds on the work of scholars who have noted that elite strategies encourage or discourage electoral stability (Gunther 2005-60; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007:170-1; Tavits 2008; Lane and Ersson
2007; Coppedge 1995)\textsuperscript{212} and the argument of the previous two chapters that the transition process is a critical juncture for party system formation.

4.1.1 Why Study Electoral Stability?

The literature on political parties and party systems, especially for post-1978 systems, has emphasized the importance of party system institutionalization and its connection to the democratic process (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Madrid 2005; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Remmer 1991; Gunther 2005; Kuenzi and Lambright 2001; Bogaards 2008; Manning 2005; Drummond 2006; Stockton 2001; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bielasiaik 2002; Diamond 1988; Kitschelt et al. 1999). The relationship between party systems institutionalization and democracy has received considerable attention in the literature because of the benefits that are associated with an institutionalized party system. While democracies can survive with volatile party systems, these systems negatively affect quality of democracy, although a number of authors have noted that this relationship is nonlinear (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Stockton 2001; Powell 1982; Thames and Robbins 2007). The negative impact that low levels of institutionalization can have on a country’s quality of democracy is particularly problematic in newer democracies, which might still be vulnerable to setbacks and even reversals.

Political parties and party systems are central to democracy because they perform a number of key functions, including providing a link between the state and society, aggregating interests at the mass and elite levels, structuring the electoral process,

\textsuperscript{212} More generally, scholars have argued that elites play a determining role in the development of new party systems (Biezen 2005, 2003; Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995).
mobilizing and representing groups, and formulating public policy. Parties best serve citizens as they perform these functions when there is enough stability in the system to provide clarity, continuity, and accountability. In the absence of these traits, citizens have a harder time gathering the information they need to make informed political decisions. In addition, volatile party systems increase the complexity of the system, making it harder for citizens to hold parties accountable for their actions. Volatility can be considered as a measure of the exercise of accountability, with citizens voting for different parties when they choose to “throw the rascals out.” Lane and Svante (2007:95, 105-6) make this argument for moderate levels of volatility for the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. When volatility is very high, however, it becomes harder for citizens to even identify which actors should be the ones to hold accountable.

The relationship between party system institutionalization and democracy makes party system stability an important topic of study, especially in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua where the quality of democracy is low. In Levine and Molina’s (2007:22) Quality of Democracy Index, for instance, Guatemala received the lowest ranking of 18 Latin American countries, with 56.4, and a 7.2 difference between it and the next lowest country, Venezuela. Nicaragua ranks slightly higher in 13th place with 69.8, while El Salvador is in 9th place, below the region’s 76.9 average with 75.²¹³

What causes electoral volatility is not well understood. For post-1978 systems scholars debate the extent to which economic performance, especially inflation, causes

²¹³ Levine and Molina’s (2007) index includes five related dimensions: electoral decision, participation, responsiveness, accountability, and sovereignty.
volatility (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Remmer 1991; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Coppedge 1995; Madrid 2005; Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008; Tavits 2006). Questions also remain about what mechanisms create stable party systems and sustain them. This chapter proposes to contribute to this literature by examining the three post-conflict cases of Central America and proposing an answer to these two questions: the causes of stability and the mechanisms that sustain it.

The similarities and differences between the three post-conflict countries introduce an interesting puzzle. Most of the robust findings from the literature, including those that point to a relationship between institutions and electoral volatility, are less insightful for these countries. A study of this smaller group of countries, that have little variation across variables usually used to explain party system institutionalization, reinforces the importance of examining the forces that shape the original arrangement of the party systems (Reich 2004; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). In these three countries the force that shaped the system was the transition. Examining the smaller number of countries also makes it possible to provide an argument about what mechanisms led to the creation of more stable, or unstable, systems and what mechanisms have contributed to the endurance of these systems. By taking this approach, the chapter contributes to the literature that has emphasized supply-side explanations of party system institutionalization (Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008; Reich 2004; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Tavits 2008; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Coppedge 1995).

The chapter is organized as follows. In the next section I present my argument about how two party system characteristics, type of party and polarization, affect the institutionalization of the three post-conflict systems. In the next section I outline four
alternative hypotheses derived from the literature about what factors best explain party
system institutionalization. Section Four analyzes the available data to determine which
argument provides the most compelling explanation of party system institutionalization in
the three post-conflict Central American cases. Section Four provides a discussion of the
findings and the mechanisms, which explain what causes party system stability. In the
Conclusion, I review the argument and its implications for the three party systems and
more generally, the theory of party system institutionalization and democracy.

4.2 Path Dependence and Electoral Stability

A number of studies have found that supply-side characteristics of party systems
have an important effect on stability. Unlike demand-side explanations that focus on the
demands that voters make on the party system, supply-side explanations posit that elite
decisions, to form new parties and ban others, to build certain type of parties, with
particular ideological orientations and organizational characteristics explain the sources
of electoral volatility (Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008; Reich 2004; Mainwaring
and Zoco 2007; Tavits 2008; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Roberts n/a; Coppedge 1995).
Tavits’s (2008) study of Central and Eastern Europe provides a convincing argument that
in new democracies, at least in the initial phases of party system evolution, elite strategies
and decisions shape voter response. Using statistical analysis to establish causality, Tavits
finds that “rather than triggering change in the supply of parties and hence party system
instability, electoral volatility merely reacts to it” (549). Following this finding, I posit
that to explain electoral volatility in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua we need to
examine two party system characteristics that depend on elite strategies: the type of
parties and level of polarization in the system. Both of these characteristics emerged as part of the dynamics of the transition and the incentives and opportunities that the elite faced at that time. Because of this effect on the type of party system, indirectly including its level of institutionalization, I identify the transition as a critical juncture of party system formation in the three post-conflict Central American countries.

To analyze party system institutionalization I use one of the more common measures of the concept, electoral volatility. The time period that is now available to examine party system institutionalization in the post-conflict cases of Central America is not extensive (1989-2009). The time frame includes 6 legislative and 4 presidential elections for El Salvador, 5 legislative and 4 presidential elections for Guatemala, and 3 legislative and presidential elections for Nicaragua. The range of available years and electoral periods is short, which makes multivariate analysis unreliable. Using this relatively small time frame can be useful, however, for identifying patterns in newer party systems (McKeown 2004:164-7). In addition, one of the characteristics that mark these systems has been the consistency of their traits, making it possible to identify patterns of institutionalization and put forth an argument about transition effects for the first 20 years of democracy. Previous studies have also shown that in most countries volatility is stable over time (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007:170; Reich 2004:236).

4.2.1 Party Type

\[ P_1: \text{Party systems that include political parties with durable organizations will decrease electoral volatility, helping to institutionalize the party system.} \]
Cross-regional studies of electoral volatility have found that post-1978 democracies are more susceptible to higher levels of electoral volatility than older party systems (Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008:12; Lane and Ersson 2007). Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) argue that the differences between newer and older systems lies in the type of political party that elites have created in newer systems. When older party systems formed, the political elite needed partisan organizations to mobilize voters and anchor social sectors to the party. In contrast, in newer party systems the political elite can win elections with thin partisan organizations and the use of mass media campaigns (Biezen 2005; Gibson 1996; Kopecký 1995; Middlebrook 2000; Toole 2003). At the system level, one consequence of this new strategy is that the parties of post-1978 systems have weaker ties with society and are less able to hold the loyalty of their electorate over time (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007:170-1). Gunther (2005) makes a similar argument in his study of electoral volatility in Southern Europe. He finds that the types of parties in the system explain the different levels of volatility across this region. Systems with mass-based parties, which provide durable anchors for partisanship, have lower levels of electoral volatility than party systems that are dominated by catch-all or personalistic parties, which do not build loyalty with their electorate (260-2, 273).

According to this literature, parties that have stronger linkages with society will lead to more stable party systems because these parties will permeate society and forge links with voters, encouraging them to form attachment to parties. These attachments will lead to higher levels of stability, as most voters will remain loyal to a single party over

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214 Roberts’ (n/a) more recent work starts with the same premise and concludes that in Latin America the reforms of the 1980s and 90s led to higher levels of electoral instability precisely in those systems that had mass-organizations when these lose their support as a result of neoliberal reforms.
time. Durable organizations, similarly to mass-based parties, have a more stable anchoring with society than parties that lack this type of organization. The existence of party systems with this type of organization, one that remains active across the national territory and engages with citizens between elections, will foster stronger citizen attachments to parties through prolonged interactions with them. These anchoring of parties in society will tend to decrease electoral volatility. In contrast, electoralist parties have thinner organizations that lack roots in society and do not seek to build linkages with society and lack a social anchoring, which makes the electorate susceptible to the appeals of competing parties. For this reason, systems where the relevant parties have thin organizations will tend to have higher levels of electoral volatility.

The three countries of post-conflict Central America are somewhat surprising in that not all of them fit in with the expected pattern of development for post-1978 systems. Chapters Two and Three explained how the transition influenced party development in the three countries, arguing that the different types of parties that formed in these systems depended on the dynamics of the transition process. Elite incentives and opportunities during the transition, shaped by the balance of power between the transition actors, influenced the type of parties that formed in the new systems. In two of three countries, El Salvador and Nicaragua, a leftist and conservative party with durable organizations emerged to contest elections. These parties invested a great deal of resources into building and maintaining durable organizations, unlike the majority of their counterparts in post-1978 systems. The result for the party system has been the establishment of two dominant parties in each of these systems, the FMLN and ARENA in El Salvador and the FSLN and PLC in Nicaragua. These parties make use of mass media campaigns to reach
voters, but they complement this strategy with the use of durable organizations that work to secure the loyalty of voters between elections. Alternatively, party system development in Guatemala has followed the expected pattern for post-1978 systems more closely. In this system, the left did not undertake the task of building a durable organization during the transition and conservative parties have successfully used parties with thin organizations and the mass media to win elections. This variation in the type of party that developed in the party systems provides part of the explanation of why levels of electoral volatility vary so much across the systems.

4.2.2 Polarization

P_2: Polarization will increase party system stability, especially if it has centrifugal tendencies.

The literature on polarization and party systems has tended to highlight the potential dangers of a highly polarized party system (Linz 1978; Sartori 1976; Valenzuela 1978; Sani and Sartori 1983); the presence of ideological choices for voters, however, is important. For instance, analysis of electoral volatility has found that polarization is likely to decrease volatility (Roberts n/a; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Gunther and Montéro 2001:105, 126-9).\textsuperscript{215} Polarization tends to reduce volatility because left-right designations and the perception of political parties on the ideological spectrum are useful points of references that citizens can use to make political decisions, including vote choices (Gunther and Montéro 2001:105; Downs 1957; Roberts n/a; Roberts and Wibbels

\textsuperscript{215} Brown (1992) and Heath (2005) find the same relationship at the sub-national level in the U.S. and India, respectively.
In addition, polarization will decrease electoral volatility because the greater the distance between parties, the less likely voters will be to transfer their vote (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Gunther and Montéro 2001; Downs 1957). According to Gunther (2001:105), polarization reduces electoral volatility by “restricting shifts in electoral support to other parties within a given ideological space” (105). I argue that when polarization has centrifugal tendencies, stability will be reinforced. Voters will be less likely to switch their support from one party to another in these systems because the costs of doing so are high. Instead, voters will have a higher tendency to be anchored in one of the available options and will be constrained in their ability to move from this preference (Roberts and Wibbels 1999:583-5).

Just as the transition process shaped the types of parties found in the Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran party systems, the transition process also affected the level of polarization of these systems. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, two political parties at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum emerged from the dynamics of the transition. These parties have benefited from the creation and maintenance of their durable organizations, but also from the framing of politics around a “conflict dimension.” This dimension, promoted by both the left and the right, encourages the idea that the two relevant contenders in elections stand at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. In Guatemala, the weakness of the left during the transition and its strategic choices also affected the level of polarization in the system. Without a threat from the left, conservative parties had no incentive to promote the idea of a “conflict dimension” or the creation of parties with durable organizations. One consequences of this sequence has been a more moderate level of polarization in the party system.
Table 4.2 gives data on this second party system characteristic, measured using Dalton’s polarization index (2008). Dalton’s index is a useful measure of polarization for comparative purposes because it takes into account “(a) the relatively [sic] position of each party along the Left–Right scale and (b) the party’s position weighted by party size (because a large party at the extreme would signify greater polarization than a splinter party in the same position)” (Dalton 2008:906). The index has a value of 0 when all parties occupy the same position on the left-right scare and a value of 10 when all parties in the system are split between the two extremes of the scare. Both the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran post-transition party systems are highly polarized, with average scores of 6.72 and 6.47, respectively, from 1994-2006. Guatemala’s party system has a more moderate level of polarization with a score of 3.39 for the 1996 to 2008 period, a score that is well within the region’s average and almost half of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran values. This score reflects the different formation path of the system, with a smaller ideological space between the relevant political parties in Guatemala compared to the distance between the largest parties in the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party system.

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216 The formula used to calculate polarization is:

\[ PI = \text{SQRT} \left\{ \sum (\text{party vote share}_i \times \left[ (\text{party L/R score}_i - \text{party system average L/R score})/5 \right]^2 \right\} \]

where \( i \) represents individual parties (Dalton 2008:906). Dalton uses this index to measure polarization with public opinion data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project. I calculate polarization with data from the Elites Parlamentarias de América Latina (PELA) project, using question 13, which asks non-party members to place the parties in the system along the left-right ideological spectrum. Using question 50, which asks respondents to identify their own party along the spectrum yields similar results. Zoco (2006) also finds that there is a great deal of consistency overall in the two questions. The idea behind this index varies slightly from Sani and Sartori’s (1983) well-known measure of polarization, but the two are highly correlated at 0.86 for the third wave of surveys (2001-2010).
TABLE 4.2:
POLARIZATION

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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: PELA</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE: Polarization is calculated using Dalton's index: PI = SQRT{∑(party vote share)^2 - party system average L/R score}/5}, where i represents individual parties.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: PELA</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: PELA</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: PELA</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: PELA survey, various years.

NOTE: Polarization is calculated using Dalton’s index: PI = SQRT{∑(party vote share)^2 - party system average L/R score}/5), where i represents individual parties.

In addition to highly polarized systems in El Salvador and Nicaragua and low polarization in Guatemala, the tendency in these systems also varies across the three systems. Figure 4.3 positions all of the parties that have competed in these three systems on the left-right spectrum with their average vote share between 1994 and 2008. The figure includes all of the parties that have competed in legislative elections during this time and have won enough votes to secure a significant number of seats in the legislature.\(^{217}\) In El Salvador and Nicaragua, the two largest contenders are positioned at opposite poles of the spectrum. In both countries, the dominant parties in the system monopolize the ideological space on their respective sides resulting in a polarized score that is well above the region’s average and systems with centrifugal tendencies. In

\(^{217}\) PELA’s samples depend on the percentage of seats that a party has on the legislature so that the characteristics of individual smaller parties are less clear.
Guatemala the tendency has tended toward centripetal polarization, with most parties occupying the center-right to right side of the ideological spectrum. Spaces between the parties are also much smaller than in either the Salvadoran or Nicaraguan party systems, especially if we examine the vote share of those parties that on average have received at least 20% of the votes. The differences in levels of polarization and the tendency of this polarization across these three party systems, consequences of party system formation, help explain variation in the levels of party system stability.
Figure 4.3: Centrifugal and Centripetal Polarization

NOTE: Calculated using the averages for the vote share and polarization between 1994 and 2008.
Propositions one and two outline my argument that two party system characteristics that can be traced back to the emergence of the party systems have an important effect on party system institutionalization, operationalized as electoral volatility. Figure 1.1 from Chapter One outlines this relationship, showing the expected influence of the two party system traits. This argument points to the impact that transition dynamics have had on the three post-conflict countries. In the following section, I present four alternative explanations of electoral volatility, derived from the literature.

4.3 Alternative Explanations of Volatility

The literature on party system institutionalization and electoral volatility is extensive and has examined have a number of interesting factors and how they affected stability. These studies can be organized into three main groups according to the explanatory factor emphasized: economic, institutional, or structural.

H₁: Economic growth will tend to encourage stability in the party system.

Macroeconomic factors are consistently included in analysis of electoral volatility as an important demand-side explanation. The economic model of voting behavior argues that citizens punish or reward incumbents based on their economic performance. When incumbents perform well they will be reelected, decreasing electoral volatility. When governments perform poorly volatility will increase as voters switch their support to other parties (Birch 2003; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008; Remmer 1991; Powell and Whitten 1993; Lewis-Beck 1988). If voters’ main concern on election day is economic interests, electoral volatility will be the product of unstable
economies. Previous analysis of the cause of electoral volatility test this argument using measures such as GDP growth and inflation to measure government performance (Birch 2003; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008; Tavits 2005; Lane and Ersson 2007; Powell and Whitten 1993).\footnote{Inflation is also often included in studies of electoral volatility, but with less consistent findings, for this reason I only examine the relationship between GDP growth and volatility.} To measure economic growth, I follow Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) and measure GDP per capita growth, averaging for each electoral period.\footnote{For a complete explanation of how variables are measured and the sources used see the Appendix.}

$$H_2:$$ Party system fragmentation will tend to encourage electoral volatility.

The institutions governing party systems have a direct impact on the characteristics of party systems and are expected to also affect electoral volatility, both the demand and supply side factors (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bielasiak 2002; Birch 2003; Pedersen 1979; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Tavits 2005; Shugart and Carey 1992). For instance, some rules encourage parties and citizens to forge connections with each other, fostering loyalty between parties and their electorate, while other rules encourage politicians and citizens to circumvent political parties (Birch 2003; Shugart and Carey 1992).\footnote{Another argument often included in analysis of electoral volatility is the permissibility of the rules regulating the entry of new actors (Brinnir 2004; Thames, Patterson, and Robbins 2008). I do not include this argument because the previous chapter found that there is little variation in the rules regulating new party entry. The three systems have permissible rules (see Table 3.8). As I argued in Chapter Three these rules have had little impact on the entry of new parties. For example, volatility decreased in Nicaragua after the 2000 electoral reforms, against the theoretical expectation that institutional changes increase volatility (Madrid 2005; Bartolini and Mair 1990), and in 2006 volatility increased under the same rules that discourage new party entry.} I examine one of the more consistent arguments from this literature: that the
number of parties in the system will have a positive effect on volatility so that as the number of parties increases electoral volatility will also increase (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bielasiak 2002; Maas and Hox 2004; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Pedersen 1979; Roberts n/a; Roberts and Wibbels 1999). With a greater number of parties in the system, citizens are presented with a larger number of options on election day, encouraging electoral volatility. In addition, as the number of parties increases the differences between parties will decrease, lowering the costs of switching support from one party to the other. I expect fragmentation to have this affect in the three Central American countries. To measure fragmentation I use Laakso and Taagepera’s (1979) index of the effective number of parties (ENP), measured in votes.  

\[ H_3: \text{A well-organized class cleavage will stabilize the party system, reducing electoral volatility.} \]

According to the next two arguments, social cleavages shape party systems (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The literature on electoral volatility has found that the way society is organized has an important influence on stability (Tavits 2005; Roberts n/a; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Madrid 2005; Bartolini and Mair 1990). Social cleavages are expected to form ties to political parties, based on their group characteristics. These links foster loyalty to parties from election to election, stabilizing the party system. Studies that have examined this relationship in Latin America have found that the existence of class

\[ \text{221 Another institutional argument often employed to explain volatility is that the type of electoral systems, more specifically whether it favors candidates or voters, will impact stability. Those systems that favor parties rather than candidates should tend toward stability. I do not examine this argument in my analysis because as I reviewed in Chapter Two, the electoral system of the three countries are very similar and tend to favor parties; only in El Salvador and Nicaragua do volatility scores match the theoretical expectations.} \]
cleavages do tend to stabilize party systems (Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Roberts n/a; Madrid 2005). I expect this same pattern to hold in the three Central American countries. Roberts and Wibbles (1999) and Madrid (2005) measure class cleavages in Latin America using union density, while Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) use the percentage of the labor force that is employed in four blue-collar sectors of the economy (manufacturing, mining, construction, and transportation). I use both measures to examine how class cleavages affect electoral volatility.

\[ H_1: \text{Ethnic cleavages that are not represented in the party system will tend to increase electoral volatility.} \]

The second structuralist argument is concerned with ethnic cleavages. Similar to the previous argument, the expectation is that the presence of ethnic cleaves in societies will tend to stabilize parties as groups vote reliably, based on group interests, for the same party over time (Birnir 2007 Madrid, 2005 #553; Tavits 2005; Bartolini and Mair 1990). Following Madrid’s (2005) work, the expectation for Latin America is that party systems that do not incorporate existing ethnic groups will have higher electoral volatility. The presence of ethnic groups without an attachment to the party system increases volatility as parties compete to capture this social group from one election to the next.\(^{222}\)

\[^{222}\text{Birnir (2007), in a study of electoral volatility in Easter Europe, finds that only certain types of ethnic cleavages, those organized around language, are likely to help “jump-start” party systems stabilization. Interestingly, since the 1990s the indigenous community in Guatemala has increasingly organized around language, yet thus far this has had little impact on stability. Gosselin and Tóka (2007) in a cross-regional study of volatility find that value based cleavages and not social group cleavages have a stabilizing impact on the party system (24).} \]
To measure this variable, I use the percentage of a country’s population that is indigenous. Measuring ethnic cleavages in Central America is difficult because defining who is indigenous continues to be a controversial topic (Sieder 2002:1-23; Tilley 2002). For example, in El Salvador there is a general understanding, one that has been promoted by different governments and most state entities, that there are no indigenous populations in the country. Scholar and international organizations, on the other hand, tend to estimate that the country does have an indigenous population. For this reason, estimates of the size of this population in El Salvador vary from 0 to 7%. In addition, there is little data that consistently covers the democratic period. This is further complicated by the lack of consistency across sources. For instance, Guatemala’s indigenous population is reported to be somewhere between 40-60%, depending on the source. I use data from Gutiérrez Saxe and Vargas Cullell (2002:284-368) for El Salvador and Nicaragua, which provides a reliable snapshot of the percentage of the population that is indigenous for the time period under analysis. For Guatemala, I use data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de Guatemala (INE), the 1994 national census, and the 1998 Households and Family Survey.
4.4 Examining the Evidence

4.4.1 Party Type, Polarization, and Stability

In this section I examine the data to evaluate how well competing arguments of the causes of volatility explain changes within and across the systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Despite the limitation of a short time frame with which to analyze the different hypotheses, the available data does provide enough information to evaluate the patterns of the last twenty years, with greater confidence in the cross-system comparisons. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 give the distribution of the 6 explanatory variables under consideration, organized by presidential and legislative elections. With this information I figure the explanatory variables and volatility, for both presidential and legislative elections.
### TABLE 4.3: DISTRIBUTION OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volatility</th>
<th>Polarization</th>
<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>ENP</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>UM</th>
<th>% Indigenous</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1999-2004</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>26.98</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2009</td>
<td>15.64</td>
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<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.99</td>
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<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>ENP</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>UM</th>
<th>% Indigenous</th>
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<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>4.75</td>
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<th>Volatility</th>
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<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>ENP</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>UM</th>
<th>% Indigenous</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1996</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>23.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996-2001</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>2001-2006</td>
<td>35.44</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.31</td>
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### TABLE 4.4: DISTRIBUTION OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES, LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Volatility</th>
<th>Polarization</th>
<th>GDP Growth</th>
<th>ENP</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>UM</th>
<th>% Indigenous</th>
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<td><strong>El Salvador</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1991-1994</td>
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<td>27.16</td>
<td>7.2</td>
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<td>1994-1997</td>
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<td>1.83</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala</strong></td>
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<td>1990-94</td>
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<td>1.64</td>
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<td>1999-2003</td>
<td>56.19</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003-2007</td>
<td>34.87</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>23.80</td>
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<td><strong>Nicaragua</strong></td>
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<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>23.69</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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The tables do not include data on the type of parties in the three systems because not enough information is available to quantify the durability of party organizations in these systems. The anecdotal data presented in Chapters Two and Three does provide some support for the argument that certain types of parties, those with durable organizations, will help stabilize the party system. In both El Salvador and Nicaragua the left and right have invested substantial resources into partisan organizations. The level of activity of these organizations includes maintaining offices open throughout the national territory. This characteristic is important because through these offices parties create and sustain links with their constituencies. The organizational reach of these four parties, during and after elections, stands in sharp contrast to the other parties in the systems. Smaller parties have thin organizations. These remain active only in the national capitals and in those municipalities where they control the local government after elections. For this reason, and because of their electoral weight, I refer to the FMLN and ARENA in El Salvador and the FSLN and PLC in Nicaragua as dominant political parties.

In Guatemala, on the other hand, none of the parties in the system have organizations that can compare in their national reach to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran dominant parties. No political party has an organization that remains active across the national territory in a non-electoral year. The left in Guatemala, both the URNG and other progressive parties in the system, have thin organizations that in a non-electoral year exist only in the country’s capital or those municipalities that the party controls. The conservative and centrist parties in the system also have thin organizations that revolve around presidential candidates. Once a party’s presidential candidate wins an election (or is no longer a viable candidate) the party’s national organization diminishes dramatically.
Parties remain active at the legislative level and in the national capital between elections, and any municipalities a party controls, but the organization outside of the capital shrinks until the next election. As Chapter Three showed, unlike their counterparts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the winners in Guatemala have not used their access to the state to build durable organizations.

The type of party that exists in the two systems fits with the argument’s expectation and confirms the broader argument in the literature that parties that create and sustain linkages with society tend to stabilize the party system (Gunther 2005; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Tavits 2008; Lane and Ersson 2007). The systems where the dominant parties in the system have invested in durable organizations that are active across the national territory during electoral and non-electoral years are the more stable party systems. In contrast, in Guatemala the absence of parties that promote linkages with their electorate once the election is over has helped encourage volatility in the party system, with new parties consistently forming to compete for unattached voters.

Figure 4.4 and 4.5 present data on the relationship between volatility and polarization for presidential and legislative periods, respectively. The figures show that the relationship between polarization and volatility, especially when polarization is centrifugal in nature, is in the anticipated direction. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, in both presidential and legislative periods, high levels of polarization have kept electoral volatility low. In El Salvador there is a close fit between the two variables, especially in presidential elections with a close overlap. Similarly, in Nicaragua polarization and volatility are closely related, with high levels of polarization helping to stabilize the party system. Data for the 1990-1996 Nicaraguan legislative period is not available; however,
given the polarized nature of the 1990 election it is reasonable to assume that polarization in this first period was consistent with the following two periods. With high polarization since the transition, volatility remained low from 1990 until the 2006 election. In this election polarization remained high, but against the expectation volatility increased. In Guatemala, polarization also has the anticipated affect in legislative elections. High volatility corresponds with low levels of polarization, although a slight decrease in polarization in the 2003-2007 legislative period does not have a corresponding impact on volatility. In presidential elections, however, the relationship between polarization and volatility is positive, contrary to the expectations from the argument.
Figure 4.4: Polarization and Volatility, Presidential Elections
Figure 4.5: Polarization and Volatility, Legislative Elections
Comparing the impact that polarization has on volatility across the three cases lends support to the argument that lower polarization results in more fluid party systems. In Guatemala, polarization is considerably lower than in the other systems, just as volatility is consistently higher than in either El Salvador or Nicaragua. In addition, high levels of polarization in the other two countries also correspond to lower volatility. With the exception of Nicaragua’s 2006 election, high centrifugal polarization appears to keep volatility down, while a centripetal systems with low polarization, such as Guatemala’s, encourages volatility by diminishing the distances between parties. The cross-system comparison suggests that it might be the nature of polarization, whether it has a centrifugal or centripetal tendency that determines the extent to which polarization will affect electoral volatility.

An interpretation of both findings that durable organizations and centrifugal polarization tend to stabilize party systems, suggests that these two characteristics probably work together. Durable organizations bind citizens to one party while polarization limits citizens’ options of switching support to another party because of the distance between relevant parties. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have used quantitative methods to test the argument that types of party and polarization help or hinder system stability in Latin America and other regions (Madrid 2005; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Gunther 2005; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Roberts n/a).

### 4.4.2 Alternative Hypotheses

Do alternative arguments of what causes volatility provide a better explanation for the pattern of differences and similarities between El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua? I examine four alternative arguments, which include both supply and demand
side explanations of volatility, to evaluate whether an alternative explanation might better account for Guatemala’s high volatility and El Salvador and Nicaragua’s relatively low volatility during similar time periods.

The first is an argument about economic voting that posits that economic performance will drive electoral volatility, as voters punish or reward incumbents. On average, Central America’s economic performance improved marginally during the 1990s moving away from the negative growth rates of the 1980s (Proyecto Estado de la Región 1999). There is some variation across the three post-conflict party systems: economic performance in El Salvador has been slightly stronger (although more unstable) than in Guatemala, which in turn has performed better than the Nicaraguan economy. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 present the relationship between economic growth and electoral volatility for presidential and legislative periods, respectively. The figures show the expected negative relationship between economic growth and volatility for both presidential and legislative elections in Nicaragua, for part of the time series of presidential elections in El Salvador, and for legislative elections in Guatemala. Economic performance predicts volatility in Guatemala’s legislative elections for the full time period, but in presidential elections the relationship breaks down at the end of the time series, which is surprising. Despite poor growth, volatility decreases in the last election. Voters in El Salvador appear to vote along economic lines in the early presidential elections, but this does not last after the first presidential period. Therefore, poor economic performance has not translated to electoral volatility for most of the time series in either presidential or legislative elections in this system.
Figure 4.6: Economic Voting and Volatility, Presidential Elections
Figure 4.7: Economic Voting and Volatility, Legislative Elections
Comparing across the three cases suggests that economic performance is a weak predictor of electoral stability in these countries. There is little variation in economic performance across the three countries when compared to the higher levels of variation in electoral volatility. In addition, higher levels of economic fluctuation in El Salvador have not translated into higher levels of electoral volatility. In comparison, Guatemala’s high volatility is not easily explained by the relatively stable, if poor, economic performance of governments. Overall, there is a weak fit between economic performance and electoral volatility in the three systems, a finding that is supported by previous work on volatility in Latin America (Roberts and Wibbels 1999:582-4; Coppedge 1995: 5-6).

The fragmentation of the party system also has little consistent impact on electoral volatility in these countries. As Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show, the possible exception to this is the Nicaraguan party systems where an increase in the effective number of parties at the end of the time series did have a corresponding affect on volatility. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the impact that party system fragmentation has on volatility is not consistent over time. The relationship works in the expected direction for some time periods in both legislative and presidential elections, but during other periods the number of effective parties has the opposite effect on volatility than the one that the argument outlines. In these instances, fragmentation negatively affects volatility, with volatility increasing as the number of parties decrease.
Figure 4.8: Fragmentation and Volatility, Presidential Elections
Figure 4.9: Fragmentation and Volatility, Legislative Elections
Comparing the impact that fragmentation has across the three systems suggests a stronger relationship between this party system characteristic and volatility. Compared to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems, the Guatemalan system has consistently had a larger number of effective parties and higher volatility in both presidential and legislative elections. The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran systems, on the other hand, have had a smaller number of effective parties since the transition to democracy and lower volatility. Yet there is some variation between these two countries that does not fit well with the expected pattern. In legislative elections, Nicaragua has tended to have a smaller number of effective parties than El Salvador but higher volatility, while for presidential elections the two countries have had low volatility with similar averages, but Nicaragua has had a slightly larger number of parties contesting presidential elections. Overall, fragmentation and volatility have the expected relationship, although the Nicaraguan-Salvadoran comparison raises the question of a possible threshold before which the effect of fragmentation is less clear.

The last two alternative arguments that I evaluate are demand side arguments that posit that society and its social cleavages will shape the party system. In systems where social cleavages are well defined and anchored in the party system, the tendency will be toward the stabilization of electoral competition. Arguments vary about which social cleavages will have this expected effect and how these cleavages are activated (Birnr 2007; Chandra 2004; Gosselin and Tóka 2007).

Figures 4.10 and 4.11 give data on the first measure of class cleavage, union membership, and volatility. The effect that this cleavage has on electoral volatility is weak and not consistent across the three countries. In El Salvador, union membership has
little impact on electoral volatility, while in Guatemala and Nicaragua union membership has the expected negative effect on volatility, at least for some of the electoral periods. In Nicaragua and Guatemala, volatility has increased in both presidential and legislative elections as the percentage of the population that is affiliated with unions has declined. In both countries, however, the degree of change between the two variables suggests a weak relationship between union membership and electoral volatility. Of the three countries, Guatemala has the most stable rates of union membership, yet it is the country with the highest volatility. In comparison, Nicaragua experienced the sharpest drop in union membership rates, dropping 16.8% in less than 10 years. Yet, despite this dramatic decline and change in Nicaraguan society, the system has remained relatively stable with low volatility, since the transition to democracy. The system-comparison confirms the weak relationship between union membership and volatility. For instance, the difference between the percentages of the population affiliated with unions is small in El Salvador and Guatemala. In both countries only a small percentage of citizens are union members, yet El Salvador has a relatively stable party system more in line with Nicaragua’s, while Guatemala has high volatility.
Figure 4.10: Union Membership and Volatility, Presidential Elections
Figure 4.11: Union Membership and Volatility, Legislative Elections
The second measure of class cleavages used to evaluate the relationship between class cleavages and volatility is the percentage of the population that is economically active in blue-collar work. This measure also shows a weak relationship between a class cleavage and volatility for these countries (see Figures 4.12 and 4.13). While the relationship is in the expected negative direction in Nicaragua and in El Salvador—in both systems as the percentage of the population that is engaged in blue-collar work increases volatility decreases, there are slight fluctuations in El Salvador that do not correspond with the system’s low, and stable, volatility. In Guatemala, the percentage of the population that is engaged in blue-collar work only has the expected effect on volatility in presidential elections and only for some of the time series. For certain periods in presidential and legislative elections this measure of class cleavage has a surprising positive effect on volatility. As the percentage of the population that is engaged in blue-collar activities increases, volatility also increases.
Figure 4.12: Economically Active Population and Volatility, Presidential Elections
Figure 4.13: Economically Active Population and Volatility, Legislative Elections
The structuralist argument that class cleavages will help stabilize the system also has little explanatory power in the cross-system comparison. The percentage of the population that is engaged in blue-collar work has been relatively stable across the three countries with only a slight difference between them. This fits the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran volatility patterns, with relatively stable party systems since the transitions. In contrast, a relatively stable percentage of the population that is active in blue-collar sectors cannot explain the fluidity of the Guatemalan party system. This weak relationship between class cleavages and party system stability in the three countries is surprising, given previous work that has consistently found that the presence of well-defined class cleavages tends to stabilize electoral competition. One possible explanation for the lack of congruence with previous analysis might be the relatively small percentage of the population that is economically active in blue-collar work in these countries. It could be the case that for class cleavages to have a significant impact on party system stability, a critical mass is necessary and that none of these countries have reached this threshold.

The second structuralist argument I examine, the presence of an ethnic cleavage, does have the expected relationship with electoral volatility across the three countries. Table 4.3 includes data on the percentage of the population in these countries that is indigenous, while this data provides only a snapshot of this cleavage it is one that is expected to remain relatively stable over time, especially in the narrow time frame under consideration. These data make possible a cross-system comparison that confirms previous findings about the effect that ethnic cleavages will have on party system stability. Madrid (2005) tests this argument for Latin America and finds that the presence
of ethnic cleavages have an effect on electoral volatility. He argues that large indigenous populations tend to increase volatility in the region because most ethnic cleavages have historically not been represented in Latin America’s party systems (11-16). This finding is consistent with the pattern in Central America.

In Guatemala, a high percentage of the population is indigenous, 42.8% in the mid-1990s and 48.6% by the end of the decade. In contrast, both El Salvador and Nicaragua’s percentage of the population that is indigenous is much lower, with less than 10% for each country (see Table 4.3). None of these ethnic cleavages have been incorporated into the party system, but the small size of the indigenous populations in El Salvador and Nicaragua has meant that this cleavage has not had a significant impact on the party system, reflected in the low and stable electoral volatility. Guatemala’s large indigenous population, on the other hand, one without strong party ties (Bastos and Camus 2003, 1996) does affect the stability of this system.

The evaluation of the alternative arguments points to a number of interesting findings. In the within-system comparisons a number of the variables had what appears to be a strong relationship with volatility, but few had a consistent relationship across time or systems, although the short time series makes this a tentative conclusion. For instance, while economic performance seems to explain volatility in Nicaragua, it has the expected effect in Guatemala for only a small period of time in legislative elections and does not

223 The increase in the percentage of indigenous population in Guatemala is probably due in large part to an increase in the population that is willing to self-identify as indigenous rather than the birth rate.

224 In Nicaragua, regional elections in the Caribbean coast have incorporated the indigenous and Afro-Caribbean populations into a regional party system. In this system, a number of relevant ethnic regional parties have formed, although the two dominant national parties are still important actors in these elections and usually from electoral alliances with the regional ethnic parties.
appear to drive the vote in El Salvador. Similarly, while fragmentation explains volatility in Nicaragua, it has little impact on stability in El Salvador and in some periods appears to have a surprisingly negative relationship in Guatemala, with fragmentation increasing while volatility decreases. Levels of change also had a small effect on volatility. For example, the relationship between one of the class cleavage measures, union membership, was in the expected direction for Nicaragua, but the sharp drop in percentage of the population that belongs to a union had only a slight impact on volatility.

In the cross-system comparisons, the variables examined were also limited in their ability to explain the difference in volatility across the three systems. Of the alternative arguments examined, ethnic cleavages had the strongest and most consistent relationship with volatility for this set of countries. This finding is consistent with the theoretical expectations and previous work on the effect that unrepresented ethnic cleavages have on system stability. While some of the variables, such as fragmentation and class cleavages, corresponded with volatility, the differences across countries were less dramatic than variation on volatility. For example, both union membership and percentage of the population active in blue-collar sectors point to a relatively stable class cleavage in Guatemala, one that does not vary overmuch from the other two countries. This lack of variation across systems cannot account for the much higher degree of fluidity in Guatemala’s party system. Similarly, the difference in the degree of system fragmentation explains the differences between Guatemala’s high volatility and the more stable party systems of El Salvador and Nicaragua. The argument is less consistent in that it cannot explain the differences between El Salvador and Nicaragua.
4.5 Founding Patterns and Stability

This chapter has analyzed the extent to which two party system characteristics that I trace back to the transition process explain the different levels of institutionalization in the three post-conflict party systems of Central America. The results of the comparisons suggest that previous arguments about the impact of party type and polarization, both characteristics that emerged as a consequence of the transition dynamics, hold for the three Central American countries. According to the argument outlined, certain party types, in these systems those with durable organizations, work to build a loyal constituency to compete in elections. Alternatively, party types that avoid thick organizations and instead choose an electoral strategy that relies on media campaigns have weak links with their constituencies, encouraging volatility. The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems have dominant parties that have a durable organization; while in Guatemala, parties across the spectrum have a thin organization. I posit that this characteristic helps explain the difference in volatility across the three systems.225

It is also the case, not coincidently as previous chapters have argued, that in these three party systems, those that have parties with durable organizations are also the ones with a high degree of polarization, which has a strong centrifugal tendency. This is the type of systems we can find in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Low polarization in Guatemala, one the other hand, has a centripetal tendency and overlaps with parties that

225 The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems also include smaller parties that have thin organizations, suggesting that it is not necessary that all of the parties in the system have the type of organization that foster voter loyalty. It is more likely that what is important is only the type of organization that relevant parties have.
favor thinner organizations. The chapter’s analysis also found a strong relationship between polarization and volatility in the three systems. This overlap between party type and polarization suggests that there are two important effects taking place at the same time in these countries. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, party type encourages citizens to remain loyal to one party while a polarized system discourages citizens from switching their support to another party, especially when the system has a centrifugal tendency that increases the distances between relevant options. The two findings support the theory that volatility is driven by supply-side variables, since both these characteristics are the result of particular elite strategies adopted during the transition and sustained in the post-transition period because of their electoral benefits.

The other findings in this chapter show that most other theories of electoral volatility fall short of providing a compelling explanation of the variance in volatility across the three systems. Economic voting and class cleavage measures (union membership and economically active population in blue-collar work) have a weak relationship with volatility. Citizens in these three countries do not appear to be voting along economic lines or their class interests. For instance, in El Salvador poor economic performance has not affected the stability of the party system, while relatively stable economic performance in Guatemala does not easily explain the fluidity of the country’s party system. Similarly, the percentage of the population that is registered with unions or that performs blue-collar work, cannot account for the pattern of similarities and differences across the three systems.

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226 One possibility that the type of analysis in this chapter could not test, but might help explain how party type and polarization overlap is that some citizens might be more susceptible to influence from one of these characteristics than the other.
Fragmentation appears to have a stronger relationship with volatility in the three countries, although the comparison between El Salvador and Nicaragua was less clear than the comparison between these two systems and the Guatemalan one. This finding is somewhat tempered, however, by the argument put forth in Chapters Two and Three that the dominant parties in El Salvador and Nicaragua have used their positions in power and monopoly of resources to discourage new party entries. It could be the case that it is this aspect of power reproduction that the political elite has engaged in since the transitions that is behind the low levels of fragmentation in the two systems and its subsequent link to volatility.

The alternative argument that has the strongest overlap with volatility, in the expected direction, is the second structuralist argument, that ethnic cleavages that are not represented by the party system encourage volatility. Only Guatemala has a significant percentage of the population that is indigenous and has not been incorporated into the party system. Madrid (2005) argues that the presence of this politically unattached ethnic cleavage encourages volatility because parties from one election to the next compete for the electoral support of this constituency. Given that elite decisions are expected to have an impact on ethnic mobilization (Chandra 2004; Horowitz 1985), a brief examination of the question of why the political elite in Guatemala has not incorporated this ethnic cleavage into the party system can help explain the country’s inchoate party system.

One of the reasons behind the absence of an indigenous party in Guatemala is the heterogeneity of this cleavage, with important divisions over what goals the community should pursue (human and political rights or cultural rights) and how it should pursue them (Bastos and Camus 1996, 2003). The question of why the indigenous communities
do not have stable ties to one (or more) political party also has part of its answer in the heterogeneity of the cleavage. I posit that elite strategies have also played a role in maintaining this cleavage outside of the party system.

In Chapter Two, I noted that although the armed opposition, the URNG, had formed important ties with the indigenous communities in the interior, these ties were to a large extent severed by the state’s counterinsurgency strategy of the early 1980s under the leadership of Gen. Ríos Montt (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999).\textsuperscript{227} During the transition, the URNG and the international community championed issues directly related to the indigenous population and included them in the negotiating agenda. This presented the URNG with an opportunity to rebuild its ties with the indigenous communities and help it create a “peace” constituency that could have translated into long-term electoral support for the new party, just as organizing around the conflict dimension has served the dominant parties of the other two systems. The URNG’s transition strategy, however, did not turn to its electoral needs until late in the transition process. It did not begin to organize for electoral purposes or to mobilize support for the election until late into its first electoral process (toward the end of 1999). This strategy also meant that the new party, in the lead up to the 1999 Referendum, which took place early in the year, did little to mobilize the population in support of the reforms (including indigenous issues) that it had helped to negotiate. I posit that this was a wasted opportunity for the URNG, an opportunity it could have used to build a loyal constituency and electoral support for the electoral process that was to take place later

\textsuperscript{227} The state’s counterinsurgency strategy deliberately targeted the indigenous community. This targeting took various forms, including massacres, forced relocations, and forced recruitments (Brockett 2005; Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico 1999).
that same year. After this moment, with the defeat of the Referendum and the URNG’s minority status after its first election, the newly mobilized indigenous communities have had little incentive to forge a strong alliance with a weak left. Instead, this ethnic cleavage has negotiated with the parties in power to promote its political and cultural agenda.228

Centrist and conservative parties, on the other hand, have little incentive to mobilize along indigenous lines. Thus far, these parties have appealed to the median voter rather than risk becoming an ethnic party in fear of alienating over half of the population for a constituency that has a lower rate of participation (Lehoucq and Wall 2004). In addition, the fears that indigenous demands for land redistribution or the recognition of ethnic differences trigger among a majority of the non-indigenous population, and more importantly the country’s elite, I posit stop centrist and conservative parties from mobilizing a party around an ethnic cleavage. For electoral purposes politicians do set out to secure the support of this cleavage every four years, but the political elite has to balance this outreach with their need for resources from the economic elite, for the financing of electoral campaigns. Those parties that have done well in the interior of the country compared to the capital (the FRG and UNE) have had more success in forging this electoral connection with the indigenous community. Once in power, however, neither party has become a pro-indigenous party that we can say represents indigenous interests, another reason that has kept the indigenous community

228 The left and indigenous communities often cooperate, but indigenous leaders need to secure the support of other political parties in the pursuit of their agendas. Other political parties also seek out indigenous leaders, particularly as the electoral campaign begins.
from forming strong linkages to any one party and supporting it from one election to the next.

4.6 Conclusion

Converse (1969) argued that party systems would become stable over time as citizens formed attachments to parties. Since Converse published this influential article, a number of studies have challenged his theory noting that in older systems there has been a rise in volatility and in older systems that time is not positively correlated with system stability (Drummond 2006; Pedersen 1983; Pedersen 1979; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000) (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Bielasiak 2002; Biezen 2005). In the three new party systems that I analyze time has had little effect on stability.

The party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua formed during the same period of time. In the three countries, the transition process, which set the foundation of the party systems, began in the mid 1980s, and free and fair elections were first held in each country within a short period of time from each other (1982 in El Salvador, 1984 in Guatemala and Nicaragua). Despite the closeness in the age of the party systems, the three systems vary across a number of important traits, including stability. Both the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems have been relatively stable in the last twenty years, while Guatemala’s system has sustained high volatility for the same period of time.

A second important finding from the literature on new party systems is that these systems tend to have much higher volatility than older ones (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006; Bielasiak 2002; Bogaards 2004; Toka 1997; Birch 2003). This tendency can be
seen in Guatemala’s party system, which has high volatility even in comparison to other new systems. The party systems of El Salvador and Nicaragua, while more stable are on the high end of volatility scores compared with other world regions. Mainwaring and Zoco (2007:166-71) explain this variance between new and older party systems by arguing that when a democracy was born has an important effect on party system stability because the roles that parties in new systems perform and how they perform them differs. In a similar vein, Tavits (2008) argues that in new party systems electoral volatility follows from the choices that elites make. To understand the causes of stabilization we therefore need to analyze the “incentive structures of elites that encourage or discourage stability on their party” (549). Reich’s (2004:236) argument follows a parallel logic, positing that understanding how and why new systems assume their long-term characteristics rests on elite decisions and the initial configuration of party blocs.

I use these three arguments to propose an explanation of the causes of stability in the new party systems of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and what explains the differences between them. I posit that the type of party that the elite chose to build during the transition to compete in elections and the extent to which the political elite has continued to benefit from high levels of polarization in the system have a determining effect on the stability of the party system. Where parties have felt the need to build durable organizations to compete in elections, partisan competition has been stable. In addition, because conservative forces have an incentive to build this type of party only when a leftist victory is viable, systems with durable organizations are also highly polarized, with competition organized around the two dominant parties in the system, which are opposite ends of the ideological spectrum.
In party systems where the conservative political elite does not need to build a durable organization and can rely on media campaigns to reach voters, the citizenship will not develop loyalty to any one party, encouraging volatility as parties vie for voters in each election. In addition, the lack of attachment to established parties is a strong signal to the political elite that new parties (with the right resources) have a high probability of performing well in elections and stand a good chance of doing as well as, if not better than, older parties (Bielasiak 2002; Cox 1997; Mair 1997; Reich 2004; Tavits 2008).

These characteristics of the party systems can be traced back to the transition process, which led to party system formation along two distinct developmental paths. Elite incentives and opportunities during the transition determined the sequence that the elite follow and the extent to which the political elite create the type of parties that are more conductive to building linkages and loyalties among their constituencies. In addition, the incentives and opportunities of the political elite, as the left and right reacted to each other’s transition strategies, influenced the level of polarization in the party systems and the extent to which it is centrifugal or centripetal.

The two characteristics continue to be relevant and to help stabilize the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party system long after the resolution of the transitions because the political elite continues to benefit from the patterns established during the transition. Consequently, the political elite (both from the right and the left) uses its

229 Reich (2004) distinguishes four clusters of party system, using a different set of criteria to distinguish them: the effective number of parties, support for minor parties, and the vote share of the initially largest party (244), although he does not develop an argument about what determines the path that a party system will follow.
access to power to perpetuate its position in the party system, using institutional reforms, or the absence of reforms, and its monopoly over resources to maintain the *status quo*. In addition, the dominant parties in both El Salvador and Nicaragua continue to promote the perception that the relevant choice in elections is between the left and the right. The political elite limits the options that citizens have on election day, by framing electoral choices in centrifugal terms. At the system level this has the effect of encouraging stabilization. As this argument outlines, politicians, given the opportunities available to them and their perception of threat from alternative winners, will seek to build the type of party that is more likely to win elections. This decision has wide ranging implications for the party system that will form in the post-transition period, including its level of institutionalization. In these three systems, as in other new democracies, party system stability (and instability) has been the result of elite behavior (Tavits 2008:538).

The literature has stressed the importance of party system institutionalization for the consolidation and quality of democracy, although it has also noted that this relationship is not linear (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Powell 1982; Thames and Robbins 2007; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Gunther 2005; Bogaards 2008; Drummond 2006; Stockton 2001; Bielasiak 2002; Diamond 1988; Kitschelt et al. 1999). Similarly, the literature has noted the potential downfalls that polarization can have for democracy, although the presence of choices are important if citizens’ political decisions are to be meaningful (Linz 1978; Sartori 1976; Valenzuela 1978; Sani and Sartori 1983; Dalton and Tanaka 2007; Powell 1982).

In the Guatemalan party system some of the problems of volatile party systems that the literature makes reference to are evident (Sánchez 2008; Azpuru 2005, 2008). As
was noted above, Guatemala ranks in last place in Levine and Molina’s (2007:22) Quality of Democracy Index, with a score of 56.4, well below the region’s average of 75. Similarly, Guatemala has the lowest score in Hagopian’s (2005: Table 11.3, p.334) index of satisfaction with democracy between 2000 and 2004, with a score of 34. The region’s average in comparison is 49 and the closest countries to Guatemala are Paraguay and Ecuador with a score of 38.

These low scores are at least partially explained by Guatemala’s inchoate party system. Of the three systems that I analyze, Guatemala is the only one where new parties can enter the political arena and compete successfully.\textsuperscript{230} When this characteristic is found at an extreme it can negatively affect citizens’ choice, government policy, and the ability to hold government officials accountable because of the lack of continuity in the party system. It is also possible that the high levels of fluidity in the system and the complexity it introduces might be depressing participation, which between 1985 and 2007 averaged 47.73\% for presidential elections and 49.82\% for legislative elections.\textsuperscript{231}

Systems with highly volatility also create the possibility that outsiders, politicians without ties to the system, will come to power and further undermine the party system and other institutions. For instance, although Jorge Serrano was not an outsider in the sense that he had held previous (nonelected) positions and ran for president in the 1985 election, Serrano was elected to power with one of the weakest parties that had formed in

\textsuperscript{230} The clear exception can be found in Nicaragua with the ALN, which was discussed in Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{231} Turnout is considerably lower if it is calculated against the voting age population, as opposed to registered voters, dropping almost 10\%. For the same time period turnout in presidential elections is 39.47\% and for legislative elections 37.36\% (calculated using data from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) http://www.idea.int/vt/view_data.cfm).
the system, the Movimiento de Acción Solidaria (MAS). Without a strong party in the legislature, Serrano tried to undertake a presidential coup in 1993. Ultimately this move was unsuccessful, but the crisis demonstrates some of the potential perils of weak parties (Cameron 1998). Presidents since then have not resorted to similar dramatic strategies, but weak parties in the legislature and a lack of majorities often leads to unstable coalitions in Guatemala, which negatively affect governability (Sánchez 2008; Azpuru 2005, 2008). The weak ties that citizens have with parties can also be found in the relationship between politicians and parties, adding to the confusion and complexity of the system. For example, between January 2004 and June 2007, 43% of legislators switched parties (ASIES 2007: Table 2, p13).

While the instability of Guatemala’s party system leads to the conclusion that inchoate party systems are detrimental to a country’s quality of democracy, the argument that extreme levels of stability and polarization also have a negative impact on the quality of democracy reflects a potentially problematic position for the two other systems. It is not clear what the cut-off points are beyond which stability and polarization become detrimental. Have the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems become too stable? Are they too polarized and is polarization too centrifugal? Both countries score higher in the Levine and Molina Index of the Quality of Democracy and also rank higher in Hagopian’s index of citizens’ perception. If we examine other indicators of legitimacy, however, the consequences of stability coupled with polarization are less clear. For instance, participation has been consistently low in El Salvador since the transitions, although in recent years participation has increased slightly. The country’s average, while above Guatemala’s, is still low with 53.52% of registered voters participating in
presidential elections between 1989 and 2009 and 54.7% in legislative elections between 1988 and 2009. In Nicaragua, participation has always been higher, although in the last election participation dropped below 75%, the average for 1984 to 2006, with only 66% of registered voters participated in the 2006 election, the lowest turnout since the 1984 election.

What effects do differences across party systems have for democracy? Does the variation across the three post-conflict Central American countries that I have highlighted in previous chapters and that I argue have affected the level of stability of these systems have consequences for the quality of democracy and resilience of democracy of these new democracies? The next chapter analysis these questions, examining the potential impact that party system characteristics, stability and polarization, have on citizens and democracy.
CHAPTER 5:
PARTY SYSTEMS, CITIZENS, AND TURNOUT

5.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have highlighted the differences between the three post-conflict party systems of Central America, drawing attention to two particular party system characteristics: polarization and electoral volatility. The chapters argued that one can best explain these party system differences by examining the events that took place during the transition process: a sequence of decisions taken by four transition actors determined the developmental path of the three party systems. In this chapter, I switch the focus from explaining party system formation to asking whether these differences across party systems have wider implications for democratic regimes. Do the stable, but polarized, party systems of El Salvador and Nicaragua and the volatile but more moderate party system of Guatemala have positive or negative consequences for democracy and the citizens in these countries? How do these party system traits affect the linkages between parties and citizens in a democracy?

In the literature, the quality, and even endurance of democracy has often been tied to the type of party system in place. As I noted in Chapter Four, a number of studies have argued that the degree to which a party system is institutionalized affects the democratic regime (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Madrid 2005; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Remmer 1991; Gunther 2005; Kuenzi and Lambright 2001; Bogaards 2008; Manning 2005;
Drummond 2006; Stockton 2001; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bielasiak 2002; Diamond 1988; Kitschelt et al. 1999). In this chapter, I explore the link between party systems and democracy by examining the impact that two party system traits, polarization and stability, have on the probability that citizens will participate in the political process.

The central role that parties play in a democracy is the starting point for my argument. Given the functions that political parties perform as intermediaries between citizens and their government and citizens and the state, I expect that party system characteristics do significantly impact how citizens interact with the regime. To make this argument, I focus on whether party systems affect the extent to which citizens vote.

There are a number of ways in which citizens can participate and be involved in politics; I examine citizens’ participation in a key activity that is at the core of a democracy: elections. Voting is a critical component of the democratic process and one that is closely linked to the legitimacy of a democracy (Anduiza Perea 2002; Lijphart 1997; Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes 1999; Aldrich 1993). In addition, at least in principle, voting is available to all citizens in a democracy and is also one of the few, perhaps the only, form of political participation that guarantees all citizens the same influence and access (Rokkan 1962). Yet despite the importance of voting, not all citizens choose to, or are able to, exercise this right. In both newer and older democracies, there is variation in the rates of voter turnout. Table 5.1 presents the average turnout rates for 18 Latin American countries for both presidential and legislative elections, using voting age population and the most recent democratic period. This aggregate measure of turnout provides a picture of the variation that can be found in the region, from Uruguay’s high turnout rate to Guatemala’s low levels of average turnout for a similar time period.
TABLE 5.1:
VOTER TURNOUT IN LATIN AMERICA, LEGISLATIVE AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Elections</th>
<th>Presidential Elections</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina (1983-2007)</td>
<td>78.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil (1986-2006)</td>
<td>76.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua (1990-2006)</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (1989-2005)</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela (1958-2005)</td>
<td>75.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia (1985-2005)</td>
<td>60.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia (1958-2006)</td>
<td>40.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin America</strong></td>
<td><strong>64.41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


NOTES: 1) Turnout is measure with the percentage of the voting age population and total votes, unless unavailable.

2) A Polity score of 2 is used to choose the first election. For some countries, data was only available after the country received this score.

3) For presidential elections, when there was a runoff election only turnout for the first election is included.

4) (1) The 2001 election is not included.

5) (2) The 2000 election is not included.

6) (3) The 2009 general election is not included.
Low turnout rates are worrisome for a number of reasons, including the potential implication that it can have for the legitimacy of the democratic process, signaling the apathy and disaffection of citizens. In new democratic regimes, low voter turnout is also potentially dangerous for the continual stability of the regime in that a disengagement from the system that low levels of participation signal might make citizens more vulnerable to the appeals of political entrepreneurs with weak democratic commitments.232 In Latin America, despite a number of similarities across the countries, there are significant differences in the numbers of citizens that participate in elections. What factors explain these cross-system differences?

There are a number of explanations in the literature, which has devoted considerable attention to the question of voter turnout. Some scholars have emphasized individuals’ sociodemographic characteristics (Rosenstone 1982; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993) and cultural influences (Inglehart 1990; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Almond and Verba 1963) to explain turnout. Other studies have argued that institutional factors (Jackman 1987; Pérez-Liñán 2001; Powell 1986, 1982; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), the characteristics of elections, such as the level of salience and competitiveness (Pérez-Liñán 2001; Franklin 1996), and aggregate socioeconomic variables (Filer, Kenny, and Morton 1993; Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004; Radcliff 1992) explain voter turnout across countries. A number of studies have also highlighted the importance of political parties and party systems for turnout (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Powell

\[\text{232 Colomer (2006) presents an interesting argument that ties regime stability in Latin America to the rules regulating suffrage, arguing that abrupt changes in who is allowed to vote have had a negative impact of the stability of the regime.}\]
I follow this last set of arguments and posit that some party system characteristics are more likely to encourage higher levels of political participation (voter turnout) while others will have the opposite effect, suppressing participation and causing citizens to disengage from politics. From the previous chapters we know that elite decisions affect party system characteristics such as volatility and polarization. These characteristics, in turn, help set the tone for how parties will conduct and frame politics in a democracy, as well as influence the extent to which citizens have ties to parties and are anchored in the system. In seeking election to office (or reelection) and promoting policy, parties interact with society through various means, organizations, the media, etc., to frame the issues in such ways as to promote favorable outcomes and position themselves in comparison to their political allies or rivals in the party system. Through these interactions, party systems set the tone of the political arena, including the tone of political competition, the context within which system participants frame politics and determine which are the salient issues. Party systems define the stage in which citizens process information and interact with the state and government. Because of these central roles that parties perform in organizing democratic politics, I posit that inter-party relations set the tone for the political system. The characteristics of the party system should therefore influence citizens’ political participation in a democracy.

Drawing on the previous chapters, I examine what role the two characteristics that I used to highlight the differences between El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua have on voter turnout. I argue that while polarization will tend to increase political
participation, stability has a curvilinear relationship with turnout, so that at the extremes it will tend to suppress participation. To test these hypotheses I compiled a data set that includes 16 Latin American countries, expanding my set of cases. The database includes individual level indicators from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) 2004 and 2006 surveys and system level indicators including volatility scores and a measure of polarization. I adopt this approach, rather than just examining what impact these two party system characteristics have on the countries that have been the focus of the dissertation thus far for two important reasons. First, by increasing the countries to be analyzed I can use multivariate analysis to examine the relationship between party system characteristics and voter turnout. In addition, while previous chapters have argued that the three post-conflict cases of Central America challenge a number of theories of party system formation, there is no theoretical reason to expect that any effect that polarization and stability might have on voter turnout is limited to these three countries or that it will have a different effect on El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua than it might in any other country in Latin America or other world regions.  

There are several reasons for choosing to examine how party systems affect citizens’ decision to participate in Latin America. The countries of the region share a number of system level characteristics that have been emphasized in the literature as having an important effect on citizens’ participation and support for democracy, including type of government, and historical and cultural characteristics. There are also significant differences across the post-1978 party systems of Latin America (Coppedge  

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233 I limit my analysis to the Latin American region because of data availability, in particular because of scarcity of data in measuring polarization.
introducing variation across the system level variables that I am interested in testing. Lastly, by working with the LAPOP surveys, I could ensure that the three countries I have closely examined in the previous chapters would be included in the study.

5.1.1 Why Study Citizens, Voting, and Party Systems?

Participating in the democratic process is an important manifestation of regime support (Booth and Seligson 2009) and plays an important role in the stability of democracy, anchoring citizens to the regime, and providing an opportunity for within-system participation. Elections also provide a mechanism for the representation of citizen interests and give citizens the opportunity to hold governments accountable for their actions. In other words, elections continue to be the “primary basis of public influence in representative democracies” (Dalton 1996: 143).

For the same reason abstention is problematic, since it leaves some citizens outside of this important democratic process. Low levels of voter turnout throw into question the premise that through elections all citizens are represented equally in the democratic process, unlike other forms of participation where access to networks and resources gives some a distinct advantage in influencing political outcomes. Studies have shown that who is left out of the process is not random, so that voters and nonvoters are not drawn from the same group. In particular, the socioeconomic characteristics of individuals, such as education (closely correlated with income), and the socio-economic environment are strong predictors of turnout (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Lijphart 1997; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998). This finding, coupled with work that has shown that the political elite is more likely to listen to voters (Hicks and
Swank 1992; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; Highton and Wolfinger 2001) are problematic for Latin America, a region that has historically struggled with high levels of inequality. If turnout is in large part driven by socio-economic factors and low turnout also affects the type of governments that come to power, who they listen to and therefore their government policies and priorities, then the low levels of voter turnout found in Latin America are troubling. If low turnout weakness the representative links between citizens and government and reflects citizen discontent, low turnout can threaten the stability of the democratic regimes of the region, many of which are struggling with significant challenges (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005). In systems where citizens are disengaged from the system, it is likely that they will be more likely to be persuaded by the rhetoric of populist leaders that are more likely to throw into question the democratic process.

For all these reasons, it is important to understand what drives participation. We know that individual level variables play a large role in determining who will vote, but the literature has also noted the importance that system level factors can have in encouraging (or discouraging) citizens’ participation on election day. If certain institutional arrangements are likely to increase participation, such as party system characteristics, it is important to know what might lead to higher levels of participation and how these system level characteristics affect voter turnout.

The question of whether differences across party systems matter for voter turnout is important for understanding the mechanisms that link party systems, citizens, and democracy. By undertaking this study this chapter seeks to contribute to the scholarship on political participation, new democracies, and party systems by analyzing what
consequences party systems traits have for democracy. It explores possible connections between two-system level characteristics (polarization and volatility) and citizens’ level of participation in democratic politics. If higher levels of citizen participation are likely to contribute to the stability of the regime by encouraging within-system forms of participation and a stronger linkage between citizens and the regime, then it is important to know if party systems can promote participation.

This chapter also makes a contribution by linking the literature on participation, which has tended to give less attention to party system characteristics such as polarization and in particular electoral stability, and the party system literature that often lacks explicit explanations of how party system characteristics affect democracy. For new democracies, including the three post-conflict Central American democracies, how party systems and citizens are linked is an important question that can affect the stability and quality of the new democratic regimes, perhaps even their survivability, if low participation, as a measure of citizens’ dissatisfaction, makes citizens more vulnerable to anti-democratic leaders.234

The chapter also contributes to the literature by analyzing the effect that party system characteristics have on individuals in an analysis that takes into account factors at both levels. This approach follows a growing literature that argues that explanations of individual level beliefs and actions require that the two levels of influence be included in the analysis to ensure that we avoid making erroneous inferences (the ecological

234 For an argument about why turnout does not matter because differences between voters and nonvoters are slight as is the impact that they have, at least in Europe, see Rosema (2006). She also makes the argument that low turnout might be a blessing in disguise if better informed citizens are the ones that are participating.

The chapter is divided into five sections. In the following section I present my argument about how I expect the two party system characteristics to affect citizens’ decision to participate in the regime. Section Three outlines the hypotheses, measurement, and methods I employ in the analyses. Section Four presents the results of the statistical analysis, and Section Five discusses the findings, including how the findings of the statistical analysis fit in with the patterns found in the three post-conflict Central American countries. The Conclusion returns to the central question of what consequences party system characteristics have for democracy and citizens, discussing potential trade-offs between polarization and stability for party systems and democracy.

5.2 Party Systems and Deciding To Vote

The question of why citizens decide to vote has received considerable attention in the literature on political participation. These studies have made valuable contributions to our understanding of the individual and system level characteristics that best explain voter turnout. At the individual level, studies have noted the importance that socioeconomic status (SES) has on turnout, but have also drawn attention to other factors, such as what benefits citizens receive from the act of voting and how beliefs and religion affect voting (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Brady and Ansolabehere 1989; Mattes and Gouws 1998; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Blais, Massicotte, and Dobrzynska 2003; Leighley and Nagler
A second group of studies has highlighted the importance that the environmental setting, system level characteristics, has on voting. In particular, these studies have emphasized the impact institutions and how macroeconomic influences affect turnout at the aggregate level (Powell 1980; Pérez-Liñán 2001; Jackman 1987; Powell 1982; Powell and Whitten 1993; Aguilar and Pack 2000; Endersby and Kriekhaus 2008; Radcliff 1992; Lewis-Beck 1988; Franklin 1996; Anduiza Perea 2002; van Egmond, De Graaf, and van der Eijk 1998).

A number of important studies have highlighted the role that party systems play in voter turnout. They have noted a number of ways in which political parties influence turnout, arguing that mobilize citizens for electoral purposes and through partisan identification, determine the supply of parties that is available from which citizens can choose, and through the competitiveness of elections (Powell 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Powell 1982; Aldrich 1993; Crepaz 1990; Budge and Farlie 1976; Kostadinova 2003; Gray and Caul 2000; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Powell 1986). This chapter also argues that party system characteristics affect voter turnout because of the prominent role that political parties have in democracies, from mobilizing citizens to setting the tone of politics and framing salient issues.

Even before citizens decide to vote or abstain from voting they face a particular political context that is shaped in large part by the party system. Party systems help to create the political environment within which competition takes place and determine how politics are framed, deciding which are the salient political dimensions. During elections, political parties are also directly interested in securing a favorable outcome and ensuring
that at least their supporters participate in the electoral process. For these reasons, parties are at the center of the mobilization of citizens during elections (Pérez-Liñán 2001; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Powell 1982). Parties also provide citizens with information short cuts, cues that facilitate the decision-making process for citizens during elections, lowering the costs of voting (Hinich and Munger 1994; Downs 1957). In the absence of parties that perform these functions, citizens must make political decisions in a system that is more complex and harder to navigate. For these reasons, I expect both electoral volatility and party system polarization to have a significant impact in shaping the context within which citizens must decide whether to vote or abstain on election day. In the following section I outline in greater detail how I expect stability and turnout will affect voter turnout.

5.2.1 Electoral Stability

H1: Moderate electoral stability will increase voter turnout, while high electoral stability and high volatility will suppress turnout.

Numerous studies have taken electoral stability, or its absence, as the dependent variable; no studies have examined what impact this system characteristic has on voter turnout. Chapter Four discusses some of the possible negative repercussions that party system instability can have for democracy. In inchoate systems, citizens cannot rely on parties to provide information short cuts, increasing the cost of voting and potentially suppressing turnout. I posit that volatility has a curvilinear relationship with turnout because it affects the extent to which parties provide information cues or short-cuts to voters, facilitating citizens’ decision-making process and lowering the costs of voting.
(Downs 1957; Hinich and Munger 1994; Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Volatility increases the complexity of the system, so that in systems with high volatility, citizens have a harder time knowing which parties to hold accountable for government performance, especially when the same politicians repeatedly switch party labels. Inchoate party systems also have weaker links with society, which means that there is likely to be less mobilization of voters by political parties. I expect moderately stable party systems to have a positive effect on voter turnout. Citizens face less uncertainty and complexity in these systems, lowering the costs of participating and creating clearer lines of accountability. Political parties in these systems are also more likely to have linkages with citizens that they can use to mobilize them for elections, encouraging higher participation. At higher levels, however, stability is likely to suppress turnout. When little changes after an election, citizens will have few incentives to participate in the electoral process.

5.2.2 Polarization

H$_2$: In polarized party systems, citizens should have a higher rate of participation.

The literature on party systems has noted the connection between polarization and democracy. Similar to party system instability, extreme levels of polarization have been linked to regime instability (Linz 1978; Sartori 1976; Valenzuela 1978; Sani and Sartori 1983; Valenzuela 1997; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005). At the individual level, however, scholars have made the argument that for citizens, the availability of choices, including their range, are important and influence their decisions to vote or abstain (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Crepaz 1990; Dalton and Tanaka 2007; Gray and Caul 2000;
Kostadinova 2003). The presence in the party system of parties with particular ideologies has also been linked to turnout (Pacek and Radcliff 1995; Radcliff 1992) and even the stability and survival of democracy (Gibson 1996; Middlebrook 2000; Roberts and Monaco 2006).

I expect polarization to affect voter turnout because the choices available to voters influence citizens’ decisions to vote or abstain (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Crepaz 1990; Gray and Caul 2000; Kostadinova 2003). Crepaz (1990), in an aggregate study of voter turnout, found that the greater the range of political expressions available to citizens, the more likely it was that a higher percentage of citizens would decide to vote. I also expect that higher levels of party system polarization, especially if it has a centrifugal trend, increases the probability that citizens will participate in the electoral process because in these systems the stakes of outcomes are higher. By raising the stakes, interests in politics increases and should lower the cost of voting by providing citizens with clear information on who the relevant actors are and what programs these actors represent. In addition, as I argued in previous chapters, polarization also raises the stake of outcomes for the political elite. One consequence is that the political elite will tend to build linkages with society, which should encourage participation. In these systems, during elections, the political elite has a strong incentive to engage in voter mobilization to ensure a favorable electoral result. In Milbraith and Goel’s (1977) terms, polarization serves as a motivational factor for voting.

The first two hypotheses outline my argument about how I expect the two party system characteristics to affect citizen participation in the democratic process. These hypotheses are connected to the arguments of previous chapters in two important ways.
First, there is the expectation that the political elite plays an important role in shaping politics, in this case citizen participation in the electoral process, and second, for the three post-conflict Central American cases, there is continuity in that the two hypotheses point to the impact that transition dynamics have had on the three post-conflict countries.

In the next section, I present an explanation for how I measured the variables for the multivariate analysis, including the control variables I draw from the existing literature. I also discuss the logit model I use to examine the relationship between party systems and the probability that citizens will participate in the regime.

5.3 Measurement and Methodology

To test whether party system characteristics affect citizens’ political participation, I compiled a dataset that includes individual and system level indicators. The main sources of data are LAPOP surveys from the 2004 and 2006 waves, and the Elites Parlamentarias de América Latina (PELA) project from the project’s third wave, which covers legislatures from 2000 to 2010.\(^{235}\) The database includes 29,530 respondents from sixteen Latin American countries, although due to the availability of data not all countries were included in every model that was tested.\(^{236}\) The average sample size for LAPOP for the sixteen countries is 1,865 respondents per country.

\(^{235}\) Most of the LAPOP surveys I use are from the 2004 surveys, rather than the more recent waves of 2006 and 2008, to ensure that there would be an overlap with the data from the PELA surveys, which I use to measure party system polarization.

\(^{236}\) For a complete list of which countries are included for what variables and which survey questions were used see the Appendix.
5.3.1 The Dependent Variables: Turnout

There are a number of possible approaches to measuring voter turnout, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. At the aggregate level, scholars have for the most part used the percentage of the vote cast over the total voting age population. In some cases, the comparison is made only with those individuals who are registered to vote. As I am interested in exploring the influence that party system characteristics have on citizens’ decision to vote, I use a self-reported measure of turnout. There are some challenges in using a self-reported measure of turnout, mainly due to the question of the validity of responses (Karp and Brockington 2005), but the benefits of including both individual and system level characteristics make it a useful measure for the purposes of this study.

Data from the LAPOP project make it possible to use this measure of turnout across sixteen Latin American countries for presidential elections. In most countries respondents were given two choices, whether they voted or did not vote in the past presidential election. In a few countries, respondents were also presented with other options: whether they were minors and thus ineligible to vote, whether they were registered to vote but did not vote, or whether they were not registered to vote. To facilitate comparability, I created a dichotomous variable of voter turnout that included

\[\text{(footnote:} I focused on presidential elections mainly because of data constraints; the inclusion of the question on legislative voting varied considerably in terms of when it was included and how it was coded, so that it was not always possible to ascertain when an individual had not voted and when she had not answered the question. As a result, using the rate of participation in legislative elections meant that only seven countries would have been included in the analysis, dropping the number of cases at the second level of analysis considerably.\text{)}}\]
all of the sixteen countries, collapsing those who had responded that they were not registered into the “did not” vote category and excluding minors from the analysis.

5.3.2 The Independent Variables: Polarization and Stability

The two independent variables that I am interested in testing are polarization and stability. There is some debate in the literature about how party system polarization, which needs to capture the distribution of parties along an ideological spectrum, should be measured. Most measures use the left-right scale because it is a useful point of reference for citizens (and the elite). Colomer’s (2005) work supports this conclusion for Latin America, showing that Latin American voters are highly ideological and that they consistently locate themselves on the left-right dimension. To measure polarization, I use Pelizzo and Babones’ (2003) measure of polarization which simply sums the vote share of extreme left and right parties and subtracts the vote share of the center. I chose this measure because it provides some sense of the tendency that polarization will have, whether the greater vote share will be going toward the center (centripetal) or toward the poles (centrifugal). When the parties at the extreme are receiving a majority of the votes, the value will be positive and when most of the vote share goes to center parties, the value will be negative or smaller. To decide which is a left and which is a conservative party, I use the same definition used in Chapters Two and Three, defining a leftist party those that place 3 or less on the ideological spectrum and conservative parties as those that place 7 or higher on the spectrum.\textsuperscript{238} Because I am interested in the impact that the

\textsuperscript{238} I use 7 to 10, rather than 8 to 10 to measure conservative parties for one practical reasons despite, while legislators placed parties as 1 on the ideological spectrum, parties were never placed on 10 on the ideological spectrum.
parties have on voter turnout, I calculate polarization using elite data from the PELA surveys, which asks respondents to place the parties in the system on the left-right spectrum.

By including polarization in the analysis, the study is limited in some ways because of scarcity of data on this variable, restricting the number of countries that I can use in the analysis. Given the important influence that polarization can have in the party system, as the previous chapters show, it is worth limiting the number of cases to explore what impact this party system characteristic has on citizen behavior. Does it affect mass behavior just as previous chapters showed it affected elite behavior?

To measure volatility, I use Pedersen’s index of electoral volatility (1983), which calculates the extent to which parties are able to retain their vote share from one election to the next. This index yields a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 signifies that no parties lost or gained vote shares and 100 signifies that all of the votes went to new parties, and that older parties were unable to retain any electoral support. I use the election respondents were asked about in the LAPOP survey to measure volatility. There is significant variation across this variable for the countries included in the analysis, with values ranging from Honduras’ stable party system with 9.45% volatility to Guatemala’s unstable system with 67.52% volatility.

\[^{239}\] To calculate this index, the sum of the net change in percentage votes that are gained or lost by each party from one election to the next is taken and then divided by two.
5.3.3 Control Variables and Alternative Arguments

The literature on voter turnout has highlighted a number of important individual and system level variables that affect citizens’ level of political participation. I include a number of the variables in my analysis to control for alternative explanations and to test the extent to which the party system characteristics I am interested in have a significant and independent effect on citizens’ political behavior. I first outline the individual level variables I include in the model and then the system level variables.

Individuals

H₃: Individuals with higher levels of socioeconomic status are more likely to vote.

Socioeconomic status (SES) has consistently been found to be an important predictor of political participation (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995; Filer, Kenny, and Morton 1993; Muller, Seligson, and Turan 1987). To measure an individual’s SES, I follow the literature and use an individual’s level of education (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995), which LAPOP surveys asks respondents to give. This measure is collapsed into five possible categories, from 0 when an individual has had no schooling to 4 when an individual has attended University. The advantage of using this question instead of one that asks respondents to give their income is that education is more easily comparable across countries.

H₄: Age will have a positive relationship with turnout, so that as the age of an individual increases so too does the likelihood that she will vote.
I include a second control variable at the individual level: age. The work of Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) and Blais (2000) has shown that the probability that an individual will vote increases with age. I expect this relationship to hold for the countries in the study. To measure an individual’s age, I use LAPOP’s second question, which asks individuals to report their age at their last birthday.

H1: Women are likely to have different voting patterns than men.

The literature on gender and voting has noted that the traditional understanding that women were more conservative than men and less likely to vote has changed in recent years (Norris and Inglehart 2000). Perhaps for this reason, findings on the effect of gender on voting have not been consistent and have tended to depend on which other variables are included in the model (van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1990; van Egmond, De Graaf, and van der Eijk 1998). I include gender in the analysis, but do not predict a direction of the relationship. I use data from the LAPOP survey that noted the sex of respondents.

Systems

H6: Poor economic performance is more likely to encourage voting.

An argument from the literature on turnout, forwarded by Radcliff (1992), is that in the developing world poor economic performance encourages voter turnout. Fornos, Power and Garand (2004), do not find evidence to support this argument when testing specifically for the countries of Latin America using GDP growth. To examine this possible relationship in this model, I include economic performance at the system level but measured it as the natural log of Inflation, averaged per electoral period.
H$_7$: More parties in the party system will increase turnout.

The next two control variables come from institutionalist arguments in the literature that posit that the institutions in place will affect voting and support for democracy (Jackman 1987; Pérez-Liñán 2001; Powell 1986; Franklin 1996; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Anderson 1998; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003; Booth and Seligson 2009). The literature has highlighted a number of important institutions as having an impact on citizens’ level of participation, including the type of electoral system in affect and type of government. There is, however, little variation across this predictor in Latin America. To maximize variation at the systemic level with few variables, which is important because of the small number of cases at the system level, I include two institutional characteristics that maximize variation. The first is an indirect one that measures the effective number of parties (ENP). Some of the literature has argued that multipartism will decrease turnout because citizens will be less able to identify potential winning coalitions (Jackman 1987), although Powell (1982) argues that multipartism (when parties have links to society) will tend to increase participation. Work on post-1978 democracies has shown that mutlipartism decreases turnout because of what is argued is a saturation of the market (Kostadinova and Power 2007; Kostadinova 2003). It seems likely, given the characteristics of the region, to expect that multipartism will have a negative relationship with turnout in Latin America. To measure fragmentation I use Laakso and Taagepera’s (1979) index of the effective number of parties (ENP), measured in votes.

H$_8$: Compulsory voting that carries sanctions will encourage turnout.
The second institutional variable I include, compulsory-voting rules, should also increase turnout (Pérez-Liñán 2001; Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004); for this variable it is important to take into account the extent to which compulsory voting carries sanctions that are enforced (Blais, Massicotte, and Dobrzynska 2003; Norris 2002). To account for this, I include a variable that measures whether compulsory rules exist and the extent to which the rules carry enforced sanctions. To measure this variable I use data from Payne et al. (2003: Table 3.2), who classify Latin American regimes according to the type of sanctions that countries impose against non-voters and the extent to which these sanctions are enforced. This index ranges from 0 when a country does not have compulsory rules to 3 when a country has sanctions that are enforced.

H$_2$: The more democratic the regime, the more likely it is that an individual in the regime will vote.

The last control measure I include in the model is Polity scores. Kostadinova and Power (2007) have argued that the level of democracy is likely to have an impact on voter turnout in post-1978 democracies, so that the higher the level of democracy in a country, the higher the probability that an individual will participate in an election. To measure a country’s level of democracy I use Polity scores for the year of the election.

5.3.4 The Model: Individuals and Systems

As public opinion surveys have become increasingly available for analysis, scholars have begun to use them more systematically to examine citizens’ perceptions and behavior. One of the main concerns in this growing literature is the extent to which we can make inferences from one level of analysis to another (Canache, Mondak, and
Seligson 2001; Booth and Seligson 2009; Inglehart and Welzel 2003). To avoid this problem, and gain a better understanding of how individual and system level variables interact, scholars have made strong arguments about the need for more sophisticated statistical models that explicitly include the two system levels (Inglehart and Welzel 2003; Anduiza Perea 2002, 1999; Booth and Seligson 2006; van Egmond, De Graaf, and van der Eijk 1998; Tope, Meyer, and Sowash 2005; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003; Booth and Seligson 2009:111-3).

Following these arguments, I test for the effect that party system characteristics, polarization and stability, have on levels of citizen participation in the democratic process, using a panel model with countries as the panel identified to account for the fact that individuals are clustered by countries in the data set. It is important to make this specification because party system characteristics vary by country. Because my dependent variable is binary, whether an individual voted or did not vote, I use a logit model with random effects to determine which factors affect voter turnout. I use random effects to get at the subject-specific probabilities, rather than the population-specific probabilities (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2005:120).²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Ideally, it might have been more appropriate to run a Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM), but the small N at level-2 made it difficult to know the extent to which the results from this model were a reflection of the relationship between the variables or a problem with the estimations. Maas and Hox (2004) suggest that for HLM analysis interested in the fixed effects of the model, 10 groups can lead to good estimates, but that to analyze contextual effects at least 30 groups are needed (135). Because this requirement limited the analysis, I use clustering instead.
5.4 Examining the Evidence

Table 5.2 presents the results of the model. For most variables there is a fit with the theoretical expectations that were outlined. Most of the variables in the model reach statistical significance, so that we are confident that they have a statistically significant relationship with the probability that an individual will vote. The model as a whole is also highly statistically significant.
For the control variables at the individual level, both Age and Education perform as the theory predicted and have a positive relationship with the probability that an individual will vote. As an individual’s level of education, a proxy for an individual’s SES, and age increases an individual is more likely to participate in elections and vote. There was no theoretical expectation about the third individual level variable included in the model, Gender, but the results show a negative relationship. It does not, however, reach statistically significance. As some of the literature has increasingly argued, gender is not a good predictor of whether an individual is likely to vote in an election. This is an
interesting finding in the Latin American context since we might have expected, as some
of the older literature argued, that there would have been a gender deficit in this region,
with women tending to vote less than men.

At the system level, the two party system characteristics that I am interested in do
have a statistically significant relationship with the probability than an individual will
vote. In addition, both variables have the expected relationship with the dependent
variable. Volatility has a curvilinear relationship with voting, so that at the extremes
volatility has a different impact on the likelihood that an individual will vote. When party
systems are too volatile or too stable, citizens are less likely to participate in the electoral
process. Polarization fits the theoretical expectations with a positive relationship with the
dependent variable. In more polarized party systems—those that have centrifugal
tendencies with the majority of the vote share going to either of the two extremes on the
ideological spectrum, citizens are more likely to vote. Because of data constraints, adding
the variables that were of interest meant that some of the countries were dropped from the
analysis. For this reason, I also checked the model at the aggregate level. I used an
aggregate measure of turnout, based on voting age population, to test whether at this level
of analysis polarization and volatility had the same effect on turnout. The results were the
same as the individual level analysis, with both an ordinary least squares (OLS) and a
robust OLS analysis. While this procedure did not solve the small-N problem, the results
do provide some further evidence that polarization and volatility affect voter turnout. In
both cases the variables had a significant relationship in the expected direction. As a last
possible check, I also ran an OLS regression between volatility and turnout using a larger
data set that includes legislative elections. This model was smaller and only included
the dependent variable (turnout), and volatility (and its square), the effective number of
parties, and the country’s polity score. The results of this model also confirmed that
volatility did help predict, in the correct direction, aggregate turnout.

The two variables included from the institutionalist literature also reach statistical
significance, helping us predict the likelihood that an individual will vote. The presence
of compulsory rules and their enforcement do increase the probability that an individual
will vote. As the rules of enforcement get stricter, the probability of voting also increases.
This finding confirms previous studies that have consistently found a strong positive
relationship between turnout and compulsory votes. Multiparty systems in Latin
America have a negative—and significant—relationship with voter turnout, so that as the
number of parties in the system increases, voters are less likely to participate. This was
the expected relationship and fits with previous findings for the region (Fornos, Power,

The last two system variables have an unexpected relationship with voter turnout.
Economic performance, measured as the natural log of inflation per electoral period, has
a positive impact on the probability that an individual will vote. The results are contrary
to earlier findings that bad economic performance would encourage citizens from the
developing world to participate in politics. It is possible that the earlier findings from
Radcliff’s (1992) study, which included very few Latin American cases, might have been

\[\text{\textsuperscript{241}}\] This larger data set includes 58 countries and 585 observations (electoral periods)
(Mainwaring, España Nájera, and Gervasoni 2008; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007).

\[\text{\textsuperscript{242}}\] Power and Garand (2007) find that compulsory rules lead to a higher percentage of invalid
votes being cast in Latin America.
driven by patterns in other regions that are not duplicated in Latin America. The results from this model, that performance has a positive impact on voting, do confirm the results from Fornos, Power, and Garand (2004).

Lastly, the Polity variable has a surprising negative relationship with the probability that an individual will decide to vote in an election. This result is surprising given previous work that has found a positive relationship between the level of democracy and voter turnout in Latin America. At the aggregate level, Kostadinova and Power (2007), in an analysis of turnout in legislative elections, find that an increase in the level of democracy in a country increases voter turnout in Latin America and has the opposite effect in Eastern Europe. While these authors use Freedom House scores as their measure of the level of democracy, the high correlation between the two measures does not provide a satisfying explanation for the lack of congruence between the two studies.

5.5 Party Systems and Democracy

In this chapter I asked whether party system characteristics influence the context in which individuals’ choose to vote or abstain from voting. I argued that given the theory behind the party system literature and the role that parties play in elections, we should expect party systems to affect voter turnout. I argue that systems with moderate levels of stability should encourage voter turnout by lowering the costs of voting. At the extremes stability should suppress citizen participation at one end, increasing the costs of voting by introducing high levels of uncertainty in an election, and at the other, it should suppress participation because of the lack of change in the system, which lowers the stakes of elections. The results showed that volatility helps explain turnout and that it has a
curvilinear relationship with voter participation, affecting citizens differently at extreme values.

The second characteristic that I analyzed was the relationship between party system polarization and voter turnout. I argued that polarization should encourage a higher level of turnout by raising the stakes of elections for both citizens and the elite. In more polarized party systems I expect political parties to take a more active role in mobilizing citizens, creating a greater level of awareness of the political process and providing more information for citizens with clear alternatives from which they can choose. I use a measure of polarization that measures the trend of polarization, that is, whether it is centripetal or centrifugal, since the findings in earlier chapters have shown how important this aspect of polarization is in influencing political action. The model that was tested supports the argument that polarization would help us predict the probability that an individual would vote and that this is a positive relationship, so that as the percentage of the vote that goes to the extremes increases, citizens are more likely to participate in elections.

How do these findings fit with the three countries examined in previous chapters? Do these two party system characteristics help us explain voter turnout in the three cases? The countries of El Salvador and Nicaragua closely resemble each other in that both have high levels of polarization and are highly stable systems. Guatemala, on the other hand, has a very volatile party system and low levels of polarization. Given the arguments in this chapter, we would expect Guatemala to have a very low turnout rate with both party system characteristics suppressing participation. For the other two cases, the expectations from the argument are less clear. The high levels of polarization in both systems should
encourage high levels of participation, but it is not clear what impact stability should have on turnout.

In Guatemala, the data confirms our expectations. Since 1985, only 39.47% of the population on average participates in presidential elections and only 37.36% in legislative elections. Even if we only take into account post-conflict elections, since it is possible that the conflict was suppressing participation independently of volatility or polarization, turnout is very low. In the shorter time frame (1999-2007), turnout is 39.63% on average in presidential elections and 45.87% in legislative elections. In El Salvador, turnout is slightly higher than in Guatemala. Since the 1989 presidential election, on average 53.52% of the population votes, while for legislative elections, since 1985, 54.7% of the population tends to vote. Restricting the analysis to post-conflict elections has the opposite effect that it did in Guatemala, so that 52.83% of the population tends to vote in legislative elections and 53.22% in presidential elections since the 1989 general elections. In this case, it seems that stability is suppressing turnout and that polarization has little effect on levels of participation. Contrary to the Salvadoran experience, in Nicaragua it seems that polarization encourages turnout, regardless of the stability of the system, since in Nicaragua turnout has remained high since the 1984 election with 74.82% of the population on average voting in presidential elections and 75.06% in legislative elections, with no significant drop if we only examine post-1990 elections (the decrease in participation is less than 1%).

These findings raise the question of what determines which party system characteristic will take precedence when we expect their effect to pull in different directions. The restrictions in the small number of cases available for analysis in the
statistical model limit the possibility of introducing interaction terms, but the three countries suggest that this might be an important direction to take in future research. Overall, the statistical findings from the logistic regression model do point to a significant relationship between the two party system characteristics that so sharply differentiate the three party systems of post-conflict Central America. The questions revealed by a more detailed study of the relationship between turnout, volatility, and polarization for these countries point to an interesting avenue of research that could bring together two important groups of literature and clarify one of the mechanisms through which party system characteristics affect participation and democracy.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter asks what consequences polarization and stability have for voter turnout. The findings suggest that there is a relationship between party systems and citizens in that both polarization and volatility affect citizens’ decision to engage in politics and participate in one of the central components of democracy: elections. These findings, while not conclusive, provide some idea of how party systems can contribute to the quality of democracy. Systems with characteristics that encourage participation do a better job of anchoring citizens in the democratic process and increasing their levels of participation within the system. This has a number of benefits, including limiting the vulnerability of regimes to political entrepreneurs that might take advantage of dissatisfied and disengaged citizens to pursue agendas that throw into questions the premise of democracy.
One of the findings of this chapter also challenges the conventional wisdom that party system polarization is necessarily dangerous for the regime. At least in some ways, polarization might be a positive characteristic in the party system. As previous chapters have shown, polarization can push the elite to become involved in the democratic process to an extent not previously seen because of the attribution of threat from an ideological opponent. This has had positive consequences for the party system, helping to institutionalize the system to a greater degree, stabilizing competition between the polarized poles. Similarly, this chapter showed that at the mass level, polarization plays the same role and encourages a higher level of participation in politics. This effect on voter turnout we can posit is at least in part the result of the mobilizing effect that the polarized party system will have. With the result of elections having high stakes, because of polarization, political parties have a higher incentive to mobilize citizens to encourage turnout. In addition, we can expect that in more polarized systems, the electoral choices are clear for citizens and the availability of information is greater, both factors that lower the cost of voting. One question that would need further exploration is whether polarization has a different effect in the Central American countries because of the small number of relevant parties in the system. It is perhaps the combination of centrifugal polarization with dominant parties in the system that explains the equilibrium in these countries and this counterintuitive finding.

The chapter’s second finding, that volatility has a nonlinear relationship with turnout, helps bring together two groups of literature, the literature on participation and the literature on party systems. This relationship between volatility and participation mirrors the relationship that the literature on party system highlights between volatility
and regime stability. The findings in this chapter reinforce the idea that the possibility of change is important in the party system and that at the extremes electoral stability/volatility is a problematic party system characteristic.

Lastly, for the three countries that have been the focus of previous chapters, the findings in this chapter reinforce the importance of the transition process. Chapter Four noted the impact that the transition had on party system institutionalization in the three countries, arguing that how the party systems developed from the transition process determined the extent to which the three party systems would institutionalize in the post-transition period. The findings in this chapter show one more important implication of the transition process. By shaping the type of party system that formed this process also affects how citizens engage with the democratic process, depending on what type of party system developed from the transitions, the party system will encourage citizens to have higher or lower level of political participation.
Chapter One began with an empirical puzzle: what factors explained party system formation in the post-conflict countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua? The answer to this question is not immediately obvious as the countries present two puzzles for the existing literature on party systems. The first is the surprising path of development that the systems have followed, given the history of the countries and the institutions in place. The second is the continuity that the three post-transition systems have exhibited since the transitions.

Had we tried to predict what type of party systems would form in these countries after the dual transitions, a reasonable expectation would have been that the Guatemalan and Salvadoran systems would continue to resemble each other and to differ from Nicaragua, given their historical trajectory. Or we might have predicted that all three party systems would converge on a similar pattern of development as the initial uncertainty of the first elections faded and the effects of similar institutions began to influence political action (see Table 2.6). But as the previous chapters have shown, the pattern of development of the three countries has been very different from both of these expectations. The Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party systems have developed along the same path, with a high degree of stability and polarization, while the Guatemalan system has diverged, with low stability and low polarization. Perhaps just as surprising, in a
region in which many party systems exhibit striking change, this new pattern of similarities and differences has remained relatively stable.

To explain the development of these systems, I propose a path dependent argument that identifies the transition process as a critical juncture (Pierson 2000:75; Collier and Collier 1991:29). In the following section I review this argument, highlighting how it helps explain party system formation in these cases and what contributions it makes to the existing literature. I then discuss the generalizability of the argument, asking whether it can explain party system development in other countries. Lastly, I examine some consequences that the party systems have had for the three countries and conclude with an exploration of the possibilities for change.

6.1 Transitions as Critical Junctures

To explain party system formation in post-conflict Central America, I posit that the events that took place during the transition, when a competitive and inclusive party system began to take shape, placed these systems on a particular path of development. Biezen (2005) refers to this as a “generation” effect and argues that “conditions in which a party first emerges would largely determine its internal structure as well as the nature and strength of its external linkages” (151). The transition is a critical juncture because the early decisions in the process shaped future possibilities, restricting the choices that would be possible in future interactions between the elite. In addition, self-reinforcing mechanisms have made the probability of departing from the set pattern of development increasingly unlikely (Pierson 2000:74-6; Collier and Collier 1991:29-31), which explains the stability of the patterns established.
My central argument is that what took place during the transition explains party system institutionalization. The interactions between four actors (the military, the armed opposition, the conservative political elite, and the economic elite) determined the degree to which the party system would be polarized and the type of party organizations that would form in the new system. These two characteristics, in turn, explain party system institutionalization. Polarization increases or decreases the distance between parties, lowering or raising the costs of switching parties from one election to the next. The type of partisan organization affects the extent to which citizens are bound to the party system, with durable organizations tending to encourage loyalty among voters from one election to the next.

This path dependent argument about party system formation in the post-conflict parties of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua contributes to a number of different arguments in the party system literature. First, it provides further evidence for the theory that in post-1978 party systems elites play a defining role in shaping party systems (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Tavits 2008; Biezen 2003; Grzymala-Busse 2002). The dissertation demonstrates that the strategies of the elite during the transition had a strong influence over the type of party system that would form in the new democracies.

The dissertation also contributes to the party system literature by showing that polarization can have a positive effect on party system institutionalization. Most scholars have argued that polarization has dangerous consequences for the party system and for regime stability (Sartori 1976; Linz 1978; Valenzuela 1978; Sani and Sartori 1983; Scully 1992; Norden 1998). In his classic study of party systems, Sartori (1976:131-173) drew attention to the precarious nature of polarized systems, especially those with centrifugal
tendencies. Similarly, Bermeo (2003) argues that in post-conflict democracies, lowering the costs of electoral competition is important for the survival of peace and the regime. Yet my findings in Chapter Three show that polarization can encourage a higher level of commitment to party politics and the new regime, even among a conservative elite that traditionally has not engaged in or supported the democratic process. Faced with a leftist actor that pursued a procedural strategy early on in the transition process and that had some organizational strength, the conservative political elite mobilized to counteract this threat. In response, this elite created a particular type of conservative party, one with a durable organization that could match the left’s and that emphasized unity to avoid costly electoral splits that would favor its rival. When the economic elite also saw the left as a likely winner and there was no third actor that would or could protect its interests, this elite—in an unprecedented move in this region—began to invest its resources into the creation and maintenance of a durable party organization, promoting the institutionalization of the party system (see Figure 1.3).

I also show that polarization has a positive effect on party system stability, depressing electoral volatility in at least two ways. Polarization has had a direct effect by raising the cost of switching support from one party to another and an indirectly effect by helping to shape a party system with two dominant parties on either end of the ideological spectrum. As Magaloni (2005:124-9) also argues, dominant parties have an incentive to discourage splits and new party entries because of their potential electoral costs. In El Salvador and Nicaragua, parties that dominant the right and left sides of the spectrum use their power to protect their position, consolidating their early advantages (Thelen 2000:103-4). These parties also raise the cost of entry for competitors, as Arthur
argues, this makes it more likely that “individuals and organizations have a strong incentive to identify and stick with a single option” (Arthur 1994:112-3). Building an organization that can compete at the national level with the two dominant parties is no easy task and requires significant resources, as the ALN learned in the 2006 Nicaraguan election and as the various factions that have left the FMLN and FSLN to compete against them have learned.

Polarization not only has an important effect on elite behavior during the transition, influencing strategy choices, it also affects citizens’ level of political participation, more specifically voting. By raising the stakes of election outcomes and promoting a greater commitment to voter mobilization, polarization can increase citizens’ participation in one of the central democratic processes, elections.

The dissertation’s findings also stress the important role that the type of party organization can have on the institutionalization of the party system (Gunther 2005; Gunther and Montéro 2001; Tavits 2005; Toole 2003). When the system includes relevant parties with durable organizations, citizens are more likely to be anchored in the system and are less likely to switch their support from one party to another. The dissertation also provides an answer to the question of what type of organization post-1978 parties will adopt, explaining when parties are more likely to build thin or durable organizations by drawing attention to the importance of *when* things happen (Pierson 2000).

As previous work has shown, in newer party systems the political elite can win elections with thin partisan organizations and the use of mass media campaigns, no longer needing the mass organizations of earlier periods (Biezen 2005; Gibson 1996;
Kopecký 1995; Middlebrook 2000; Toole 2003). This explains why, in the absence of a viable threat from the left, Guatemalan political parties have refrained from building durable organizations, choosing instead a more limited investment in the party system that can efficiently win votes. The Guatemalan party system took shape in an era when media campaigns dominated the electoral process and made durable party organizations unnecessary for winning.

Yet while thin organizations have tended to prevail in newer party systems, there are instances—though they may be in the minority—when parties choose to build durable organizations. The dissertation provides an argument for when we can expect parties to adopt this costly strategy, arguing that a threat from a strong ideological opponent encourages a party building strategy that has positive consequences for the stability of the party system and the regime. The right decided on its electoral strategy in response to the earlier decisions of the left. When the left focused on strengthening its organization for electoral purposes, it was building on a type of organization that emphasized the importance of fostering support and loyalty among citizens. These early choices presented the right with a particular context when it was choosing its transition strategy. If the right wanted to win the loyalty of supporters, it had to reach out to citizens and “win” them back, necessitating an extensive durable organization that would have contact with society. In effect, the right needed to win hearts and not just votes during the transition because of the conflict, forcing it to match the left’s strategy. Once this type of organization was established it was locked in so that in the post-transition period, its

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243 Since the 1970s, the guerrilla movements of the region had moved away from a foco strategy and had instead emphasized the importance of building mass support for the revolution by creating ties between the movement and society.
success reinforced the need for its existence. As a result, both ends of the ideological spectrum both major parties were convinced of the need for this organizational type, and neither was likely to unilaterally stop investing in the organization (see Figure 1.2).²⁴⁴

The dissertation also contributes to the literature on path dependence. Social scientists have increasingly called for a clearer specification of the causal mechanisms that exist behind the relationships that we are interested in explaining (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Pierson 2004; Thelen 2000; Elster 1998; Hedström and Swedberg 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). In the dissertation, I specify the causal mechanisms that led to the formation of different types of party systems and those that have served to reinforce the patterns established in this early stage of party system development.

During the transition process, the left’s configuration of political opportunity (Brockett 2005; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) changed, opening the political space and creating a window of opportunity that put the left in a place of national prominence as one of the key negotiators in the peace process. This process presented the left with an opportunity to capitalize on its role in the transition process, to use its prominence during this process to focus on its organizational needs and the importance of capturing and maintaining an electoral base of support for future competitive elections. While leftist parties could count on a certain level of support from particular sectors of the population because of the role they had played in the conflict and in the negotiations, maintaining this level of support depended on the electoral strategy that the left adopted during the

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²⁴⁴ In the dissertation I do not explore what type of linkage these organizations have built and maintain with citizens, but interviews with party members (across parties) suggest that most of the emphasis is on clientalistic (service) and personalistic linkages.
transition. The left’s claim to be the representative of the progressive agenda because of its role in the conflict did not automatically translate into votes beyond the first election. Because of this, examining the strategy of the left is critical for identifying the causal mechanisms in place.

The extent to which the left was perceived as a threat rested on both its strategy and previous organizational strength (an antecedent condition). To explain the success of the left and how other actors perceived it, it is necessary to include an element of agency. The strength of the left’s organization is not fixed, and its maintenance depends on what strategy it chose. As Roberts (1998) argued for the Peruvian and Chilean cases: “the strength of a leftist party in civil society is no guarantee of success in the electoral realm” (77). In addition, as Hofferbert (1998) notes for the post-communist cases: “[s]tatus as a heroic movement does not necessarily translate into a readiness to become just one more competitor in an open contest” (427). For these reasons, while organizational strength might explain why the FMLN and FSLN performed better than the URNG in the first post-conflict election, it cannot explain why the URNG lost its vote share or why the FMLN and FSLN continued to perform well past the first election (see Figure 1.1 for how the left and other opposition movements map along the two dimensions).

I also specify the self-reinforcing mechanisms that have ensured the continuity of the party systems after the resolution of the conflicts. In most post-transition countries, the “transition effects” have proven to be short lived (Cavarozzi 1992; Hagopian 1993; Hartlyn 1998; Przeworski 1991; but see Fishman 2002). Yet in these three Central American countries the patterns established during the transitions have thus far lasted, for some of the countries for well over two decades. I posit that these patterns remain
relevant today because of three causal mechanisms. The first is the continual presence (or absence) of the *attribution of threat* from the left. As long as the political elite on both sides of the ideological spectrum continues to find it useful—or profitable in terms of votes—to frame political discourse in terms of what I call the “conflict dimension,” the party system maintains the same incentives to mobilize against the other pole that existed during the transition. Similarly, the continual absence of threat from the left negates the need to change a pattern of electoral competition that is efficient and requires only a short-time investment in the party organization.

A second mechanism that has ensured the continuation of patterns established during the transitions is *elite learning*. The political elite has learned which are the winning formulas from those patterns established during the transition, whether this is the continual investment in durable organizations and the maintenance of the conflict dimension or securing enough resources from the economic elite to finance electoral campaigns that revolve around individuals rather than parties. Thus far, these strategies have proven to be successful. In addition, through *power reproduction*, the winners of the party system have used their access to power to preserve their position, promoting institutional change (or inertia) that enhances their power and using existing institutions to block new party entries. The dominant parties on the left and right side of the ideological spectrum also discourage challenging actors through co-opting and the set-up costs that new organizations face, while in volatile party systems the absence of stable competition ensures that the incentive to build personal reputations and form new parties continues to shape the party system.
Having highlighted the main findings and contributions of the dissertation, in the next section I ask whether an explanation of the institutionalization of the party system focused on the transition process helps explain party system development in countries beyond my three cases.

6.2 Generalizing beyond Central America

In the dissertation I focus on explaining the puzzle of party system development in post-conflict Central America. I put forth a number of propositions and then trace the transition processes of the three countries to examine the extent to which this process was a critical juncture for the party systems. One of the questions that this work points to is whether transitions are always critical junctures of party system formation. Work on post-Communist and African countries has also highlighted the importance of transition effects on party system development (Grzymala-Busse 2002; Riedl 2008). I posit that some of the endurance of transition effects I have drawn attention to might be due to the dual nature of the transitions, that is, the relevance of the conflict. To test the argument that dual transitions have particular dynamics that have long lasting consequences for the new regime, it is necessary to examine the extent to which dual transition processes have also been critical junctures of party system formation in other post-conflict countries. Such an approach would make an important contribution to the literature, which has for the most part not highlighted the differences between regime transitions and dual regime transitions that include an element of internal conflict resolution.245 The findings of the

245 An important exception is the work of Bermeo (2003; Bermeo 2007) which raises this point and argues for a new research agenda for post-conflict transitions.
dissertation strongly suggest that dual transition processes have particular characteristics and that these might prove to have a longer effect on the post-transition regime than we expect from a non-conflict transition.

The dissertation undertook a small step in this comparison, using secondary literature to explore the extent to which the electoral success of ex-guerrilla movements can be explained by their organizational strength and transition strategy. I focus on these movements because of the critical role that they play in the sequence of events that I highlight in the transition, influencing the strategy of other actors. The findings of Chapter Two suggest that the decisions taken during the transition process had lasting consequences for other ex-guerrilla movements that took part in dual transitions that resulted in regime change. The comparison is helpful in highlighting the role of strategy during the transition process (see Figure 2:1) but also identifies other factors that might play an important role in influencing post-transition success in other regions, such as international financing for the restructuring of the guerrilla movement.\textsuperscript{246} Overall, my findings and the work of others such as Carbone (2005) on Mozambique suggest that the transition process was a critical juncture for the party system in these other countries. Future work would need to consider the response that the incumbents in these countries had to the inclusion of the armed movements in order to explore the extent to which the attribution of threat and polarization plays a similar role in influencing the response of other actors.

\textsuperscript{246} Unlike the Central American guerrilla organizations, African movements received direct funding from the international community specifically aimed at helping them in the transformation of movement into political party.
6.3 Looking to the Future: Room for Change?

For the Central American region, the period since 1984 marks the most number of years that free and fair elections have determined who governs in the isthmus. Despite this substantial change, public support for democracy remains low, with a high percentage of citizens willing to at least consider a possible preference for authoritarian regimes (The Economist 2008; Lagos 2001; Latinobarómetro 2008). In 2008, only 50% of Salvadorans and 58% of Nicaraguans agreed with the statement that democracy was always the best form of government, while an even lower percentage, 34%, of Guatemalans agreed with the same statement (Latinobarómetro 2008:105).\(^247\) These are surprising numbers when we consider that thirty years before the countries were suffering from internal conflicts due in large part to the nature of the nondemocratic regimes in place. Citizens’ evaluation of how democratic governments are performing has also been poor and follows a similar ordering. Aggregating the scores from the World Governance Indicators (WGI) Project (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2009) between 1996 and 2008, reveals that the general perception is that El Salvador has outperformed Nicaragua and Guatemala with a WGI aggregate score of -0.98, compared to Nicaragua’s score of -2.76 and Guatemala’s aggregate score of -3.42.\(^248\) There is a high degree of overlap between support for democracy and perceptions that democratic governments are performing well and how stable and how polarized the party systems are, although the observation does not necessarily point to a causal relationship. The variation does suggest

\(^{247}\) The regional average was 57%.

\(^{248}\) To calculate this score I take the sum of the yearly scores (using the six categories that the WGI include) and then take the average score for the 1996-2008 period. The regional average for the same period was -1.11.
that party system characteristics are affecting citizens’ perception of democracy and its performance (Hagopian 2005:358).

The underlining argument in this dissertation has been that party systems have a significant impact on democracy and citizens. In Chapter Five I explored one possible manifestation of this relationship by examining how party system characteristics affect citizens’ participation. The findings from the chapter, while tentative because of data limitations, suggest that differences across party systems matter and influence voter turnout. Given the important role that political parties and the interactions between them play in the democratic system, it stands to reason that party systems will affect other aspects of the democratic process.

It is plausible, for instance, that stability affects perceptions of governance. In Guatemala’s highly volatile system, it is difficult to keep track of who is accountable for what policies, government formation (legislative coalitions) are unstable, and politicians move across party lines without electoral costs. Voting as an exercise in accountability loses its validity. In highly volatile systems, without the stability that parties provide for coordination, it is difficult to sustain working coalitions and provide public goods. The other party system characteristics that the dissertation has highlighted also point to challenges for the democratic process, for instance, a fragmented party system with few incentives for unity; thin party organizations that depend on the monetary contribution of some sectors of society to win elections; high levels of party switching; and a distance between parties and citizens. Many of these party system characteristics tend to give more voice to some sectors of society, those that can afford to pay. Without thicker organization (or an incentive to create them), political parties are unlikely to extend
themselves to build more durable connections with the electorate. This distance between parties and citizens also raises the possibility that dissatisfied citizens will be more vulnerable to political outsiders that have weak democratic commitments.

At the same time, it is hard to come to the conclusion that the highly polarized and stable party systems of El Salvador and Nicaragua are necessarily the best configuration for democratic politics. We might question, for instance, how represented citizens are by a party system with two parties that dominated the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum and few viable alternative options in between them, especially when the larger parties are able to use their position to block new entries into the system. Perhaps the more notorious example of this practice is the pact (el pacto) between the FSLN and PLC in Nicaragua, an agreement between the two dominant parties that resulted in the 2000 electoral reforms that made registering new parties and maintaining a party’s legal status much harder for parties that lack substantial resources and an existing national organization. While some of these challenges to democracy might be the result of the subordination of party organizations (and politics) to the interests of a few politicians in Nicaragua in what Norden (1998) describes as collusive party relations, it is also possible that the same polarization that helped establish the system and has contributed to its stability is more problematic for governance in these countries.

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249 There have in fact been two pacts, one in 1996 and the second in 2000; both agreements effectively divided the state between the two dominant parties (Dye, Spence, and Vickers 2000).

250 Parties are now required to maintain registered members in all 151 municipalities. Previously, the 1996 reforms had stipulated that parties are required to register members in half of the country’s municipalities (see Table 3.9).

251 Siaroff (2000) argues that polarized systems always remain unstable and less responsive, although the democratic longevity of a polity can off set potential breakdowns.
Given the problems that the three party systems and the regimes face, what are the possibilities for change? Throughout the dissertation I have drawn attention to a number of possibilities for change in these three party systems, while noting that thus far the reforms adopted have reaffirmed the characteristics of the systems. Of these possibilities, two have the most potential to change the current configuration of the party systems. The first is a change in the attribution of threat. A change in perception of the level of danger that the victory of an ideological opponent has could change the calculus of the incentives currently in place. For example, an increased possibility in Guatemala that a party with a substantially different agenda could come to power might encourage a higher level of unity among the current party offerings and perhaps even a greater commitment from the economic elite to the party system. A change in perception in the other direction, that is, that the left would no longer be considered a threat to the position of the economic elite and/or the conservative political elite, could have an equally important effect in El Salvador or Nicaragua. Such a change could decrease the level of polarization and stability in the system, but potentially it could also open up the space for alternative parties to compete. This possibility is perhaps less likely in Nicaragua after the 2006 election because of the confrontational and populist leadership style of President Ortega, but the results of the 2009 general election in El Salvador, with the election of the more moderate FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes, does present the possibility of a significant change in the party system.

The second related factor is the availability of resources. Throughout the dissertation I have highlighted the importance of resources for competing in elections. As Linz (2002) correctly notes: “democratic politics in a mass society is very expensive”
Who has access to resources and where these resources come from are important factors that shape party competition. The possibility of a viable alternative in Guatemala that departs from the center-right/right concentration of competition, for instance, depends on the availability of resources, as does the possibility of new relevant actors entering the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran party system to compete against the two dominant parties. Potentially, a more generous distribution of public funds, especially if they are more generous toward minority parties, could change the party system, as would limiting the private funds that parties are allowed to receive.

The likelihood that these two factors will come into play is harder to predict. The advances of Central American regimes are undisputable, when we compare them to their history of state violence. Today, the basic principle of democratic competition and the rights of the opposition to participate and take office exists in these three countries (with some important limitations). This is a significant improvement for these countries. Yet the challenges that the region faces continue to grow, from poor economic performance to the troubling levels of violence that the state has been unable to curve. One can certainly argue that some form of change is needed in the three countries if they are going to deal successfully with these challenges while reinforcing the newly established democratic regimes, perhaps most dramatically in Guatemala, but problems that challenge the core principles of democracy also exist in the other two countries.
APPENDIX A:

CHAPTER THREE

Questions used from the Elites Parlamentarias de América Latina (PELA) survey to identify the conservative parties in the system.

Question: Cuando se habla de política se utilizan normalmente las expresiones izquierda y derecha. En una escala donde el 1 es la izquierda y el 10 la derecha, ¿en qué casilla colocaría Ud. a los siguientes partidos o coaliciones?

Answer: 10-point scale from Left (1) to Right (10).

Question: Como Ud. conoce, existe actualmente un debate entre las posiciones estatistas y neoliberales en diversos países del continente. Al respecto, ¿podría decirme si está Ud. más a favor de una economía regulada por el Estado o por el mercado? Utilice para ello la siguiente escala de 1 a 5, donde el "1" significa una máxima presencia estatal en la economía y el "5" una máxima regulación a través del mercado.

Answer: 5-point scale from Statism (1) to Market (10).
APPENDIX B:

CHAPTER FIVE

B.1 Individual Level

**Voting**: Whether an individual voted in previous presidential election. Values are collapsed into a dichotomy where Yes was coded as 1 and No was coded as 0 (No includes: registered but didn’t vote and not registered), minors were not included in the analysis.

LAPOP Question: **VB2** ¿Votó usted en las últimas elecciones?

**Educ**: Education level, measured from the last year of schooling. The measure includes five categories from no schooling to university level education (0 to 5)

LAPOP Question: **ED** ¿Cuál fue el último año de enseñanza que usted aprobó?

**Age**: Age of interviewee (Q2).

LAPOP Question: **Q2**. ¿Cuál es su edad en años cumplidos?

**Gender**: Sex of interviewee

LAPOP **Sexo**. Interviewers coding of the respondents sex.
B.2 System Level

**Volatility**: Electoral volatility calculated with Pederson’s Index (1979): the sum of the net change in the percentage of votes gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, divided by two.

**Polarization**: Pelizzo and Babones’ (2003) measure of polarization: the sum of extreme votes minus the center vote.

PELA question various years, **Q13**.

**Inflation (logged)**: The geometric mean of inflation, averaged per electoral period: from the year of the first election in the electoral period to the year before the second election.


**Compulsory voting**: Categorical variable with four possible values, the higher the value the harsher the sanction against non-voters.

Source: Payne et al. (2003).

**Effective Number of Parties (ENP)**: Calculated using Laakso and Taagepera’s (1979) formula, measured in votes: the inverse of the sum of the square of all parties’ vote shares.

**Gross Domestic Product (logged)**: GDP per capita for the electoral year.

Sources: World Bank (2009).

**Polity**: The Polity score for the electoral year.

### B.3 Description of Variables Included in the Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Obs</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Countries Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote</td>
<td>28777</td>
<td>0.7781909</td>
<td>0.4154706</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>29530</td>
<td>1.526109</td>
<td>0.4993263</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>28963</td>
<td>2.150813</td>
<td>1.150825</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23454</td>
<td>39.36659</td>
<td>15.92056</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volatile</strong></td>
<td>29530</td>
<td>36.882</td>
<td>21.0211</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>67.52</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polarization</strong></td>
<td>25030</td>
<td>17.37925</td>
<td>38.63364</td>
<td>-52.3</td>
<td>95.36</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation (log)</td>
<td>29530</td>
<td>2.008904</td>
<td>0.9651207</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (log)</td>
<td>49218</td>
<td>7.648737</td>
<td>0.6138902</td>
<td>6.661855</td>
<td>8.723882</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory</td>
<td>49218</td>
<td>1.668353</td>
<td>0.9858656</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Number of Parties</td>
<td>28316</td>
<td>5.702186</td>
<td>3.782802</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>15.46</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF INTERVIEWS

El Salvador


Arévalo Pineda, José Orlando. PCN member and legislator, May 2005.


Calderón de Escalon, Carmen Elena. ARENA member and party leader, July 2004 and April 2005.


Dada, Héctor. Academic and center-left politician, member of the CDU in 2005, member of the FDR during the transition, May 2005.


González Rivas, Ramón José. ARENA member in charge of the party’s national organization, April 2005.


Huerzo, David R. Member economic elite and president AmCham, involved in some of the informal meetings with FMLN members during the transition, April 2005.

Medardo, Gónzalez. Member FMLN and General Coordinator for the national office, May 2005.

Quintanilla, Gamerro. Member of the economic elite and active in ARENA, May 2005.


Salgueró Gross, Gloria. Founding member ARENA and prominent party leader, June 2005.


Samayoa, Salvador. ex-FMLN member, representative of the guerrilla organization in the peace negotiations. May 2005.


Silva, Héctor. CDU member and legislator, ex-FMLN presidential candidate, May 2005.

Sol Midence, Ana Cristina. Member of the Salvadoran Foreign Service during the peace negotiations (1989-93),


Vaquero, Donato. ARENA member and party leader, June 2005.


Guatemala

Aitkenhead Castillo, Richard. Prominent member of the economic elite and government representative in the final peace negotiations, November 2005.

Arévalo de León, Bernado, Academic and members of the Guatemalan Foreign Service during the conflict, Deputy Foreign Minister (1993-95) and Ambassador to Spain (1995-96), March 2005.


Asturias, Rodrigo. URNG member, representative of the guerrilla organization in the peace negotiations, January 2005.

Cabrera Navia, Juan Pablo. Secretary General of the party Transparencia, February 2005.


Colom, Álvaro. Prominent politician and member of various parties before creating the UNE, presidential winner of the 2007 presidential election, March 2005.


González, Eduardo. Secretary of the Executive Coordination for the Presidency, ex-PAN member, member of Berger's faction and in charge of the new GANA organization, April 2005.

Lamport, Peter. Prominent member of the economic elite and former president of CACIF, November 2005.

de León, Anabelle. Legislator, member of various political parties, April 2005.

Maldonado, Alba Estela. URNG member and comandante during the conclit, January 2005.


Pivaral Guzmán, José. Member economic elite and ex-CACIF president, November, 2005.

Quej Chen, Haroldo. Member of the FRG and a member of the party’s Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (CEN), Secretary General of the Organization (1996-2001) and Secretary General of Doctrine (from 2001-2005), February 2005.

Quej Chen, Eduardo Genis. FRG member, legislator, and closely involved with the party’s organization, March 2005.

Reyes, Carlos. PAN member and manager of the party’s national organization, January 2005.

Rosada, Héctor. Government representative in the peace negotiations, April, 2005.

Taracena Diaz-Sol, Mario. PAN member and legislative leader, January 2005.

Yat Sierra, Carlos. Member PAN and party leader, March 2005.
Nicaragua

Aguerri Chamorro, José Adan. Prominent member of the economic elite, June 2005.

Bonilla Madrigal, Yamileth. Ex-PLC member in charge of organizational development in the early 1990s, October 2005.

Cruz Sequeira, Arturo José. Prominent member of the economic elite, involved with the Contra during the conflict, October 2005.

Cuadra Lacayo, Joaquín. General, ESP, second in command during the transition, and ex-FSLN member.

Flores, Lester. Member PLC, in charge of the party’s national organization, October 2005.

Godoy, Virgilio. PLI member and presidential candidate for various elections, party leader during the 1990 election (September 2005), Managua, Nicaragua.

Lacayo, Antonio. Chief of Staff for President Chamorro and campaign manager, September 2005.


Navarro, Wilfred. PLC member and party leader, July 2005.

Noguerra, Carlos. PLC member and party leader, July 2005.

Ramírez, Sergio. Ex-FSLN member and Vice-President of Nicaragua during the transition, October 2005.

Rosales, Miguel. Member of the PLC and its organizational commission, August 2005.

Tellez, Dora Maria. Ex-FSLN member and *comandante*, founding member of the MRS, August 2005.


Zúñiga Gutiérrez, Aníbal, PC member and president of the party, October 2005.


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