Cooperation Among the Nicaraguan Sandinista Factions[1]

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This article reports on the findings of archival and field research in Nicaragua and includes interviews with 33 top-, mid-, and low-level rebel fighters who participated in the Nicaraguan Revolution. Several theories in political psychology are used to explore coalition formation and cooperation among Sandinista factions. The article also examines the lack of cooperation among the Contra fighters during the same time period. Several hypotheses are presented identifying sources of the Sandinista division into three factions and later unification into a single revolutionary force. Finally, the article offers our perspective on the factors that hindered cooperation among Contra factions and ultimately allowed the Sandinistas to emerge victorious in the revolution.

Este trabajo difunde los hallazgos de investigaciones de archivo y de campo en Nicaragua e incluye entrevistas con 33 guerrilleros de nivel alto, medio y bajo que participaron en la Revolución Nicaragüense. Se usan varias teorías de la psicología política para explorar la formación de coaliciones y la cooperación entre las facciones sandinistas. El artículo también examina la falta de cooperación entre las facciones de los Contras durante el mismo periodo. Basado en entrevistas y observaciones en el campo, se ofrecen algunas hipótesis y variables analíticas que afectaron la división y la reunificación de las varias facciones sandinistas. Por último, el artículo ofrece nuestra perspectiva de los factores que dificultaron la cooperación entre los Contras y que finalmente permitieron a los sandinistas salir victoriosos en la revolución.

Key words: insurgency, Nicaraguan Revolution, FSLN, Contras, coalition formation, cooperation

Introduction

In July 1979, after more than two decades of armed struggle, the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) overthrew Anastasio Somoza's regime in Nicaragua. It was a remarkable accomplishment given that the organization had been nearly decimated two years earlier (Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). In 1977, the *Guardia Nacional* (GN) launched a massive counterinsurgency operation that decapitated the leadership of the FSLN by killing Edgar Muncia, Eduardo Contreras, Carlos Fonseca, and other members of the National Directorate. This was followed by the FSLN's disastrous "October 1978

Offensive" in Ocotal, along the northern border, the group's worst military defeat (Humberto Ortega, personal communication, July 2008). By the end of 1978, the FSLN found itself in a precarious position in the war and comprised three distinct groups or "tendencies" (as the splintered groups were called within the FSLN).

These "tendencies" were completely separate organizations with dueling interests and strategies and separate leaders (Edén Pastora, and Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). Leading up to the "national reunification" of March 1979, the organization faced dueling models in military strategy, dwindling resources, and a deepening power struggle within its leadership; it also had failed to capitalize on a number of "spontaneous mass uprisings" in major cities. Nonetheless, although each tendency remained inflexible in its own strategy, each also maintained a strong identification with the larger group (Jaime Wheelock, personal communication, July 2008). Finally, despite the level of "petty bickering by the members of the Dirección Nacional" in the late stages of the war (Edén Pastora, personal communication, July 2008), they put aside their differences and forged a "unity of action" (Victor Hugo Tinoco, personal communication, July 2008) that allowed them to move forward in the armed struggle as a united front.

The case of the Sandinista Front allows us to study conditions under which splintering insurgency groups move away from competition and toward collaboration. Throughout its armed struggle against Somoza, the FSLN did not have strong internal cohesion. The depth of its divisions led to multiple strategic, ideological, political, and practical problems and to the creation of the three "tendencies." Although most research into the politico-military dynamics of the FSLN has focused on the development of a single strategic vision and has downplayed differences over tactics and personalities as small (Walker, 1997), it is important to acknowledge and examine the considerable depth of the internal divisions within the FSLN. Why do individuals and groups cooperate with each other? Which factors initially lead to conflict, and how is each group able to resolve these conflicts? What motivates them to engage in cooperation, what enables them to cooperate, and what factors keep coalitions together?

In Nicaragua, a variety of centripetal factors fostered a congealing transformation in the FSLN, as opposed to further splintering the movement. Several analytical variables will be discussed in terms of their role in explaining the reunification and their influence on the nature of that unity. Most importantly, this article examines the manner in which the different factions purposefully cooperated in the later stages of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Methodology

Relying heavily on data collected during field research in Nicaragua in the summer of 2008, this article attempts to examine cooperation dynamics manifested over more than 30 years of armed conflict in this country. All of the data used in the analysis was obtained during a three-week period in the field, and a total of 33 subjects were interviewed. Four groups (three Sandinista factions and the Contras) were evaluated, with one group (the Contras) acting as the null

hypothesis given that cooperation did not take place in its case. Our team comprised one principal investigator and two research assistants. We traveled first to Managua, the capital, where we interviewed high-level decision makers in the FSLN and the Contras. We then moved to Matagalpa, in the northern part of Nicaragua, to interview low- and mid-level fighters in each organization. We returned to Managua to resume the interviews of high-level leaders. Finally, in Diriamba, a small town directly south of Managua, we interviewed mid- and low-level Sandinista fighters.

Most of our interviews were conducted individually, except in the city of Matagalpa, where the bulk of the interviews consisted of our team meeting with multiple members of three non-governmental organizations, ranging from eight to fourteen individuals at one meeting.[2] Additionally, we conducted archival research at the *Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica*, at the *Universidad Centroamericana* in Managua. Here we had the opportunity to study original, unedited letters and communiqués from the FSLN, government records, and insurgent documents. All members of our research team were knowledgeable in Spanish, with two being native speakers; all of the interviews (except for a portion of our interview with Jaime Wheelock) were conducted in Spanish. This helped maximize efficiency in the data-gathering process. We collected personal narratives focusing on dynamics leading to cooperation between the various armed groups.

Cooperation in our case study was approached as a stage in the conflict process rather than as part of a monolithic category of events occurring outside the conflict. It is presumed to arise within certain conditions; instances of cooperation reflect real political processes within armed groups. It is our goal to uncover the settings for cooperation and the principal factors and conditions that forced different groups into cooperation during the armed conflicts even at the risk of sacrificing resources in the short and long term. Evidence from the field points out one certainty: During the Sandinista Revolution, the three organizations collaborated closely with each other to achieve regime change. They did so in spite of marked differences in military and political strategy, separate leadership, and diverging long-term goals.

Using patterns of cooperation and lack thereof identified using minimum-resource theory, minimum-power theory, bargaining theory, and image theory, we examine the willingness of the FSLN to form and maintain collaboration. We posit that collaboration can occur in a variety of ways, with differing implications for a conflict's outcome and for the interested domestic and international actors. We see collaboration occurring along the following continuum:

Collaboration ← leading to power-sharing	Collaboration ← until victory, competition afterward	Information ← sharing and logistical support	Ad hoc ← cooperation	Implicit ← cooperation (do no harm)	Personal contacts only

Organizational Structure of the FSLN

The FSLN was a complex insurgency organization that evolved over time in terms of ideology, leadership, membership, strategic preferences, and factions. A

group of intellectuals led by Carlos Fonseca Amador formed the FSLN in 1962. The organization evolved from the Socialist Party of Nicaragua (PSN) and several student organizations. Fonseca, a student leader and member of the PSN, disagreed with the party's unwillingness to encourage armed struggle. As one of their first acts of rebellion, Fonseca and some associates from the PSN staged an armed attack against the dictatorship in 1959; it proved to be a disaster. After this defeat, the group that reorganized into the FSLN had three principal characteristics: generational leadership, political philosophy, and membership groups within the organization.

Generally, the majority of the leaders of the first group were part of the elite who were middle class, college-educated people (Víctor Hugo Tinóco, personal communication, July 2008). The first group of leaders, the generation of 1959, included founders Carlos Fonseca, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomás Borge. Most were university students who felt a strong connection with the nationalistic spirit of Augusto César Sandino (Borge, 1986; Fonseca, 1984). The second generation joined during the 1960s and early 1970s and drew additional inspiration from the Cuban Revolution and Ché Guevara (Ortega, 2004). Members were recruited in high school or college. The prominent leaders of this generation included Jaime Wheelock and Daniel and Humberto Ortega. The third generation of leaders joined after mass uprisings in the mid-1970s and was influenced by the nation's declining political and economic conditions, persecution as students, or both. This group included Victor Hugo Tinoco, Mónica Baltodano, and Roberto Huemba and had a large proportion of underage soldiers.[3]

In terms of political philosophy, Victor H. Tinoco (personal communication, July 2008) described three pillars:

1. Nationalism as a legacy of Augusto César Sandino.

2. Marxism imbued with a Latin American perspective.

3. Christendom as embodied by Liberation Theology.

Nicaraguan nationalism, the legacy of Sandino, the self-made "general of free men" (Gabriela Mistral, personal communication, July 2008) who fought against the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s, is the most fundamental of the three pillars. Sandino was a nationalist, and the FSLN saw itself as an indigenous movement. This sentiment grew to the extent that members of the FSLN understood that "to be a Nicaraguan meant to be a Sandinista."[4] This idea allowed the Sandinistas to become the superordinate identity of all the tendencies, one of the factors that would foster cooperation.

Marxism with a Latin American influence acknowledged that the experience of the countries of the isthmus was different from that of the Soviet Union, even though the historical challenge (create a "just society" and alter the class-based distribution of wealth) was similar. The FSLN faced the need to fuse a revolutionary path within a pluralistic reality (Victor Hugo Tinoco, personal communication, July 2008). In this sense, the Sandinista experience had more in common with the Chilean experiment under Allende than with the European model of socialism.

Finally, Liberation Theology shaped the political philosophy of the group. Nicaragua always has been a deeply religious country, but for the *guerrilleros*, the true sense of Christendom was rooted in the revolutionary experience. This contemplation led to a political compromise, which in turn led to a revolution (Ernesto Cardenal, personal communication, July 2008). This "compromise" fused Marxism, nationalism, armed conflict, and Christianity.

During the 1960s, the FSLN staged few military actions, and most proved disastrous, resulting in death or imprisonment for some of the most important leaders. In 1963, it set operations in the eastern region in Rios Coco y Bocay, hoping to emulate Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara by establishing a *foco de guerrilla* (foothold) in the mountains from which to build a revolution (Humberto Ortega, personal communication, July 2004). In this period, the group was inactive militarily, with few members and resources. It decided that the *foco* model would prove ineffective in Nicaragua and began the process of actively recruiting a new, specialized group of Sandinistas: the *Clandestine* (Mónica Baltodano, personal communication, July 2008), which focused on urban action beginning in the second half of the 1960s. Although the mountains remained the military vanguard, the *Clandestine* became an effective support and recruit system. This decision accomplished three goals: relieving pressure from the group in the mountains, forcing the Somoza regime to spread out its resources, and forcing FSLN leaders to share decision making. By 1967, the FSLN had established, by strategic necessity, three specialized divisions within the group (Dora María Téllez, Jaime Wheelock, Margine Gutiérrez, and Mónica Baltodano, personal communication, July 2008):

1. *The Guerrilleros* spent most of their time in the mountains, did most of the fighting, and rarely went into the city.

2. *The Clandestine* were mid-level leaders that had been "marked" by the authorities and could no longer go about in public without risking their lives. They spent most of their time in "safe houses" organizing activism and revolts.

3. *The Legals* led normal lives in the cities while leading underground efforts to provide resources and recruits for the *Clandestine*.

In the 1970s, a series of events precipitated further divisions in the structure of the FSLN. More defined entities arose within the organization, and these later split into tendencies. First, Somoza's counter-insurgency tactics (Mónica Baltodano, personal communication, July 2008) forced the FSLN to divide its leadership into two groups: the mountain and urban fronts.[5] Although initially this was perceived to be a natural expansion of the movement, eventually it would provide the foundation for ideological schisms. Second, life in the mountains was harsh, with few resources and a low survival rate for most new recruits.[6] Third, given that the regime in power used heavy-handed techniques to elicit collaboration from *campesinos* in identifying any "foreigner,"[7] the Sandinistas proved easy targets for Somoza's army. It became necessary for the survival of the group once again to shift focus to the cities (Margine Gutierrez, personal communication, July 2008.) This is how the *Clandestine* became the spearhead of the organi-

zation. Finally, attrition losses forced the group to send its top leaders into exile—for their own protection. It was at this point that the tendencies began to adopt separate strategies.

Separate Organizations

The end of the 1960s found the FSLN trying to resolve a series of internal conflicts while at the same time attempting to develop specialized units within the group. After the exile of its top leaders, the FSLN entered a period of internal criticism concerning the effectiveness of its military strategy, and it splintered into three separate organizations.[8]

The first split had its genesis in the decision to adopt a more defensive strategy modeled on Mao Tse Tung's "People's War." The so-called "Prolonged People's War" (GPP) was a strategy that preserved the notion that mountains were the natural habitat of the revolution. Accepting urban resistance as a necessity, power shifted to the mountains, and by incorporating peasants into the group, the FSLN saw the fall of Somoza as inevitable. At the same time, the exiled leaders developed a formal structure and a national directorate. Carlos Fonseca was named the politico-military head and Oscar Turcios the second in command. Although Fonseca held "moral authority," decision making remained decentralized in the group.[9] The practical reality of the mountain and urban fronts demanded the paradoxical challenge of uncontested loyalty coupled with individual autonomy.

As tension increased between the strategy of the exiled leaders and that of those who continued to fight in Nicaragua, the group developed further contradictions that led to the birth of a second organization. The central problem at this point was a question of the validity of the moral authority of the leaders in exile: Fighters in the mountains held contempt for leaders residing in exile, claiming they were out of touch with the realities of the war, especially when their decisions put them at risk. The *Tendencia Proletaria* (TP) was more class conscious, cautious with regard to strategy, and primarily a clandestine, urban group. It subordinated military strategy to political action (Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). Its leaders included Jaime Wheelock, Luis Carrión, and Roberto Huemba, with Wheelock possessing the most authority. In late 1975, leaders in exile expelled all three of them from the FSLN, effectively conceding their separate identity.

In June 1976, after the death of Fonseca (who had returned to Nicaragua seeking reconciliation between the two existing tendencies), a third faction declared itself as formally organized. Under the direction of brothers Humberto and Daniel Ortega, the *Terceristas* (Third Way) was far less dogmatic than the other two tendencies, to the extent that it formed political alliances with nonsocialist organizations. It favored a mixed urban–rural strategy and gained the powerful position of mediating between the GPP and the TP after the death of Fonseca. At this point, the tendencies began to behave as separate organizations, each with its own structures, strategies, and goals and in conflict with each other. Evidence from the field reveals that the three groups shunned[10] each other and went as far as sabotaging each other's operations (Jaime Whee-

lock, Mónica Baltodano, Margine Gutiérrez, and Napoleón Molina, personal communication, July 2008). Additionally, the majority of interviewees indicated that they had little contact with operatives from other tendencies. Whenever they did work together, they did so on an ad hoc basis.[11]

Cooperation

Well into 1977, the *Terceristas* had yet to succeed in forging mediation between the GPP and the TP. At this point a series of planned and serendipitous events tilted the balance of power within the groups. In October 1977, the *Terceristas* launched a military offensive. Although it proved to be a military disaster, it became a political success because of high exposure in the world media (Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). Somoza lifted martial law in September, increasing the FSLN's capacity of movement. The *Terceristas* correctly identified this period as an opportunity (Dora María Téllez, Napoleón Molina, and Víctor Hugo Tinoco, personal communication, July 2008). Edén Pastora, the most respected military leader within the FSLN (and the most feared by Somoza), returned to Nicaragua and joined the *Terceristas* after having left the GPP in disgust in 1973. He took over the Southern Front. Popular opposition against Somoza was galvanized after the assassination of opposition newspaper editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro in January 1978. On August 22, 1978, a force of 25 *Terceristas*, led by Edén Pastora, carried out an assault on the National Palace and took the entire Nicaraguan Congress, which was in session at the time, hostage.[12] Spontaneous, mass uprisings began to occur across the country, such as *La insurrección de los Niños* (children's insurrection), that proved particularly damaging to the regime and beneficial to the FSLN.[13]

Additional uprisings in Monimbó, Sutiaba, and Diriamba proved to the regime, the FSLN, and the world at large that the conflict had become a Nicaraguan phenomenon, as opposed to one of "a few subversives" (as Somoza explained it).

The Sandinistas had to scramble to catch up and organize people in the uprisings. The group best suited to take advantage of this opportunity was the *Terceristas*, as it had now accumulated the largest stock of weapons (Humberto Ortega and Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008), had made significant advances on the urban and mountain fronts (Edén Pastora, personal communication, July 2008), and had established connections with outside groups that provided support (including the moneyed elite and the traditional political opposition) (Mónica Baltodano, Luis Figueroa, and Napoleón Molina, personal communication, July 2008). Realizing that "an insurrection is a phenomenon that is inherently difficult to organize" (Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008), the *Terceristas* made the decision to present to the other two tendencies the possibility of "coordination in different structures."[14] The three groups agreed to use their strongest hand in the final offensive. In essence, this act moved them into a collaborative form that allowed power sharing in accordance with the resources of each organization (Edén Pastora, Napoleón Molina, Luis Figueroa, and Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). The GPP coordinated the mountains and the TP the urban front, and the *Terceristas* mediated

between the tendencies, the moneyed elite, and the political opposition. Each group maximized its strengths and for the first time maintained a clear chain of command.

In March 1979, the Dirección Nacional announced a reunification of the tendencies, with three leaders from each organization having equal representation in the new nine-member Dirección Nacional. An official proclamation was issued to the nation via radio broadcast (*Radio Sandino*, FSLN pirated radio, broadcast freely), and the fighting forces were instructed to unify.[15] Most of the interviewees stated that the reunification was initially pragmatic[16] and was accomplished because of the following.

1. The conviction was reinforced that "Sandinista" was their superordinate identity during the war.

2. Reunification was maintained at the institutional level, negating the need to compare groups within the FSLN and reinforcing the fact that the group to which they compared each other was their common enemy (Somoza).

3. No single individual was elevated above the others, and power was evenly distributed.[17] This idea was in line with the philosophical legacy that the revolution and insurrections were a mass phenomenon brought about by the collective suffering of the people of Nicaragua.

4. The final objective superseded personal differences, providing the capacity to focus efforts on making the situation worse for the common enemy—the regime—while maximizing benefits to the group.

In the final analysis, the Sandinistas had marked disagreements on core issues during the revolution. Nonetheless, their evolution provided them with the necessary tools to set aside their disagreements and become task oriented. Their reunification was constructed with a specific goal in mind: maximize the opportunity to pool resources and bring about regime change. Most important, they were able to accommodate different long-term goals into their coalition.

The Contras: A Case of No Cooperation

The Contras in Nicaragua offer the opportunity to examine insurgent groups that did not cooperate with one another. Several Contra-affiliated groups operated between 1981 and 1990, all funded by the United States. Although this article makes use of the Contras as a comparison group for the dynamics of cooperation between the three Sandinistas factions, the Contras and Sandanistas are not fully comparable. Militarily, the Contra experience was different; the Contra War was shorter (nine years) than the Sandinista Revolution (more than two decades of armed conflict). Second, according to interviewees, the Contra strategy was terrorism—engaging in indiscriminate attacks against civilian and government targets.[18] The Contras had little or no structure, and statements provided during our interviews suggest miscellaneous reasons why they fought against the Sandinistas (Asociación de Resistencia Nicaragüense [ARNIC];[19] personal communication with multiple members, 2008). The only consistent reason provided was that "every revolution must have its counterrevolution."[20]

According to former Contra leader Adolfo Calero, "Competition is a part of the natural state of business." He goes on to explain that, "life is the same as business and that the best form of cooperation anyone can expect is not to hinder each other" (Adolfo Calero, personal communication, July 2008). As the principal leader of the largest Contra group *Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense* (FDN), he claims to have led 22,000 men at one time while trying to coordinate cooperation between the other Contra groups in order to depose the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The Contras, according to Calero, were primarily "*campesinos* spontaneously rising to fight Communists with an inferiority complex." Calero himself was born into the high-moneyed elite in Nicaragua and went to high school and college in the United States. During the later years of the Somoza regime, he claims to have tried actively to convince Somoza to leave a system of "Somozismo without Somoza," especially after the dictator failed to honor "old standards of doing business" in Nicaragua and began to accumulate land and resources that were taken away from the traditional moneyed elite. He claims to have been drawn into the conflict when he realized that the "communists were completely different from me, *they were not even humans*!" (Adolfo Calero, personal communication, July 2008). (Italics are ours; emphasis was Calero's.)

There were three different waves of membership into the Contras (ARNIC, personal communication, 2008; Calero, personal communication, 2008; DeFronzo, 2007; and Reyes and Wilson, 1992). The first wave consisted primarily of former officers of the Somoza army and of peasant militias in the north of the country. Rich Nicaraguans living in exile in Miami funded them. They lived primarily in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and never intended to face the Sandinista army full force; their strategy was to destabilize the nation in hopes of deposing the government and restoring a new one that would return their lost status (ARNIC, personal communication, 2008; Tellez, Baltodano, and Pastora, personal communication, 2008). The second wave of Contras was recruited directly from young, male Nicaraguans in exile. Finally, the third wave of Contras—by far the largest in number—joined the conflict once it was well advanced. It drew from family members of the first wave of former Somoza officers, from poor *campesinos* conscripted into the war during Contra raids, and from indigenous Miskitu pushed into the war by atrocities committed upon their communities by the Sandinista army (ARNIC, personal communication, 2008; Reyes and Wilson, 1992).

The Contras were informally organized into three major groups: the FDN and the MDN on the border with Honduras in the north and ARDE on the Costa Rican border. The U.S. government, under the administration of Ronald Reagan, began to provide the groups with funds and pressured them to form one large, umbrella group that came to be known as United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO).[21] Calero was the principal leader of UNO, along with Alfonso Robelo and Arturo Cruz, and he states that UNO was never able to fully cooperate given that it was "forced by the U.S. to join forces, it was not a natural union." Edén Pastora led another Contra group in the south, claiming to have become disillusioned with the Sandinistas,[22] although he states that he "was not a Contra and was never interested in cooperating with them given that he was a dissident."

Calero, leader of the Contra coalition, refers to his subordinates in certain terms, whereas the subordinates themselves give different, contrasting testi-

mony. Calero largely paints his subordinates with a broad stroke as "fighting for their own reasons" (Calero, personal communication, July 2008), whereas the rank-and-file speak of him with respect, given that he was "representing their interests to the United States and the world." Calero saw their relationship as one of situational commonality, whereas the fighters perceived him in a paternal light. The Contras were not able to forge cooperation, even in the presence of significantly vast financial resources from the United States. The elites had marked potential incentives for cooperating—coordination, increasing their presence, and forcing the Sandinista army into thinning its forces—yet they were unsuccessful. Pastora, a significant force in the south (given his familiarity with the region and his success as a field general) was purposefully left out of elite-level meetings.

By 1987, most of the indigenous fighters had left the war and accepted concessions from the government (namely, political autonomy) in exchange. Additionally, the monetary incentive had disappeared for the poor peasants conscripted into the Contras as Congress halted funds from the United States and popular support for the Contras began to dry up on the Honduras border. Meanwhile, the three "legs" of the elite leadership could not agree on any systematic power sharing, with Robelo and Cruz finally defecting because Calero would never agree to give up his power.[23] In the end, the Contras experienced poor long-term loyalty from their recruits (ARNIC, personal communication, 2008). As an organization formed externally, it had difficulty creating a superordinate identity between its members and suffered marked dissension from its elite group. The behavior of the Contra elite in Honduras was particularly debilitating to any attempt at cooperation given that the main actor (Calero) was unyielding in his position of avoiding power sharing at any cost. Moreover, Calero had no real connection with the men under his direction. He attributed their membership in the organization to "personal reasons."

Theoretical Framework

Political psychology contributes to our understanding of collaborative relationships between groups, although this academic field does not look specifically at collaboration between insurgent groups. The insurgent factions that collaborate share a number of traits common to coalitions. Coalitions are small collections of group members who cooperate to achieve a common goal. They typically involve group members who disagree on fundamental matters but decide to set aside those differences and focus on the problem at hand. Coalitions form to achieve certain goals, and they tend to be temporary because the participants often have little commitment to anything other than the current goal. Coalitions typically form in mixed-motive situations. Group members that formerly competed with one another must cooperate to achieve the current goal. Coalitions are adversaries drawn together by this specific goal in an attempt to win something and ensure that another coalition loses something. Although it is possible that a theory of individuals forming coalitions cannot simply be transferred into a theory of groups forming coalitions, we argue that individuals representing groups are likely to behave differently from individuals representing only themselves. Consequently, the literature on coalition formation should be considered briefly.

There are a number of theories that explain when and why coalitions are likely to form. According to minimum-resource theory, group members form coalitions on the basis of "equal input–equal output" (Gamson, 1961, 1964). This theory makes two assumptions: First, people in groups are motivated primarily by the need to maximize power and payoffs, and second, members of coalitions believe that the distribution of power and rewards should be divided equally among the members of the coalition. The central proposition is that people form coalitions with the smallest number of members possible so that each maximizes its resource outcome.

Minimum-power theory maintains that coalition members expect payoffs that are directly proportional to their ability to turn a losing coalition into a winning one. This type of power is referred to as "pivotal power" (Miller and Komorita, 1986; Shapley, 1953). Power, broadly defined, is the most important determinant of coalition formation. The number of times a member could turn a winning coalition into a losing one by withdrawing from it determines the pivotal power of any coalition member.

According to bargaining theory, coalitions form on the basis of expected payoffs based on norms of equity and equality, with group members adhering to whichever norm provides the largest payoff (Komorita and Nagao, 1983). This theory assumes that group members prefer to form coalitions with those who will not withdraw. It also assumes that the amount of payoff may change over time to compensate for extra rewards given to coalition members tempted to join another coalition.

Social identity theory and image in political psychology provide another dimension for understanding collaboration (R. Cottam, 1977; M. Cottam, 1986, 1994; M. Cottam and R. Cottam, 2001; M. Cottam et al., 2004; Tajfel, 1970, 1978, 1982; Tajfel and Billig, 1974). Social identity studies assert four central propositions. First, people strive to maintain positive self-images. Second, membership in groups contributes to one's identity and self-image. Third, individuals evaluate their own groups by comparing them with other groups. Finally, positive individual social identity is contingent upon a positive comparison of one's own with other groups. It is crucial that the power of identities be recognized. When people identify strongly with a group, the fate of the group becomes more important than their fate as individuals (M. Cottam and R. Cottam, 2001). When an important group is deprived of resources, members perceive a threat to their group's well-being and will struggle for their fair share or more. When a group whose members identify intensely suffers humiliation and loss of status or prestige, members will perceive this as a threat to the existence of their group, and insurgencies are born (Moghaddam, 2006). Changing that perception of threat is crucial to preventing fractious insurgent groups from collaborating and to convincing others to collaborate in power sharing.

Given the propensity to favor the in group, it would seemingly be difficult for political collaboration to occur, but groups collaborate under certain conditions. First, to the extent that they have overlapping identities, a superordinate identity as one in group can be developed (M. Cottam et al., 2004). A second pathway for overcoming intergroup competition and enhancing cooperation is cross-cutting group membership. Members may be in different social classes but in a common political group. It is argued that, by emphasizing the common group member-

ship, conflict will decrease, leaving more room for cooperation. This pattern has received empirical support from anthropological studies of societies with "cross-cutting kinship and tribal systems [which] seem to be less prone to internal feuding than those with more pyramidal structure" (Brown, 2000, p. 345). Third, the more permeable group boundaries are, the less rigid the divisions appear, and the more commonality the groups see. Cooperation is the natural byproduct (Gaertner et al., 1993). Fourth, warring groups often come together and cooperate when they have a common goal and need each other to achieve that goal. Cooperation can be elicited by giving competitive groups a common goal. One additional finding regarding intergroup cooperation is that groups are much more likely to cooperate when they have a common enemy (M. Cottam et al., 2004).

How groups perceive each other will affect the longevity and permanence of their cooperation. Image theory sets forth several political stereotypes that actors have of one another (M. Cottam, 1986, 1994; M. Cottam and R. Cottam, 2001; M. Cottam et al., 2004; Herrmann, 1985a, 1985b, 1988, 1991; Herrmann et al., 1997). The ally image is the most likely to lead to permanent cooperation. When one group's members see another group as an ally, they see it as equal in culture and capability, willing to help when threats occur, able to complete its tasks and goals reliably, and complex in terms of its decision making. This is a political stereotype and may not be matched by reality.

Organizational Dynamics

The nature of an insurgent group's organization is the final factor that we believe is important in determining the prospects for cooperation with other insurgent groups. Literature on organizations speaks of characteristics that contribute to successful collaboration with other groups. These include distinctiveness, adaptability to changing environments, strong horizontal rather than vertical structures, culture of trust, effective communication with other organizations, shared values, and permeable boundaries providing for easy admission of new members (Alexander, 1995; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Parker, 1994). Perceptions of members that cooperation will produce more rewards than costs and structural similarities between the organizations also enhance prospects for cooperation (Alexander, 1995). Finally, leadership characteristics are important in affecting an insurgency group's willingness to collaborate with others. Leaders who are task oriented, rather than relationship oriented, are less likely to be concerned with the feelings of those reluctant to cooperate with another group and more likely to assess the value of cooperation in terms of its effect on accomplishing the task at hand (Hogan, 2007; Preston, 2001). We maintain that collaboration can occur in a variety of ways, with differing implications for a conflict's outcome and for the interested domestic and international actors.

Examining the Hypotheses

Field research often changes the dynamics of proposed hypotheses based on experimental studies, and that was certainly the case with this research project. The hypotheses will be grouped accordingly, given that variables that can be clearly delineated in laboratory studies are less clearly definable in the field.

1. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when the insurgents believe doing so will maximize their resources.**
   The factions differed in terms of the minimal resource hypothesis in that the *Terceristas* were willing to ally themselves with non-leftist anti-Somoza factions.

2. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when the insurgents believe that doing so will maximize their power.**

3. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when all insurgent groups have low pivotal power.**
   Our interviews indicate that the leaders of the three tendencies came to the conclusion that uniting was essential to winning the revolution. The last months of the revolution were chaotic, and it is not clear that the Sandinistas believed they would be the political victors after the revolution (Kinzer, 2007). Their main goal was to depose the Somoza regime. They do not distinguish between power and resources in interviews. In terms of pivotal power, each faction recognized that, alone, it could not win the revolution; therefore, it is logical to conclude that each had low pivotal power.

4. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when the groups have norms of equality, equity, or both.**
   This hypothesis is supported in the case of the FSLN. The disagreements they had did not subvert the value they paid to equality and equity. Throughout the revolution, the leaders treated each other as equals, and no faction had veto power after the unity agreement. After the victory, the norm of equality was maintained through a power-sharing structure that gave each faction an important piece of the pie. The standard of equality filtered through to the base. Although some members had reservations about the inclusion of women as combatants, the *cúpula* (highest-ranking leaders) and combatants in the field denounced this hesitation, and women played an important role in this revolution.

5. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when they perceive one another as allies and trust each other.**
   Interviews and written accounts lead to the conclusion that this hypothesis is not clearly supported in the case of the FSLN at the leadership level, but the data speaks more of the limitations of current knowledge about in-group differences and the ally image. There were many reports of lack of trust among the leaders. The lack of trust reflected personal animosities, which were controllable, according to Ortega (personal communication, August 2008). Most important, the interviews reveal the complexity of in-group dynamics and imagery. On the one hand, there were personal conflicts and lack of trust. On the other, years after the victory of the revolution, our interviewees frequently referred to their fellow revolutionaries as "brothers." Those who had left the FSLN expressed strong feelings of sorrow and stress. There was evidence of a strong in-group attachment, but the imagery did not clearly reflect an ally image (equal in culture and capability, helpful in intensions, complex deci-

sion making). For example, Humberto Ortega's book (2004) describes mutual perceptions (pp. 293–295). The GPP regarded the *Terceristas* as desperados and adventurers and the TP as false Marxists. The leaders of the TP regarded the GPP as romantic guerrillas and the *Terceristas* as provocateurs who caused the National Guard to be more brutal than ever and as traitors willing to ally with the petty bourgeoisie. The *Terceristas* considered the TP to be too theoretical and the GPP to be dogmatic and sectarian. Do these negative attributions mean that they did not see each other as allies? Our suspicion is that the answer is no.

Another indicator of the presence of an ally image is that they kept much of their disagreement at the task level rather than at the relationship level. In-group disagreements tended to be focused on tasks rather than on the relationship or the fundamental characteristics of those in disagreement with each other (M. Cottam, 2005). Disagreements about strategy led to evaluations of one another as too romantic, theoretical, or dogmatic. Those characteristics were not seen as inherent to each side. Once again, it is important to make a distinction between the *cúpula* and the *base*. Although interviewees describe tension and mistrust in the *cúpula*, they often state that things were different in the *base*, that there was confidence among fighters from different factions.

6. **Coalitions developed with ally images are more likely to survive after the conflict is over.**

7. **Coalitions are more likely to form when the groups have a common enemy.**
   The Nicaraguan case shows the power of a common enemy and the aftereffects of an ally image. The common enemy shifted during the revolution from imperialism first and Somoza's regime second to Somoza's regime first. After the revolution, the common enemy was the United States, and Humberto Ortega argues that this was the principal reason for the true reconciliation between the three factions (personal communication, August 2008). Clearly the ally image existed in the factions.

8. **Coalitions are more likely to form when members of each group have a common superordinate identity.**
   There is no doubt of the common superordinate identity because Nicaraguans and Nicaraguan nationalism played an important role in bringing the FSLN together as well as in promoting power sharing after the revolution. Tellez notes that, even after the formal unification, the three tendencies had not formed an "organic" unification. Nevertheless, they did not fight. She argues that Nicaraguans put aside differences and became friends and that this is the national personality (interview, July 2008).

9. **Coalitions are not likely to form when a group believes its survivability as a group (psychologically, not literally) is in danger.**
   Our data does not permit us to speak on this hypothesis. The FSLN tendencies were careful to preserve the power, and therefore the existence, of each group.

10. **Coalitions among insurgents are likely to form when the insurgent groups are horizontally rather than vertically organized.**
The FSLN factions were horizontally organized at the political level, which may have facilitated cooperation. At the military level, their armies maintained a typical hierarchical structure.

11. **Coalitions are likely to form when the organizations are permeable.**
The FSLN tendencies were permeable in the sense that a member could move from one faction to another. In addition, many urban dwellers went to the mountains to fight, and a person could, with permission, move from a clandestine role to a combatant role.

12. **Coalitions are likely to form when the insurgent organizations are adaptable.**
The FSLN tendencies were not equally adaptable. The *Terceristas* were much more adaptable than the GPP or the TP in terms of tactics and a willingness to carry the fight anywhere they could win. On the other hand, the GPP adjusted its mountain tactics and learned from its mistakes. The TP's ability to change is less clear. As a clandestine organization, it employed many different methods of moving information, people, and resources, and it was able to continue its recruitment and politicization campaigns, but Wheelock did not reveal much in our interview about its adaptability. It is also likely that it understood the additional flexibility to be gained by forming a unified front and that this contributed to the decision to unite.

13. **Coalitions are likely to form when there is effective communication.**
In the Nicaraguan case, forming the coalition contributed to effective communication. Before the unification, communication was difficult. Because of the need for secrecy, fighters often did not know who their commanders were before an operation began. The extreme danger of clandestine operations made communication difficult.

14. **Coalitions are likely to form when insurgent leaders are task rather than relationship focused.**
Our interviews with FSLN leaders indicate that they were task oriented. Fonseca may have had some element of relationship orientation in his leadership, but he too was famous for being strict, by the book, and disciplined. The factions removed and replaced those who did not perform well, those who could not control their personal behavior and thereby put others at risk, and those who were not worthy revolutionaries. According to one commander, the guerrillas had nightly sessions discussing each person's performance, discussions that were "not personal but designed to improve the struggle" (Napoleon Molina Davida, personal communication, August 2008).

Conclusion

The process of division of the FSLN into three separate organizations was slow and "evolutionary" in its development. By contrast, the reunification processes

and the decision to cooperate with each other were punctuated and serendipitous. Nonetheless, the two are intrinsically connected in the dynamics of development of the FSLN as an indigenous organization. Evidence shows that the five main reasons why reunification was possible were:

1) They saw each other as *compañeros*, or part of the same group with one superordinate identity: Nicaraguans. This precluded fighting each other, at least to the degree that they would hurt the larger organization.

2) There was reunification at all levels of the FSLN and this did not impede leadership of each group from direct decision making within its respective sphere of influence.

3) Power was evenly distributed among the three tendencies even though, by the time of reunification, the *Terceristas* were the largest and most powerful organization. That is to say, no single individual had the mantle of the revolution.

4) They were consistently task oriented in their dealings with each other, allowing them to minimize internal conflict.

5) Their strong conviction that the final objective was more important than personal differences allowed them to minimize differences and focus on the task at hand—namely, defeating the Somoza regime.

Even while most of our subjects claim that the reunification was largely pragmatic, there is no question that the process was positive. After the death of Carlos Fonseca and the splintering of the group into three tendencies, the FSLN developed "three different foci and three different visions" of the problem in Nicaragua (Edén Pastora, Napoleón Molina, Luis Figueroa, Mónica Baltodano, Margine Gutiérrez, and Dora María Téllez, personal communication, July 2008). After reunification, each rearranged its goals into one single strategic plan, and the three remained united. The Sandinistas have transformed themselves into an effective political party, even as they revisit some of the old contradictions. Many interviewees stated that this was possible because the division of power was transferred into the postrevolutionary period. In the final analysis, its complex evolution allowed the group to accommodate different models within the larger organization. In this sense, the group was able to create the necessary room within its long-term strategies and fixed institutions for cooperation to be engendered throughout all levels of the FSLN, from the elites to the foot soldiers. This was a difficult endeavor. No single factor facilitated or enhanced cooperation. It was the organic total that positively affected the likelihood of cooperation. While no single factor was the most important, there are three that seem to have played a larger role, especially when comparing the Sandinistas with the Contra case.

First, given that the Contras were an externally created group, it became difficult for them to adhere to one single overarching identity. Were they Reagan's "freedom fighters?" Were they Guardias? Were they simply the "soldiers of fortune"? Were they a tool of the superpowers? In this context, the fact that the Sandinistas were an indigenous insurgency enhanced the capacity to foster a superordinate identity, especially during hardship.

Second, given that a good number of the third wave of Contras (ARNIC, personal communication, 2008) were forcibly recruited into the group, it became more difficult to develop strong identity with the long-term goals of the organization. Contrast this with the experience of the mass uprisings during the revolution, the subsequent influx of support for the cause, and the significant amount of self-pride that individuals report from the experience.[24]

Finally, although most research into the politico-military dynamics of the FSLN has focused on the development of a single strategic vision, it has downplayed the differences over tactics and personalities as small (Walker, 1997). We argue that a close analysis of the considerable depth of the internal divisions within the FSLN provides an explanation for the reasons why the group was able to form coalitions in the later stages of the revolution. These combined changes forged by the evolution of the group became centripetal forces for the separate organizations during a crucial time in the war.

In early 1978, the Sandinistas, unlike the Contras 10 years later, came to the realization that the outcome of the group superseded benefits bestowed upon each as individuals. Communal experience and group identity became the foundation from which the three different tendencies grew into a stronger unit; the nature of the group became a decisive factor in its capacity to forge a successful coalition.

This analysis presents some of the complexities of the Nicaraguan revolution. Further examination of this topic and additional interviews are needed to offer more definitive conclusions about why some coalition formations endured while others failed. Finally, additional studies in other conflict areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan will need to be undertaken to advance our findings and further test our hypotheses.

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Notes

[1]The authors are grateful to the College of Liberal Arts and Institute for the Study of Intercommunal Conflict at Washington State University for grant support for this project.

[2]These group interviews were serendipitous, as per our original schedule when first arriving in the field. The decision was made to accommodate our format in order to maximize the opportunity and interview all of the individuals that attended our scheduled meetings.

[3]Frank Torrez, the youngest of the Matagalpa fighters, joined the insurgency at 11 years of age.

[4]All of the former Sandinistas that we interviewed repeated this description.

[5]Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge, Oscar Turcios, Rigoberto Cruz, and Silvio Mayorga were leaders in the mountains, and Daniel Ortega, Julio Buitrago, and Jorge Guerrero held top command positions in the urban resistance.

[6]Four months, according to Dora María Téllez and Edén Pastora, 2008.

[7]Most were light-skinned *mestizos* and taller than the *campesinos* (descendents of indigenous groups).

[8]Téllez, Tinoco, and Baltodano make it clear that the three tendencies were independently functional organizations within the group.

[9]According to Téllez and Baltodano, the secretive nature of the group was such that people only knew their direct contacts, with some never meeting their collaborators until well after the end of the revolution. Additionally, to protect their identities, leaders used *noms de guerre* and were not directly known by their real names.

[10]A particularly telling account describes stark interactions between imprisoned members of the different tendencies sharing the same jail. Mónica Baltodano and Margine Gutierrez, who spent a year together in prison, explain that they purposefully avoided members of other tendencies in jail.

[11]These cover high-, mid-, and low-level members in the FSLN.

[12]For this daring assault, they received a ransom of $18 million; had political prisoners released, including Tomás Borge; and were all flown by plane to Cuba. They also had their manifestos publicly broadcast around the world.

[13]As narrated by actual members of the uprising, some as young as 11 and 12 at the time.

[14]Most interviewees agree on this matter.

[15]Even as the *Terceristas* had become the largest and strongest faction, they agreed to equal-power reunification.

[16]Humberto Ortega claims that, during the Contra War, the reunification was revitalized as all Sandinista factions were threatened by a perceived outside invasion—the United States via the Contras.

[17]Numerous interviewees explained that each tendency not only voted for its own candidates to the Dirección Nacional, but also held veto power over other candidates of other tendencies.

[18]As explained to the authors by a Contra recruiter, 1984.

[19]Asociación de Resisténcia Nicaragüense (ARNIC) is a political action cooperative in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. It consists entirely of former Contra fighters. We met with three members of their leadership (Ulises Leyton, Victor M. Zeledón, and Vladimir Frankil), as well as six members that only gave their former "fighting names" ("Chaparro", "Copoyo", "Satanas," and "Yunque") or remained nameless.

[20]As a Contra recruiter explained to the authors, 1984.

[21]This situation provides a stark contrast to the dynamics of reunification of the three Sandinista tendencies. Whereas the Sandinistas began the reunification process from within the organization and may have (according to only one of our interviewees, who was not an eyewitness during the elite meetings) received only a modicum of direction from an external actor, the Contras were forcibly thrust into an externally construed cooperation.

[22]He tells of the moment he realized they had lost their moral authority. It came when high-ranking Sandinistas began to share material spoils (houses, cars, land) among themselves once in power.

[23]Calero explains that the reason Cruz and Robelo defected was that they never had their hearts in the matter. He narrates an incident when the three had a meeting with "Ronnie" Reagan. At the end of the meeting, all four men were given a t-shirt that read, "I am a Contra too." Reagan and Calero donned their shirts over their shoulders for a photo-op while Robelo held it in front of his chest and Cruz could not even bring himself to lift it over his waist.

[24]The former Contras describe a simple axiom for the existence of their organization: "Every revolution has its contra-revolution." Additionally, all mention being actively "brought to consciousness of their situation" after they had been taken to a Contra camp in Honduras.

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