Civil War and (Re)Building the State: Recovery in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and El Salvador

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CIVIL WAR AND (RE)BUILDING THE STATE: RECOVERY IN COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA, AND EL SALVADOR

By

Desmond A. Turner

A THESIS

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of the University of Miami
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the requirements for the degree of
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CIVIL WAR AND (RE)BUILDING THE STATE: RECOVERY IN COSTA RICA,
NICARAGUA, AND EL SALVADOR

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How do civil wars affect post-war states? I argue that instead of simply examining one or two variables, civil wars need to be viewed holistically in order to properly observe their effect on post-war states. The pre-war government, alliances, type of warfare, duration, and method of war termination work together in a causal sequence to determine the stability and quality of subsequent post-war states. Using comparative historical analysis, supplemented with process tracing, I compare three cases from Central America: the Costa Rican Civil War, the Sandinista Revolution, and the Salvadoran Civil War. A road map to state stability and instability and recurrence is drawn here.
Dedicated to Red, the unexpected moonlight that inspired this completion.
In memory of Cassie L. Smith. You are missed everyday…
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Desmond

Miramar, FL
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II the dynamic of warfare has been changing. International conflict has been declining in the post-1945 world while civil conflicts have been occurring with increasing regularity.¹

As civil conflicts have become more common, several questions have arisen, among them: How can these often bloody conflicts be ended? How can it be made certain that nations emerge from these wars with a strong, stable state that has the ability to avoid a relapse into conflict? Here I want to address the central question: How do the different aspects of a civil war – government prior to war, alliances, type of warfare, war duration, and method of war termination – affect the stability of the post-war state?

By answering this question, the problems plaguing multiple areas around the globe can be addressed in a much better manner. As can be seen in recent examples, including Iraq and Afghanistan among others, civil wars seem to be the trend of conflict around the globe today, and many times although the conflict has been officially concluded, no long term peace is reached. The following work aims to assist in alleviating suffering around the world.

One of the more prominent arguments that have been made linking civil wars and states is that of Monica Duffy Toft. In her work she made a drastic pivot from what was then conventional wisdom by asserting that instead of ending civil wars by negotiated settlements, military victories were more conducive to state stability, and lasting peace,

¹ For more on the decrease in international wars and the increase in civil wars see T. David Mason and Sara McLaughlin ed. What Do We Know about Civil Wars? James D. Fearon notes that there have been approximately 125 civil wars since the end of World War II with roughly 20 ongoing in 2007. The number of ongoing civil wars also increases steadily from 1945 until the early 1990s before decreasing. Also see John Mueller, “War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment,” Political Science Quarterly 124, 2 (2010) and Stathis N. Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” World Politics 54 (2001).
after civil war. She further argued that victories by rebel factions, as opposed to incumbents, lead to more stable post-war states and that those states were more likely to democratize.²

Concerning warfare and war duration, Laia Balcells and Stathis N. Kalyvas have analyzed the relationship between the two. They concluded that irregular/guerrilla wars endured for a longer period than either conventional or symmetric non-conventional wars. Symmetric non-conventional wars are the shortest of the three variants despite common assumptions.³

Although these arguments are solid cornerstones within the literature, they simply do not go far enough. Toft’s argument is incomplete in that it only looks at one factor in the stability of states after experiencing civil war. Although parsimony has been lauded in theory building, some outcomes need more than one variable when explaining it in order to grasp the full concept, hence the proposition to build upon the existing work of Toft in order to better understand how states reach stability after civil wars.

Balcells and Kalyvas’s findings establish an important link between type of warfare and duration of civil wars, but does not explicitly link these variables to the stability of the state after the war’s conclusion. They do hint at a correlation between civil wars and the state in the conclusion of their co-authored article. They state that irregular wars occurring in stronger states “may serve to (perversely, from the rebels perspective) reinforce ultimately the states they challenge.” Conversely, conventional and symmetric non-conventional wars “tend to challenge state that are already weak or are on the cusp of

failing” further degrading them, relating Charles Tilly’s famous assertion that wars make states to their own contention that civil wars make states as well.4

Here I argue that the mechanisms of civil war – government prior to war, alliances, type of warfare, duration, and method of war termination – work together in a causal process resulting in the level of stability in post-war states. A causal pathway beginning with the pre-war government/regime working all the way to the post-war state is my proposition. The government prior to the warfare determines how alliances are formed; those alliances go on to shape, and strengthen or weaken, the post-war state. On the other hand, the pre-war government also determines the type of warfare. The type of warfare, in turn, affects the length of war, which impacts the way in which the conflict is ended. From the method of termination, the causal path moves directly to the post-war state, with it working with alliances in the (re)construction of the state.

I want to shift the focus of civil wars from the usual focus of the state and outbreak5 to the conclusion of war and the state after war. The state is often taken for granted and this is arguably one of the most significant shortcomings of a significant portion of academic work as well as policymaking today.6 This will not only add an understanding of how the different aspects of civil war function together and influence one another, but also assist in understanding how state are (re)constructed after the traumatic experience of civil war.

This thesis will proceed next with a section that establishes the ground work. Here terms will be defined and the scope of my argument will be established. There will also

4 Ibid.
5 For example, see the extensive literature on greed vs. grievance arguments, as well as work on state failure.
6 Major theories of international relations, Realism and Liberalism namely, assume the existence of a unified state structure, something not present in many instances around the world.
be a brief review of the relevant literature in this section. The proceeding section will present my hypotheses, in-depth, followed by a section discussing the method and cases I will utilize in conducting this study. Following this, the empirical work will be presented, with the chapters divided according to the variables in the causal path that will be established in my hypotheses. A brief discussion of the empirical findings will proceed next, leading into the conclusion of the thesis which will include the policy implications of this work.

**Groundwork**

In this section I will define some of the key terms to be used in this study. There will also be a brief review of the relevant literature following the definitions.

**Civil War**

Civil war is defined as “a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region, or to change government policies.” The desire of a particular region of people to separate themselves from the existing state is also a possible characteristic of civil war. In addition to this, political scientists usually use a threshold of at least 1,000 killed during the course of the conflict to deem the violence a civil war as opposed to terrorism or simply internal political strife. With this definition, some conflicts that are commonly known as revolutions can be included in the universe of analysis.

Civil war has become a third (or developing) world phenomenon. Warfare has shifted from being characterized as interstate in type and located in the territory of world powers (Europe, North America, China and Japan) to intrastate conflict, located in the

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7 James D. Fearon, Iraq’s Civil War,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, 2 (2007): 4. Also see Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* where civil war is defined as “armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of hostilities.”
periphery (Latin America, Asia, and Africa). According to T. David Mason, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, and Alyssa K. Prorok, there are three types of civil wars, “categorized according to the goals of the rebels”: ideological revolutionary, ethnic revolutionary, and ethnic secessionist. Ideological revolutionary civil wars are driven by issues that divide rebels from [the] government [that] usually concern matters of governance and extreme inequality in the distribution of land, wealth, income, and political power.8

These conflicts are class-based and support is usually “mobilized around shared class identity and community ties among landless and land-poor peasants.”

Ethnic revolutions are similar to ideological conflicts in that the goal is to overthrow and replace the incumbent government, but emphasis is placed upon ethnicity instead of class as a principle identity among rebels. Many times though, “ethnicity and class coincide in ethnic revolutions,” with one ethnic group dominating the government and the economy with the other ethnic group(s) “relegated to subordinate status in the economy and political arena.”9 Ethnic secessionist conflicts on the other hand, concern issues of ethnicity and land. “[R]ebels seek not to replace the incumbent regime, but to secede from it and create a new sovereign nation-state out of a portion of the territory of the existing one.”10

Now that I have defined civil war, I will provide a few definitions of terms that are similar to civil war, but are not synonymous for further clarification. Revolution, closely related to civil wars, are defined as “observed mass mobilization and institutional change, and a driving ideology carrying a vision of social justice.” It is the “forcible

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9 Ibid., 4.
10 Ibid., 3.
overthrow of a government through mass mobilization (whether military or civilian or both) in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions.”

Many revolutions and civil wars can manifest in the same situation, but this is not always the case. The two are often not the same.

State failure, a characteristic closely linked to civil wars, refers to “the implosion of the state” in short. In this, the state becomes an instrument of predation against its citizens. This is because “politicians employ political power to levy resources from those who lack it.” Instead of utilizing the state apparatus to “enhance security, those in power use the state to promote their own interests,” leaving those outside of the state structure vulnerable and insecure. “[A] loss of the monopoly over the means of coercion” also characterizes state failure. Violence usually accompanies state failure, with “[p]olitical parties [becoming] political militias as elites transform them into military bands.” Sierra Leone, Somalia, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan stand as examples of state failure. In addition to this, terrorism refers to the application of indiscriminate violence against civilian targets; often present in, but not signifying civil war.

Pre-War Government

The government prior to the outbreak of civil war is an important variable in this study. There are three government types considered here: full dictatorship, transitioning/semi-democracy or anocracy, and full democracy. Full dictatorships can be of the personalistic or military variants or a combination of both. Democracies are systems of “governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the

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13 See Kalyvas, “The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War.”
public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.”  

Semi-democracies are regimes with a “mix of institutional characteristics, some democratic and others distinctively authoritarian.”  

The previous type of government indirectly influences how the government is re-made or modified following civil war, as I will demonstrate through the causal process.

**Type of Warfare**

The types of warfare present in civil wars utilized here are based largely on the work of Stathis N. Kalyvas. A type of warfare may be defined as “one variety of organized violence emphasizing particular armed forces, weapons, tactics, and targets.”

According to Kalyvas and Balcells, there are “three types of warfare that characterize civil wars”: conventional, irregular, and symmetric non-conventional warfare.

Conventional warfare can be thought of as traditional or standard warfare. It “entails face-to-face confrontations between regular armies across clear frontlines.” In this type of warfare both belligerents face each other in set battles. A “commonly shared perception of a balance of power between the two sides” is also necessary for conventional warfare to be possible. “In the absence of some kind of mutual consent (which entails some reasonable belief in future victory), no conventional battle can take

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Among the most prominent examples of conventionally fought civil wars are the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Conventional civil wars feature “conventional armies facing off along well-defined fronts,” and “have been highly unusual.”

Irregular warfare, on the other hand, “requires a choice by the strategically weaker side ‘to assume the tactical offensive in selective forms, times, and places.’” This occurs when one belligerent refuses to accept the basic rules of warfare. Irregular warfare may be alternatively labeled guerrilla war or insurgency. Irregular wars often transition into wars of attrition with the rebels attempting to outlast the state forces while simultaneously draining it of all its resources. Irregular/guerrilla wars can be summed up by what a Vietnamese communist told an American official in 1975: “One side is not strong enough to win and the other is not weak enough to lose.”

Another definition comes from Bard E. O’Neill, with him defining irregular warfare as:

a struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities, in which the former consciously employs political resources (organizational skills, propaganda, and/or demonstrations) and the instruments of violence to establish a legitimacy for some aspect of the present political system which it considers illegitimate.

It is also characterized as a “form of warfare based on mobile tactics used by small lightly armed groups who aim to harass their opponent rather than to defeat him in battle.”

19 Fearon, “Iraq’s Civil War,” 5.
21 Quoted in Ibid., 91.
22 O’Neill, Armed Struggle in Palestine, 11.
23 Ibid., 14.
Irregular wars also tend to develop in the geographic peripheries, but this is not a required feature of this method of warfare.

The third type of warfare identified by Kalyvas is that known as symmetric non-conventional warfare. This type of warfare is symmetrical because it features irregular forces on each side, but non-conventional because all belligerent parties are irregular forces.\textsuperscript{24} Where conventional civil wars occur when “an existing army splits, either because of a failed coup… or because a unit of the federal or quasi-federal state… attempts to secede,” and irregular wars “emerge incrementally and often slowly from a state’s periphery,” symmetric non-conventional civil wars emerge out of, or accompany processes of state collapse.\textsuperscript{25} Somalia and Libya in 2014 are among the most well-known examples of this method of warfare.

\textbf{War Termination}

Civil wars are notoriously difficult to end. Since 1945, the average duration of civil wars has been ten years, “with half lasting more than seven years.”\textsuperscript{26} Monica Duffy Toft has identified three methods of terminating civil wars: outright victories by either the incumbents or the rebels, and negotiated settlements. The option(s) that include(s) outright victory by either the incumbents or rebels is known as the “give war a chance” option. It advocates “allowing belligerents to continue fighting until one side achieves a military victory.” This view developed out of opposition to those who advocated for negotiated settlements. According to this view, negotiated settlements have proven ineffective generally with conflicts ended by this method more likely to recur than those ending in an outright victory by one of the belligerents.

\textsuperscript{24} Kalyvas, “Warfare in Civil Wars,” 91-92.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{26} Fearon, “Iraq’s Civil War,” 4.
Ending civil wars by negotiated settlements has been favored by policy makers since the end of World War II.27 “The core recommendation of this policy is to employ third-party resources – primarily in the form of economic incentives and good offices – to halt the violence and preserve the combatants.” Proponents of this make the assumption that “the sooner the violence is halted, the greater the collective benefit.”28 So war termination is simply how a war is ended. A military victory can be signified by total destruction of a fighting force and/or its fighting capabilities. A total surrender also signals a military victory. A negotiated settlement is reached over negotiations by the involved belligerents, where mutually satisfactory terms are reached.

The State

The state is something that is often taken for granted – especially in the developed world – because states have been the principal organization of societies for such a long time.29 Max Weber established the most widely accepted definition of a state: “an organization deploying a legitimate monopoly of violence over a defined piece of territory,” or the “centralized source of authority that held an effective monopoly of military power over a defined piece of territory…”30 This state as a form of social organization is often referred to as a modern state,31 a term to be employed here. China is regarded as the first civilization to develop a modern state, something it did nearly one thousand years prior to the emergence of such societal organization in Europe.

29 Current state system in the West traces its roots to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.
31 There are three types of states identified by Fukuyama: modern, patrimonial, and neopatrimonial. See Fukuyama, The Origins of Political Order and Political Order and Political Decay.
Several characteristics separate modern states from other methods of societal organization: 1) they possess a centralized source of authority; 2) that source of authority is backed by a monopoly of legitimate means of coercion, in the form of an army and/or police; 3) the authority of the state is territorial rather than kin based; 4) they are more stratified and unequal than other societies, with the ruler and his administrative state often separating themselves from the rest of society; and 5) they are legitimized by much more elaborate religious beliefs.

A form of state standing in opposition to the modern state is the patrimonial state. Where the modern state is impersonal, in a patrimonial state “the polity is considered a type of personal property of the ruler and the state administration is essentially an extension of the ruler’s household.”\textsuperscript{32} These have largely fallen out of use though, in favor of an updated, more modern method of state organization: the neopatrimonial state.

Neopatrimonial states have “the outward form of a modern state, with a constitution, presidents and prime ministers, a legal system, and pretensions of impersonality, but the actual operation of the government remains at core a matter of sharing state resources with friends and family.”\textsuperscript{33} These states have an underlying weakness that exists not because of lack of physical coercion, but because of its lack of legitimate authority and its inability to “deliver basic public services like health and education outside of cities” and to maintain law and order and adjudicate disputes, or to manage macroeconomic policy.” Neopatrimonial states are also notorious for their

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 270.
inability to monopolize force over their own territory, resulting in a weak state in many cases.\textsuperscript{34}

Underneath the surface of states, there are institutions; something absolutely vital to the state. “Institutions are ‘stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior’ that persist beyond the tenure of individual leaders.” Essentially, they are “persistent rules that shape, limit, and channel human behavior.”\textsuperscript{35} Returning to the earlier theme of difficulty in establishing states, political institutions\textsuperscript{36} develop slowly and painfully over time “as human societies strive to organize themselves to master their environments.”\textsuperscript{37}

Institutions exist in one of two capacities: inclusive and extractive. Inclusive political institutions “make power broadly distributed in society and constrain its arbitrary exercise.” These institutions make it more difficult for some actors to “usurp power and undermine the foundations” of said institutions. Inclusive economic institutions are, in turn, constructed on “foundations laid by inclusive political institutions.”\textsuperscript{38}

While inclusive institutions foster economic growth, extractive ones prevent it. These institutions tend to empower and enrich a few at the expense of the masses. According to Acemoglu and Robinson, extractive institutions usually lead to “stagnation and poverty.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 272.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{36} In addition to political institutions, there are also economic institutions.
\textsuperscript{37} Fukuyama, \textit{The Origins of Political Order}, 25.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 93 & 98.
The post-war state represents the state that is present after the conclusion of the civil war. The state is judged according to its ability to avoid succumbing to further war and the type of government and quality of institutions established in the post-war period.

**Literature Review**

When it comes to governments prior to the outbreak of civil war, it is generally argued that “semidemocracies [or anocracies] are more prone to political violence than are either pure democracies or pure dictatorships.”\(^{40}\) Similarly, state failure is linked to transitioning democracies, where full democracies and full dictatorial states appear to be more stable and less likely to succumb to state failure or internal violence in general.\(^{41}\) This could be indicative of post-war state stability. If the post-war state becomes a dictatorship or democracy, it should be more stable, but if it is left in the middle ground of anocracy (or transitioning democracy), war should be more likely to recur.

Concerning alliances, Fotini Christia has conducted work on alliance formation in civil wars in her book of the same title. She delves into the “forces that determine [the] choices and outcomes” of alliances in civil wars. She argues that “alliance formation is tactical, motivated by a concern with victory and the maximization of wartime returns as anticipated in the political power sharing of the postconflict state.” In this book, she focuses on the interaction between the macro level (i.e. societal cleavages) and the micro level (i.e. individual incentives) and finds that the “key actors vis-à-vis warring group alliance formation and fractionalization are often local elites, operating at a ‘meso level’ that links the national-level cleavages within individual motivations.” Christia also reveals new insights on “the motivations of warring actors during the conflict” which

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\(^{40}\) Vreeland, “The Effect of Political Regime on Civil War,” 401.

\(^{41}\) Bates, “State Failure.”
highlights the way in which “concerns about survival and division of postwar political control drive” alliances and fractionalization.42

Michael J. Boyle has contributed to the literature on the link between post-war states and violence. In his book *Violence after War* he argues that there are two causal pathways that explain the onset of strategic violence in post-conflict states: the direct and indirect pathways. In the direct pathway the existing combatants [from the previous war] begin to employ strategic violence to spoil or renegotiate a peace settlement, to repress the losing side, or to expand the conflict to neighboring states as a way of achieving sider regional ambitions.43

The indirect pathway states that former combatants realize that they cannot “enforce compliance with their factions or splinters over the terms of the peace settlement.” The groups that result from the split vie for power and resources leading to strategic violence.44

The concept of strategic violence is important because it is what is commonly called political violence, and is the type of violence that most often leads to war. Strategic violence is “a violent act aimed at transforming the balance of power and resources within the state.”45 This is contrasted with expressive violence, which is “motivated by emotions, such as anger, rage, or grief,”46 and instrumental violence that is “driven by a cool calculation of means and ends and is directed toward criminal, personal, or other nonpolitical goals.”47 Strategic violence is often overlooked because, although political in nature, it is not synonymous with war; and if there is an absence of war, many times the

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44 Ibid., 11-12.
46 Ibid., 26.
47 Ibid., 28.
violence present within a state is simply presumed to be simple crime. This all affects the viability and construction of the post-war state.

With these aspects of civil war studied, there is still a hole in the literature. There has yet to be someone who looks at the relation of civil wars in their totality and their relationship to the post-war state. I aim to fill this gap in the civil war literature.

Next I will introduce my hypotheses and detail how the causal mechanisms fit together in the proposed causal process.

**Hypotheses**

Here, I propose a causal process that hypothesizes a link from the initial independent variable (pre-war government) to the dependent variable (post-war state). Alliances, type of warfare, duration, and method of war termination all serve as variables within the causal process linking the pre-war government to the post-war state.

In my causal process, each variable influences the next in the causal chain, as I aim to establish causation. The chain flows in two directions, one following the path of pre-war government, type of warfare, duration, and war termination, concluding with the post-war state; and the other from the pre-war government through alliances and directly to the post-war state.

Pre-war government begins the causal process. Government types include full dictatorship, full democracy, semi-democracy, or transitioning democracy. These government types will lead to specific types of warfare after the outbreak of civil war. Full dictatorships will lead to the emergence of irregular, or guerrilla, warfare because of the concentration of power within the governmental regime. Democracies and semi-democracies will experience conventional war following the outbreak of civil war, while
transitioning democracies will experience either conventional or symmetric non-
conventional warfare. If the semi-democracy has some semblance of state authority, there
will be conventional war, but if there is a breakdown in state authority – as in the case of
transitioning democracies leading to state failure – there will be symmetric non-
conventional warfare.

The pre-war government will also determine the alliances formed that take part in
the civil war. Ideology represents and intervening variable here, intervening between pre-
war government and alliance formation. Ideological considerations cause certain groups
to align with one another in a situation that they believe will be ideologically fruitful in
the long run. Power considerations also play an intervening role, with groups also
wishing to swing the balance of power against certain factions and choosing to put
ideology to the side in order to gain power in a civil war situation.

The first route continues from type of warfare to duration. Types of warfare,
again, include conventional, irregular, and symmetric non-conventional warfare. Irregular
wars are hypothesized to last the longest of the three types and symmetric non-
conventional wars the shortest amount of time. Conventional wars fall in the midrange of
this spectrum. Duration in turn affects the method of termination with negotiated
settlements being linked to longer conflicts and military victories being more likely to be
achieved in shorter conflicts.

Method of termination, finally, directly affects the post-war state. In general,
military victories are associated with more stable post-war states. Rebel victories,
specifically, are linked to more democratic post-war states, while incumbent victories
have a tendency to lead to more authoritarian post-war states. This occurs because the
incumbent regime, in an effort to prevent further internal disturbances, will attempt to strengthen its position, which in the end actually increases the chances for war recurrence, but not to the same levels as that of a negotiated settlement.48

Picking up the other route of the causal process, alliances directly affect the post-war state because the ideologies of the victorious factions – in the case of a military victory – or the factions that take part in negotiations to reach a settlement, influence how the post-war state is (re)constructed. Depending on the ideologies of the factions, the post-war state can be made (or remade) in a number of ways.

Essentially, I am proposing a series of hypotheses that are contingent on one another. First, the pre-war government type determines the distribution of power which determines what alliances are formed and what type of warfare emerges. Ideology also has a role to play in determining what alliances are formed as well, with ideology working in conjunction with power distribution to create logical alliances between different factions.

Next, type of warfare determines the length of the war, with irregular wars enduring for the longest amount of time, followed by conventional wars, and symmetric non-conventional wars. So, as type of warfare is determined by pre-war government type, and the length of war by type of warfare, pre-war government in essence determines the war duration, although indirectly.

Longer wars are more likely to end negotiated settlements, while shorter wars are more likely to be concluded by complete military victories by either belligerent. I hypothesize that military victories by rebels will lead to the formations of the most stable post-war state, with those formed by incumbents after incumbent victories being stable,

48 See outbreak literature.
but to a lesser degree. States (re)established by settlements present unstable post-war states. The dependent variable will be characterized as either stable or unstable. States that manage to avoid war for at least ten years will be considered stable. Those that experience a return to war will be categorized as unstable. The other characteristics will be extraneous and evaluated independently, adding a qualitative evaluation of the dependent variable.

From the original variable of the pre-war government on to alliance – alliances, through the ideology of the victors (in the case of military victories) and all belligerents (in negotiated settlements), directly affect the state, again linking the pre-war state to the post-war state through two routes in the causal process. Working in combination with method of war termination, the alliances that either claim victory, or reach a settlement through negotiations influence the (re)construction of the state with those victorious alliances having the ability to shape the state in their own image with little resistance. With negotiated settlements, the power sharing leads to the state being beholden to different ideas about advancement, not affording the state the same opportunity as those with outright victors.

In the next section I will discuss the methods and case studies to be utilized here.
Methods and Case Studies

In order to tease out the causal mechanisms of my argument I will utilize comparative historical analysis, supplemented with process tracing. Comparative historical analysis is “defined by a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of system and conceptualized comparison.”49 The purpose of comparative historical analysis is to discover and test hypotheses by engaging theory with history.” In turn, this method of analysis can “inspire new theoretical formulations and stimulate new interpretations of historical cases.”50 Comparative historical analysis also allows for the uncovering of causal complexity among the interacting variable.

Scholars who utilize this method often speak of it being particularly useful of “big questions.” With this thesis, I aim to answer a question that fits into that category: How do the mechanisms of civil wars affect the post-war state? This research question is “about large-scale outcomes” that are important to specialists and the layman alike.51

In employing process tracing, I utilize three instances of civil wars that have already been concluded: the Costa Rican Civil War (1948), the Sandinista Revolution (1978-79), and the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-92). Although these wars are not usually thought of in the same light (particularly that of Costa Rica) there are reasons for my comparison of these events. All three were ideological civil wars that took place during the Cold War. The nations in which they took place also share historical, cultural, and demographic similarities, as well as being located in the same region, in effect controlling

49 James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6.
51 Mahoney and Ruechemeyer, Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences, 7.
for these factors. With these factors controlled, I can focus on the variance of the variables in the proposed causal process.

This also allows a certain level of external validity. Because the cases share the same temporal era, culture, reasons for war, etc., these factors will not pose a threat to validity and future tests of conflicts in different regions, cultures, and reasons for warring, etc. would not be affected by the differences.

**Costa Rica**

![Costa Rica Diagram]

**Nicaragua**

![Nicaragua Diagram]
El Salvador

Dictatorship → Irregular → ~12 years → Negotiated settlement

Gov’t/ARENA vs FMLN/FDR → Stable, weak democratic state
Chapter 2: BACKGROUND

In this section I will set the stage for the study to come, introducing the first variable in the causal chain: pre-war government. First, a brief history of each country will be recounted – beginning from their time as a colony of Spain and concluding with the regime in power at the time of the outbreak of civil war. Prior to the civil war, Costa Rica was a semi-democracy with neopatrimonial characteristics. Nicaragua and El Salvador were full dictatorial, neopatrimonial states. Nicaragua had a personalistic dictator, while El Salvador was dominated by the military.

These different regimes would lead to specific alliances being formed and specific forms of warfare taking shape. The semi-democratic regime in Costa Rica would cause the war to be fought conventionally. On the other hand, the dictatorial nature of Nicaragua and El Salvador would lead to irregular warfare. By the end of this thesis, we will see how, through the casual process, the pre-war regime is linked to the post-war state.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica’s civil war is an often overlooked event in the history of the nation and of the region of Central America. The so-called Revolution of ’48 marks the beginning of the Cold War in Central America, and Costa Rica has been called the “first battleground of the Cold War.”52 This brief, decisive conflict set the stage for ideological conflicts in

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52 Kyle Longley refers to Costa Rica with this title in an article and chapter title within a book. See also Marcia Olander, “Costa Rica in 1948: Cold War or Local War?”
the region for the next half century. The war in Costa Rica lasted only approximately a month, but resulted in an astounding 2,000 fatalities.53

Costa Rica has been long-lauded for its reputation as a democracy. “[I]t’s democratic traditions and social stability” have won the country praise the world over;54 it has even been called the Switzerland of the Americas.55 There is some truth to this: there has been universal male suffrage since 1902, political ideas have circulated freely, political and labor organizations (including those of a Marxist tilt) have been permitted to operate freely, and the legislature has been “accessible to, and capable of reconciling, the demands of different sectors of society.”56

Costa Rica gained its independence in 1821 as a part of the First Mexican Empire. Soon after, in 1823, it became a member state of the United Provinces of Central America, which it remained a part of until the union’s dissolution in 1838. During the early independence era, the state was extremely decentralized, with effective institutions at the local level only. The government of the state only had access to limited resources. Liberals and Conservatives also dominated during this period, as they did in the rest of the region.

Presidents Braulio Carrillo (1838-42) and Tomás Guardia (1870-82) presided over two shaping periods in the history of the nation. The coffee industry emerged under Carrillo. Also during this time “[t]hrough a series of land provisions, small farms were initially established near the major townships of the Meseta Central and then peacefully

53 See Steven Palmer and Iván Molina, Democratic Enigma,” in The Costa Rica Reader: History, Culture, Politics (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 139. Here, the authors put the death toll at no lower than 4,000.
extended to more-remote regions…” \(^{57}\) Bureaucratic and administrative expansion was also pursued without militarizing the state.

Tomás Guardia came to power via a military takeover in 1870 and he “initiated major state-building reforms.” \(^{58}\) Under Guardia the military was professionalized and the state became independent of the dominant classes of society as a result. Guardia also helped to establish democratic traditions in the country, with only one more transition of leadership occurring without elections after his presidency. \(^{59}\)

In the early twentieth century, moderate Conservatives dominated: Cleto González Viquez (1906-10 and 1928-32) and Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-14, 1924-28, and 1932-36). \(^{60}\) By the 1940s Costa Rican politics had come to be dominated by the National Republican Party, so much so that Costa Rica was virtually a single-party state. The party split between party leaders Cortés and Calderón, preventing it from consolidating governmental power in one place. Because of this, the governing party had to align with the Church and the Communists in order to combat the opposition within the country. This inability to concentrate state power among its own ranks allowed the opposition to confront the government conventionally when the actual warfare began. \(^{61}\)

Costa Rica, being dominated patrimonially by the National Republican Party, and its alliance with the Communists would lead to an alliance dominated by anti-communist leftists forming against the ruling party. The Picado administration was representative of the neopatrimonial nature of the state; it was weak, divided, and corrupt. The rebels, who

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\(^{57}\) Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism*, 143.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 153.

\(^{59}\) In January 1917 Federico Tonoco led the last successful military coup in Costa Rican history, removing González Flores from the presidency.


\(^{61}\) See Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism* for more information on the liberal period in Central America and Woodward, Jr., *Central America* for a general history of Central America.
we will see in the next section, wished to rid the political climate of the PRN, and moved to do so in the civil war.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua has a history laden with conflict and foreign intervention and domination. The territory that now comprises the country was colonized – like the other territories of Central America – by Spain, and endured the consequences of the region’s peripheral status within the empire.\(^62\) As was Costa Rica, following separation from Spain in 1821 Nicaragua was a part of the First Mexican Empire (1821-24), and then a constituent-state of the United Provinces of Central America (1824-38). Since the dissolution of the United Provinces, Nicaragua has been, at least nominally, an independent nation.\(^63\)

During, and after, the time of a unified Central America, Nicaragua was engulfed in civil conflict. This series of conflicts featured Liberals and Conservatives duking it out, with the Liberals based in León and the Conservatives in Grenada.\(^64\) The Conservatives eventually took control of the national government after the Liberals discredited themselves by inviting the American adventurer William Walker into the country, after which he seized control of the government and threw the entire region into a period of tumultuous warfare.

Since 1857 Nicaragua has officially been a republic. In 1893, General José Santos Zelaya, a Liberal, assumed the presidency. Zelaya was considered a dictator, but he was

\(^{62}\) See Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).


\(^{64}\) This also led to the cities being pitted against one another. See John A. Booth, et. al., *Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015), 97.
also a nationalist who attempted to reduce Nicaragua’s dependence on foreign business interests. In 1909 Zelaya was forced to resign due to a Conservative-led rebellion and U.S. intervention to quell it.65

From 1912-25 U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua to ensure a Conservative, Chamorro-led, pro-U.S. government. During this time the U.S. also established the National Guard to “take the place of all the small personal armies and political-party militias that had previously constituted Nicaragua’s factionalized armed forces.” Ironically, the National Guard was supposed to help “achieve a democratic constitution” and be loyal to a “democratic national constitution,” not to “any one man or political party.” Despite these intentions, the complete opposite would occur.

The U.S. chose Anastasio Somoza García to lead the National Guard. Elections were held in 1924 and an anti-Chamorro Conservative, Carlos Solorzano, gained the presidency, with the Liberal Juan Bautista Sacasa becoming Vice President. A year later the marines left the country and civil war broke out “when Chamorro Conservatives rebelled and attempted to seize power.” U.S. Marines returned in 1926 to force a settlement, but Augusto César Sandino – the half Indian, half European Liberal leader – “refused to lay down his arms as long as U.S. troops occupied Nicaragua.”66

Sandino led a struggle against U.S. forces that began conventionally, but through trial and error, became a guerrilla war. He was able to cultivate the “support of the peasants in the regions in which he operated,” and they, in turn, “served as an early warning communication network and as ad hoc soldiers during specific guerrilla

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66 Ibid., 193.
actions.” The Marines found themselves in a war “they simply could not win militarily,” and eventually withdrew in January 1933. In February 1933, with his wished met by the withdrawal of U.S. forces, Sandino signed a preliminary peace agreement with the government of Sacasa that called for a cessation of hostilities and a partial disarmament of the guerrillas, the document also guaranteed amnesty for Sandino’s men and a degree of autonomy for those Sandinists who wished to settle in the territory along the Río Coco.

There were further negotiations in 1934, but Sandino would soon be removed from the political scene.

Despite moving forward with negotiations, “After having dinner with President Sacasa one evening in 1934, Sandino and two of his aides were kidnapped and executed by officers of Somoza’s National Guard.” The killing of Sandino, along with the purging of the National Guard and the cultivating of loyalty “by allowing officers and men alike to engage in various corrupt activities,” allowed Somoza to consolidate his power. In 1936 he staged a coup and had himself elected President, being inaugurated on January 1, 1937. This was the beginning of the Somoza dynasty that would rule Nicaragua until its overthrow in 1979 by the Sandinistas.

Nicaragua was basically a personal estate to the Somozas. From 1937 to 1959 Anastasio Somoza García ruled the country “directly as president or indirectly through puppet presidents.” He was assassinated in 1956 by Rigoberto López Pérez, a young

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68 Ibid., 22-23.
The younger Somoza brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, assumed leadership of the government in 1967 after Luis died of a heart attack. Anastasio was the commander of the National Guard and politically ambitious. Once in power he unleashed a wave of corruption and repression. According to Claribel Alegría and D.J. Flakoll, Somoza converted Nicaragua into a nation ruled by the principles of the Sicilian mafia, assuring himself that he would be the undisputed “godfather” of the criminal empire he had created.

With a solid grip on power within the nation, Nicaragua was a personalistic dictatorship and neo-patrimonial state, built on a strong military foundation: the National Guard. This would lead to the rise of the FSLN, an organization/alliance that would go on to oppose the Somoza dynasty in an irregular war for control of the Nicaraguan state.

**El Salvador**

Violence has become synonymous with the name El Salvador. In a cruel twist of fate, El Salvador (The Savior in English) experienced one of the most brutal civil wars of the twentieth century; a war featuring death squads and casualties reaching approximately

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74 Ibid., 30.
75 Quoted in Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*, 269.
75,000. This war, with origins in problems indigenous to El Salvador, marked the end of the Cold War era in Central America and made big splashes on the international stage.

El Salvador began, like the other nations observed here, as a backwater colonial possession of Spain. Likewise, the territory gained independence from Spain, first as a part of the First Mexican Empire in 1821, then as a constituent state of a federal state that unified Central America from 1823 until 1838, when it finally became the independent political entity that it is today. The nation was embroiled in Liberal-Conservative conflict that raged throughout much of the region during the nineteenth century. The real conflict that came to plague and characterize the nation, though, was that of the state (oligarchy and military) versus the campesinos.

The first security forces were established in 1895; the Rural Police and the Mounted Police. Although these were established as exclusively state institutions, they did not replace the private armed forces that existed in the country; setting a precedent for the rest of the country’s history. In the early 1910s the security apparatus of the state was expanded with the establishment of the National Guard.\footnote{Not to be confused with the institution of the same name in Nicaragua.} The National Guard, also known as Las Guardias, was “established with the express intention of replacing the private security forces,” another attempt that would go astray. Closely reminiscent of characterizations of later organizations, the National Guard “gained the reputation for being the most ‘cruel, barbaric security force’” within a few years of its inception.\footnote{Julie Mazzei, \textit{Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces: How Paramilitary Groups Emerge and Challenge Democracy in Latin America} (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 132.}

The 1920s and 1930s would introduce a new stage in the conflict between the state and the campesinos. “During the 1920s, a young Salvadoran intellectual from a wealthy family named Augustín Farabundo Martí Rodríguez – the namesake of the
guerrillas who would take up arms decades later – worked tirelessly to organize Salvadoran workers.” Educated at the University of El Salvador (also known as the National University) “he was deeply influenced by Karl Marx and other communist writers.” After gaining the attention, and ire, of the oligarchy, Martí was exiled for a period.78

After the promised free and fair elections did not occur in 1932 because of a coup that installed General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in the presidency, an armed uprising was planned by Martí. The revolt was “in part fomented by Communist Party militants attempting to take advantage of indigenous peasant unrest in the country’s western provinces,” becoming the first communist-inspired revolt in the history of Latin America.79

The official date for the beginning of the uprising was January 22, 1932, but after Farabundo Martí was arrested on January 18, “one group of rebels began the revolt [on January 19] and tried to attack the barracks at the First Cavalry.” The counterattack began roughly a day later and a few days later the revolt was suppressed.80

Martínez’s response was far more violent than the revolt, becoming known as La Matanza, or The Massacre. In what has been called an unrivaled event of slaughter in Latin American history, Martínez unleashed “[t]he full power of the security apparatus”81 against the “largely defenseless, mostly landless farmers…”82 Casualty estimations range from at least 10,000 dead in about three weeks to between 20,000 and 30,000 within one

79 Ibid., 18.
80 Mazzei, Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces? 137.
81 Ibid., 137.
82 Crandall, The Salvador Option, 19.
week. This cruel response had the effect of solidifying the right (state)/left (campesino) divide within the country.

The government was plagued by a number of coups in the 1940s and 1950s, but during this time the ties that bound the state, the oligarchy, and security forces were cemented, eventually paving the way for the death squads that would haunt the country.83 Despite short stints, the military dominated the government of El Salvador until the end of the civil war. Under the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification first, and the National Conciliation Party next, El Salvador was a thoroughly military-dominated state.84

By the latter part of the twentieth century, the government was completely dependent on the military and other security forces, including the infamous death squads. From 1948 to 1979, El Salvador endured a “repressive and authoritarian system.” According to Monica Duffy Toft, the high level of repression doled out by the government actually united the opposition. “In 1978 government and paramilitary death squads killed an estimated fifty-seven people per month.”85

In October 1979, the regime was overthrown by a group of junior officers; the Revolutionary Governing Junta was formed to replace the overthrown government. “Although they [the junta] did not necessarily favor civilian rule, they did oppose the repression and corruption of the existing system of government.” Despite the junta’s position on government repression, repression did indeed increase. There were 159 killings by death squads and government forces in October and 281 in December.86 The

83 Mazzei, Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces? 137.
85 Toft, Securing the Peace, 75.
86 Ibid., 75-76.
increased activity bolstered the death squads and military, while delegitimizing the junta. In 1980 alone, nearly 1,000 Salvadorans per month met their demise at the hands of death squads and military forces, totaling between 9,500 and 11,000 deaths.

As the junta continued to be de-legitimized, the military became more prominent in the government. The government being a military dictatorship, the outbreak of civil war brought about an irregular war, as we will see in the next section. We will also see how the massive concentration of power in the military led government influenced the alliance of rebel forces against the government and the forming of the FMLN in order to perpetrate a guerrilla war.

I have set the stage for what is to come, providing a brief background on all three cases, from their beginnings as Spanish colonies up until the period just before the outbreak of civil war. Next we will see exactly how these regimes in place prior to the warfare actually impacted the alliances and the methods of warfare utilized in the civil wars.
Chapter 3: ALLIANCES

Here, I demonstrate how alliances across the case studies are determined. Where some have promoted the idea of wartime alliances being determined exclusively by either power or ideology, I argue that the pre-war government determines the alliances that are formed with power and ideology influencing the formation of alliances at varying levels. I aim to show that power and ideology work in different ways to determine which factions ally with one another.

I will also make clear the ideologies of the factions making up the alliances, as well as the overall alliances. The ideologies of these alliances determine how a state will be (re)constructed after the conclusion of civil war.

Costa Rica

The civil war in Costa Rica is unique among the case studies presented here; it is the only conflict that featured Communists/Marxist-influenced factions as members of the incumbent government alliance instead of the rebel group. So instead of the typical narrative of Cold War conflicts with Marxist guerrillas trying to overthrow the government, in Costa Rica the Communists actually struggled to prevent the rebels from bringing down the incumbent government.

During this conflict the incumbent faction was an alliance between the National Republic Party, the Popular Vanguard Party, and the Catholic Church – led by Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia and Teodoro Picado Michalski, Manuel Mora, and Archbishop Víctor Sanabria respectively. This alliance in support of the incumbent government also enjoyed the limited support of Nicaragua under the leadership of Anastasio Somoza García. The rebel faction, on the other hand, was led by José Figueres Ferrer and was
composed of the National Liberation Army, the Social Democratic Party, the Caribbean Legion, and the National Union Party led by Otilio Ulate. The following section will detail the member groups of each alliance.

INCUMBENTS

*National Republican Party*

The National Republican Party (PRN) was the party of presidents Calderón and Picado. The PRN was founded in 1931 by Ricardo Jiménez while seeking “an unprecedented third term in the presidency.”87 The party became increasingly dominant in the political landscape for the remainder of the decade. The success of the party was orchestrated by León Cortés, “a lawyer with anticommunist and profacist leanings.”88 Cortés also served as Secretary of Public Works in the cabinet of Jiménez before becoming president himself in 1936. Cortés “invested 36 percent of the national budget in building roads, bridges, and a health and education infrastructure, allowing him to consolidate support in the rural areas, especially those of the Central Valley.”89

Dr. Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia became the PRN presidential candidate in 1939. He was supported by Cortés in order to “thwart the return of former president Ricardo Jiménez.” He also believed the “Calderón would make a suitable puppet: popular and easygoing.”90 Calderón was also supposed to help Cortés get reelected four years later in 1944.91 In 1940, Calderón, with 82.5 percent of the vote, became President of Costa Rica.

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88 Ibid., 163.
89 Ibid., 163.
Calderón quickly made it clear that he would not be a puppet for Cortés, nor for the coffee-based oligarchy he was supposed to represent. He had been greatly influenced by the “social doctrine of the Catholic Church as expressed in the encyclical ‘Rerum Novarum’.” The “Rerum Novarum” was a papal encyclical issued in 1891. The influence of this encyclical led Calderón to initiate a series of social reforms including: a system of obligatory social security (1941), what he called the Social Guarantees (1942), and the labor code (1943). The Social Guarantees included “the establishment of a nation-wide health care system, social security payments for almost all retired workers, the construction of low-cost housing and other measures designed to raise the standard of living of the country’s population.”

Calderón also made clear his intentions to consolidate his own power, independent of Cortés. Calderón used his power as president to “reward his partisans and squeeze out those of Cortés,” and showed himself “to be strong-willed and ambitious.” He and Cortés broke off their alliance in 1941 when Calderón and his supporters (known as calderonistas) elected future president Teodoro Picado to the post of President of the Congress instead of the cortesista candidate. Cortés left the PRN after this. The president also began to have the label of dictator attached to his name around this time.

After Costa Rica entered World War II on the side of the Allies, Calderón began to take strong actions against “enemy aliens”: Italian and German residents within the country. He interned many of them and confiscated their properties; and to make matters

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95 Montealegre, “Costa Rica at the Crossroads,” 278.
worse, he distributed the confiscated properties amongst his partisans. These actions, along with the reforms, turned the oligarchy against him.

In 1942, with the Communists increasing their influence among the electorate, Calderón and Communist leader Manuel Mora allied their followings in order to influence the 1944 presidential election. The PRN and the Communists participated in the 1944 election as a coalition. Repeating the strategy used by Cortés that led to his presidency, Calderón supported Picado as the PRN candidate in 1944. Picado won handily with 66 percent of the vote against Cortés’s 34 percent.

The Picado administration was under attack from its very beginning. According to Eugene D. Miller, “It was accurately perceived as weak and divided, and was beset with accusations of corruption.” Picado had inherited the same reputation and practices that had come to characterize Calderón and his administration. As this weakness began to become more prominent, the Communists began to grow stronger within the alliance. Picado took steps to dissipate this perception, working through an economic downturn. By 1948, “[m]uch had been accomplished… to ensure to the Costa Rican citizen [of] the high degree of fiscal integrity he expected of public servants.” But the reputation had a lingering effect and the opposition had been working hard to garner political influence and support among the population. With tensions high, charges of electoral fraud by both the PRN and the Opposition exploded into conflict in 1948.

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100 Ibid., 12 and Molina, “The Polarization of Politics,” 164.
104 Ibid., 88.
Communists

The Communists were the main ally of the PRN in the government alliance. Communists in Costa Rica provided the only minor competition in politics to the PRN, in what had essentially become a one-party state, from 1932 to 1942 with their first party: the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (BOC) also known to some as the Communist Party of Costa Rica (CPCR), led by Manuel Mora. It garnered 16.3 percent of the popular vote in 1942, but offered no serious rivalry to the PRN.105

Coming to grips with the reality of the political situation within the country, the BOC began talks of allying itself with the PRN in 1942, “with an eye on the 1944 presidential elections.”106 Taking a step toward open alliance, the BOC “officially dissolved itself and formed the [Popular Vanguard Party] (PVP).” This “new” party announced its acceptance of the Calderón government’s social Christian philosophy and “immediately entered into an alliance with… the country’s Catholic Church.”107 This allowed Archbishop Victor Sanabria to give Catholics permission to collaborate with the Communists.

Ideologically the Communists were reformist instead of revolutionary. The party was “committed to fundamental change within the existing constitutional order,” not the overthrow of it.108 Manuel Mora also made this clear in an interview he did with the media outlet La Prensa Libre, stating:

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106 Ibid., 164.
108 Ibid., 517.
We are not looking for an alteration nor much less a bloody overthrow of the [existing] order as many believe. No, our system is very different; we struggle for our ideas, but to repeat, inside the laws that govern us.\textsuperscript{109}

In addition to this facet of the party’s ideology, some thought of the PVP as socialists instead of communists, with U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Hallet Johnson, downplaying the “Communist tendencies of Mora and the Vanguard.” First Secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica Raleigh A. Gibson stated that he found “no direct links between the Vanguard and the Soviets” in an October 1946, sixty-one page memo titled “Communism in Costa Rica.”\textsuperscript{110}

By the outbreak of warfare, the PVP was the strongest faction within the government alliance. The party had “gained unprecedented access to state power” through the alliance.\textsuperscript{111} The PVP’s organized labor wing, the Confederation of Workers of Costa Rica (CTCR),\textsuperscript{112} boasted a membership number of 30,000 at the height of unionization (1945-74).\textsuperscript{113} The party also claimed an official party membership of at least 3,000, with approximately 600 militants.\textsuperscript{114} Military power also lay with the PVP. According to Kyle Longley, “The small regular army remained loyal to Picado, but the militia, composed primarily of \textit{vanguardistas} and \textit{calderonistas}, answered to Mora…” He also notes that Communists made up approximately 70 percent of the army and police in the country.\textsuperscript{115} Additionally, it has been noted that Communists did most of the fighting on behalf of the government.

\textsuperscript{109} Quoted in Ibid., 517.
\textsuperscript{110} Longley, “Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground,” 154.
\textsuperscript{111} Miller, “Labour and the War-Time Alliance in Costa Rica 1943-1948,” 516.
\textsuperscript{112} The CTCR was supposed to be independent of party politics, as all labor unions were, but came to be dominated by the PVP. See ibid., 526-527.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 519.
\textsuperscript{114} A U.S. report claimed PVP’s party membership to number 7,000. See Longley, “Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground,” 162.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 161 & 162.
Catholic Church

The Church acted more as an assistant to the government alliance than a full-blown faction. As mentioned before, Calderón was greatly influenced by religion and the papal encyclical “Rerum Novarum.” He viewed the world through a lens of Catholicism and believed that Christianity led to “a solution of crises and divisions that dominate modern societies…” unlike other ideologies of the time. The Church was also important in that it allowed its followers to work with communists, an act worthy of condemnation under other circumstances.116

REBELS

The rebels that rose to challenge the government of Costa Rica were largely a product of José Figueres’s work and ideas. Social democratic thought was the overarching ideology for much of the alliance. The PUN was the only conservative faction within the alliance.

Army of National Liberation

The Army of National Liberation (ELN) was the principal opposition group of the war.117 The ELN was founded and led by José Figueres Ferrer, popularly known as Don Pepe. Figueres was a finca owner that eventually came to be one of the most influential people in the history of Costa Rica. He was a leader of the political left, but vehemently opposed Communism, putting him at odds with the increasingly Communist-dominated government. He was characterized by a Colombian APRA leader as “‘liberal and democrat’ struggling to prevent another Czechoslovakia.”118

117 Woodward, Jr., Central America, 225.
118 Longley, “Peaceful Costa Rica, the First Battleground,” 161.
The Costa Rican Civil War, also known as the War of National Liberation, was initiated by the Army of National Liberation. The decision to launch hostilities was made on March 10, 1948 at Don Pepe’s finca, La Lucha Sin Fin. Two groups were dispatched immediately by Figueres to capture two locations: San Isidro de General and Empalme. After these successful operations, “Figueres issued the First Proclamation of the Army of National Liberation.”

This fighting force, in contrast to the Caribbean Legion, was composed mostly of Costa Ricans or ticos, as Costa Ricans are known colloquially, although “foreign officers were critical in preparing” the force. Opponents of Figueres, like PVP leader Manuel Mora, argued that “Figueres lacked domestic support when he entered San José, having only 600 men under his command (more than half of whom were foreigners),” in an effort to demean the efforts of the ELN and Don Pepe’s legitimacy. On the other hand, Frank Marshall, a lieutenant under Don Pepe, argued that “non-Costa Ricans in the Liberation Army numbered no more than sixteen.” Figueristas point out, though, that “throughout the conflict the vast majority of the troops were Costa Rican and that political control had remained firmly in Figueres’ hands.”

Within the opposition alliance, the ELN was essentially fighting to preserve Otilio Ulate’s (PUN) election as President of the republic. Don Pepe had told Don Otilio that “he was going… to fulfill the pledge to the Costa Rican people to back their votes with

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119 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 54.
122 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 151.
124 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 151.
guns if necessary” in 1947. Ulate also “made Don Pepe his ‘jefe de acción,’ just in case” the electoral route did not work in getting him elected. Marcia Olander, though, has argued that Figueres was in fact not fighting for Ulate, noting that Don Pepe rejected an agreement that proposed a political compromise “involving Picado’s resignation and a new presidential delegate who would hold elections.” In fact, “Figueres rejected a ‘political transaction of any nature,’” signifying that the rebels had their own agenda. In the end, Figueres did hand power over to Ulate, but Figueres and his followers would exert the most influence over the (re)constructed state.

National Unity Party

Otilio Ulate Blanco, publisher of the newspaper Diario de Costa Rica, led the National Unity Party (PUN). In 1946, he “organized more moderate conservatives into the vehemently anticommunist [PUN].” This party, along with the Social Democratic Party, “reflected the growing concern over the role of communists in Picado’s government.” Ulate being strongly personalistic, the PUN was his electoral vehicle. Other than standing for “honesty in government and integrity of the electoral system’ and “being vehemently anti-Communist,” Ulate’s program “lacked social content,” allowing him to “attract the support of affluent groups.”

Ulate ran as the opposition candidate for president in 1948 against Calderón. He appeared to win the election convincingly, but the day after the election Calderón “refused to recognize the results and claimed that” the opposition had “practiced

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125 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 48.
126 Ibid., 33.
128 Woodward, Jr., Central America, 225.
129 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 28.
systematic fraud.”¹³⁰ When the Electoral Tribunal declared Ulate president, and the PRN and PVP-dominated National Assembly moved to annul the results, hostilities began.

**Social Democratic Party**

As with the Army of National Liberation, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) was a creation of José Figueres. The party emerged around the same time as the PUN, in 1946. It organized moderate leftists and anticommunists.¹³¹ According to Charles D. Ameringer, the PSD was unique in the history of Costa Rica as it was “organized to achieve specific principles and goals rather than to promote the presidential ambitions of an individual.”¹³² Despite this, personalism (or *caudillismo*) never completely disappeared.¹³³

Internationally the PSD aligned itself with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party of the United States as well as the Social Democratic parties of Europe and South America.¹³⁴ The party called for the creation of a fourth, autonomous branch of government to monitor elections, the introduction of women’s suffrage, and the destruction of Communism. Social Democrats also proposed the nationalization of the energy, communications, coffee, and sugar industries. They also guaranteed the reforms made by Calderón. The ultimate goal of the party though, was the founding of the Second Republic.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Woodward, Jr., *Central America*, 225.
¹³³ Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, 47.
¹³⁴ Woodward, Jr., *Central America*, 225.
Caribbean Legion

The Caribbean Legion (CL) was brought into the Costa Rican war by José Figueres. Don Pepe’s exile in Mexico City holds the origins of the legion’s involvement in the war. After being exiled in 1942 for criticizing Rafael Ángel Calderón, Figueres began planning his overthrow. He believed that force was the only way of removing Calderón from power.136 Don Pepe began developing his ideology while in exile, as well as making contacts with other exiles from the region.

Meeting these exiles taught him of the political situation throughout the region: dictatorships abounded. He and Nicaraguan exile Rosendo Argüello Jr. concluded that “since dictatorship was a common malady of Central America, a common remedy ought to [be] applied,” and the two “pledged to collaborate to eliminate dictatorship entirely from the isthmus.” Figueres then convinced Argüello that armed force had to be taken and that they should begin operations in Costa Rica because it was the “weakest link.”137

Guatemalan President Juan José Arévalo supported the legion in an impresario role,138 supplying arms, ammunition, and fuel that was utilized by the opposition as a whole, making the legion extremely valuable for its bringing of supplies. The legion also supplied valuable military skills “that the traditionally pacific Costa Ricans lacked.” Many of the officers during the conflict were Caribbean exiles, who were fighting to establish a base for future operations.139

136 Ibid., 22.
137 Ameringer, The Caribbean Legion, 64.
138 Ibid., 61.
139 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 151-152.
Conclusion

The roles of power and ideology can be observed in the making of alliances leading up to the Costa Rican Civil War. Both, the government and the rebels, took both into consideration when choosing with whom to align themselves. In each case, though, power and ideology played roles of differing importance.

With the government, power and ideology played similar roles. Ideologically, all parties within the faction were concerned with the welfare of the people. For example, President Calderón and the Communists shared ideological similarities. When the workers, represented by the Communists, exerted pressure on the government, the state responded by “directly regulating the domestic economy.”140 Other ideological ties can be seen in the labor code that has been called the “crowning achievement of the political alliance between the PRN, the PVP, and the Catholic Church.”141 The shared ideologies of the Church and the PRN, through Calderón, can be seen in Calderón’s affinity for the “Rerum Novarum.”

Where there were ideological differences, power concerns allowed the parties to work around them in order to come together. For example, the PVP renounced its revolutionary doctrine and changed its name in order to foster alliances with the PRN and the Church. The alliance between the PVP and the Church is especially an example of this because the Church would not allow members to work with the Communists until after the original communist party was “dissolved” and the PVP was formed.

The rebels, on the other hand, were shaped by ideology, but power served as an essential role. Ideologically the rebels ranged from conservative to liberal on the political

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141 Ibid., 519.
spectrum. The only agreement all parties of the opposition had was their disdain for Communism. The leftists in the PSD found themselves “allied with the nation’s most conservative elements in order to prevent Rafael Calderón Guardia from returning to the presidency and to remove Mora and the Communists from influence within the government.” And the ELN and CL were concerned with freedom from dictators.

Nicaragua

During the Nicaraguan Revolution, the belligerent parties broke down pretty simply. The incumbents included the Somozas and the National Guard, while the rebel faction was made up of the FSLN, which itself was divided into three distinct factions known as tendencies. Each side – the government and the rebels – enjoyed support from international allies, but none intervened directly. These alliances, like the others, are important because the members of the FSLN (the winning faction) were able to take the lead in the construction of the post-war Nicaraguan state.

INCUMBENTS

Somoza Dynasty

The Somoza dynasty was established by Anastasio Somoza García. After being appointed director in chief of the National Guard, Somoza directed the plan to kidnap and execute rebel leader Augusto César Sandino. Somoza received resistance from then-president Juan Bautista Sacasa who "sought earnestly to accommodate Sandino and to pacify the nation," as well as veteran officers of the National Guard. They “resented Somoza’s military amateurism” and his “political meddling with the Guard.”

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142 Ameringer, *Don Pepe*, 34.
143 There are some sources that state that the government used Honduran and Salvadoran troops.
Somoza had to maneuver constantly to stay atop the National Guard. Using his “personal charm and his ability to extricate himself from scrapes with the law,” he kept his political footing while dealing with different pressures. But the murder of Sandino allowed him to take undisputed control of the National Guard, and because of the Guard’s position within the country, Nicaragua as well.144

Somoza did not overthrow President Sacasa immediately after Sandino’s murder in 1934 because the National Guard was “momentarily weakened by its internal divisions and lacked a clear monopoly of force.” Sacasa also controlled his own personal guard at the time.145 In 1935, Somoza announced his candidacy for president in the 1937 election.

In 1936, Sacasa was forced to resign after Somoza’s troops surrounded the Presidential Palace, along with its guards, and Sacasa stronghold in León. Then through much legal maneuvering, Somoza was “elected” president in 1937.146

Controlling the National Guard, Somoza monopolized force within the country. Somoza used his position in a patrimonial manner, assigning “members of his own family to key positions in the Guard.”147 His three sons served in the Guard with high positions. According to John A. Booth, “nepotism provided the dictator with loyal commanders and trustworthy spies in key places, while establishing the foundations of the dynasty.”148

With this control, Somoza’s government “beat up, exiled, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered at the dictator’s behest.”149 By expanding the government, Somoza also increased the resources that could be used for personal enrichment and patronage. This

145 Ibid., 53.
146 Ibid., 54.
147 Ibid., 56.
148 Ibid., 57.
149 Ibid., 60.
was the trend of the dynasty during its entire tenure, although when Luis Somoza inherited power after his father’s assassination, “he seemed to be less personally greedy and more concerned with improving the dynasty’s ‘democratic’ and developmentalist image.”

The Somoza dynasty probably represented what Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley called a “mafiaocracy” more than any other time under the leadership of Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Where Luis was urban, personal, and stayed away from the dirty side of politics, Anastasio “took the role of soldier and enforcer, becoming progressively more abusive.” Anastasio Somoza Debayle was even involved directly in some of the torture conducted during, and before, his tenure as leader of Nicaragua.

Capitalizing on “the advantages of unchallenged power over public institutions,” the Somoza dynasty was able to enrich itself even as the Nicaraguan economy began to nosedive. In addition to demanding bribes from business operations, Somoza abused the treasury, created legal monopolies for himself, operated illegal businesses, and skimmed large portions of international development loans and contracts. Somoza’s personal net worth has been estimated to have been $400 million in 1974. In the end, after Somoza García’s death, the worst part of his legacy was propagated during the remained of the dynasty.

National Guard

The Somozas gross abuse of power was made possible by the National Guard. By the time the younger Anastasio rose to power, the dynasty was dependent solely upon military support for its ability to remain in power; public support had virtually vanished.

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151 Booth, The End and the Beginning, 73.
152 Ibid., 80-81.
After being founded by the United States in an effort to rid Nicaragua of personal armies, the National Guard did just that – it became Somoza’s personal army, and the personal army for the entire dynasty. The force was U.S.-trained and brutal against anyone deemed an enemy of the Somozas.

The Guard was given multiple roles, including: armed force, customs control, police, tax collection, postal and telecommunications service.\(^ {153}\) Policies adopted by the Somozas “made an officer’s career relatively lucrative compared to most civilian jobs.” This included “special privileges and access to the corruption that thoroughly infected the institution’s far-flung administrative domain.”\(^ {154}\) In an effort to make the Guard loyal to Somoza, “Troops and their families were encouraged to live on base and to socialize among themselves” in order to alienate the Guard from civilians.\(^ {155}\)

In sum, the government alliance was one driven by power. The Somozas and the National Guard were able to attain power and concentrate it at the top levels of the society they create through this alliance. This alliance is indicative of the neopatrimonial state that existed in Nicaragua before its overthrow by the Sandinistas in 1979.

**SANDINISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT**

Founded in Havana, Cuba in 1961,\(^ {156}\) the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) would go on to overthrow the Somoza dynasty in 1979. The organization had its spiritual origins in the struggle led by Sandino in the 1930s, hence the name. Politically, its origins lie with the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN, the Communist Party of Nicaragua). Two of the three founders (Carlos Fonseca Amador and Tomás Borge)

\(^ {153}\) Ibid., 57 & 91.  
\(^ {154}\) Ibid., 56.  
\(^ {155}\) Ibid., 57.  
\(^ {156}\) There is some dispute about the location of the founding, with some sources citing Honduras as the founding location.
“emerged from a critical wing of the PSN youth group, [Revolutionary Nicaraguan Youth]” (JRN).\textsuperscript{157} These influences point to the fact that the FSLN was not a simple Marxist revolutionary movement, but a nationalist organization as well.

The FSLN was founded to be a vanguard party. Despite the connotations of this, it did not advocate for a dictatorship of the proletariat, nor a single party state. According to Bruce E. Wright, “the concepts of pluralism and of the vanguard have been synthesized in Nicaraguan theory and practice…”\textsuperscript{158} This is demonstrated in the aftermath of the conflict against Somoza.

For the first decade of its existence, the Sandinistas were fairly unsuccessful politically and small. Beginning in 1963, the Sandinistas began operations in the mountains along the Nicaragua-Honduras border. Never gaining significant peasant support, the sporadic guerrilla efforts had largely ended in failure by 1967.\textsuperscript{159} From 1967 to 1974, “the FSLN began building a political structure” that would increase its links with the people; the period was characterized as “a phase of ‘accumulation of forces in silence.’”\textsuperscript{160}

An internal split began to develop in the mid-1970s. Ricardo Chavarría argues that the split was “more a matter of partial and temporary disagreement concerning political analysis and military strategy than a real struggle for power within the FSLN,”\textsuperscript{161} in essence downplaying it. On the other hand, Robert S. Leiken and Barry

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{157} Patriotic Nicaraguan Youth, a left-wing student group at the National Autonomous University of León contributed the third founder: Silvio Mayorga. See Wickham-Crowley, \textit{Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America}, 222.

\textsuperscript{158} Bruce E. Wright, “Pluralism and Vanguardism in the Nicaraguan Revolution,” \textit{Latin American Perspectives} 17, 3 (1990): 38.


\textsuperscript{160} Chavarría, “The Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 28.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 29.
\end{footnotesize}
Rubin state that “the FSLN was plagued and characterized by constant factional infighting involving personal rivalries as much as ideological arguments.”

The extent of the divisions that developed among factions is debatable, but three factions (or tendencies as they were known) developed in the mid-1970s: the Prolonged Guerrilla War (GPP), the Proletarian Tendency (TP), and the Insurrectionalist Tendency/Terceristas (TT/Third Way). The following three sections will detail each.

**Prolonged Guerrilla War**

The Prolonged Guerrilla War or Protracted Popular War (GPP) was the so-called “old guard.” It was the faction that held to the original ideology provided by Carlos Fonseca Amador, Tomás Borge, and Henry Ruiz. The GPP “continued to believe in ‘accumulating forces’ and waging guerrilla warfare in the countryside.”

The GPP can be considered the military faction of the FSLN. Ideological differences pitted the GPP primarily against the TP.

**Proletarian Tendency**

The Proletarian Tendency was led by Jaime Wheelock. Ideologically the TP leaned on a more traditional Marxist-Leninist strategy. According to the tendency itself, it agreed with Lenin that the only things that can have true and responsible agitational value… are events in which the masses themselves are the protagonists and which stem from their will and class interest…

The TP claimed a link to the FSLN’s original platform, stating:

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163 Ibid., 135. Also see Chavarría, “The Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 28.
The Front’s first political platform recognized the proletariat as society’s fundamental class, the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle, and saw the peasants as their closest ally…\textsuperscript{165}

This is where the split with the GPP, which the TP claimed sought not only among the peasantry, but the petit-bourgeoisie, began. The TP also considered the Terceristas representative of “the most retrograde positions of the petit-bourgeoisie…” This faction supported terrorism and they threw themselves “into a senseless offensive” against the government that, according to the thinking of the TP, was much too strong to face head on.\textsuperscript{166}

\textit{Insurrectionalist Tendency}

The Insurrectionalists, better known as the Terceristas (TT), embraced a new ideology that allowed for a broader perspective; a “third way.” Led by brothers Daniel and Humberto Ortega, the Terceristas held three principles:

(1) the National Guard was not as efficient as publicized, (2) popular uprisings were feasible, and (3) a pluralistic political position would be more effective in winning national and international support.\textsuperscript{167}

The Terceristas eventually became the largest faction, favoring “the immediate initiation of widespread urban insurrection which could be led by the FSLN.” Both other tendencies vigorously opposed the Tercerista strategy, fearing a confrontation with the government that they believed was stronger, but the Terceristas moved forward with their strategy, which eventually became the winning strategy of a reunified FSLN.\textsuperscript{168}

\textsuperscript{165} “FSLN-Proletarian Tendency: The Internal Crisis,” in ed. Leiken and Rubin, \textit{The Central American Crisis Reader}, 161.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{167} Chavarría, “The Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 29.
When The Twelve (Los Doce), “a highly respected group of business, professional, and religious leaders” appeared, they argued that “the FSLN had matured politically and should be considered a legitimate political force.”\textsuperscript{169} They also identified themselves with the Terceristas. This allowed the FSLN to re-unify with the Terceristas taking the hegemonic role among the factions.

The tendencies of the FSLN demonstrate the value of ideology. Despite their differences, they only represented differences in means to reach a shared end goal, not differences in the goal itself. All three factions were nationalists first and foremost, who were determined to liberate the Nicaragua people. This allowed them to come back together, following their initial split, and eventually overthrow the Somoza regime.

El Salvador

The alliances formed in El Salvador demonstrate a clear influence of power and ideology. Rebel forces, which would have otherwise operated independently of each other, allied with one another in the face of such an imbalance of power.\textsuperscript{170} The incumbent alliance was drawn together by power and by ideology later, being right wing ideologues unwilling to change the status quo of the nation. This conflict also featured the most extensive involvement of an international force in any of the case studies, with the United States providing significant aid to the Salvadoran government.

GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR

The government of El Salvador was historically dominated by an alliance of the oligarchy and military officers. The oligarchy was known as \textit{La catorce}, or “the fourteen

\textsuperscript{169} Chavarría, “The Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 30.
\textsuperscript{170} See Toft, \textit{Securing the Peace} and Wickham-Crowley, \textit{Guerrilla Movements in Latin America}. 
families.” There were more than fourteen families, but the group was extremely small, with William M. LeoGrande and Carla Anne Robbins stating:

The family clans comprising the oligarchy include only a few thousand people in this nation of nearly five million, but until recently they owned 60 percent of the farmland, the entire banking system, and most of the nation’s industry. Among them, they received 50 percent of national income.¹⁷¹

After the uprising in 1932, the oligarchy feared even the appearance of growth in opposition. In order to maintain its position in Salvadoran society, the oligarchy aligned with the military. Backing the military, the oligarchs hoped to keep the status quo, preferring “the security of authoritarianism to the uncertainty of electoral competition.”¹⁷²

The military had dominated El Salvador since 1931 and aligned with the oligarchy after the events of 1932. Traditionally, the military shared the oligarchy’s fear of revolution from the Left. This government alliance made El Salvador very closed politically; the practical partnership gave birth to an electoral system that was largely a charade. Moderate opponents could vent their views in periodic elections, but control of the government was reversed for the military’s own political party…¹⁷³

The military often resorted to electoral fraud to maintain its position of power.

From 1960 until 1979, the military dominated the government through its political party, the Party of National Conciliation (PCN). It was during this period that El Salvador entered its political crisis. The guerrilla movements and death squads formed. As the left-wing movements began to grow in strength, the government began to sanction legal

¹⁷² Ibid., 1086.
¹⁷³ Ibid., 1086.
repression. Passing the “draconian” Law for the Defense and Guarantee of Public Order “effectively made it illegal to oppose the government in any fashion whatsoever.”174 This law increased political violence and institution decay. The strengthening of the Left also led to the death squads, to which we turn next.

“On October 15, 1979, the Romero government was ousted in a bloodless coup led by two young and apparently progressive colonels.”175 Creating the Revolutionary Governing Junta, it was supposed to reform the country’s antiquated political, economic, and social institutions. The junta even invited the moderates and leftists to be a part of the government.

The junta collapsed on January 3, 1980, a mere three months after its inception. The civilian leaders of the junta resigned after being blocked at every turn by conservative influences. The military was still allied with the oligarchy, and the two forces successfully prevented an exposé of the military’s crimes among other issues. The paralysis created by this “destroyed any chance [the junta] may have had to build a popular base on the Left or the Center-Left.”176

A new junta was formed immediately after the collapse of the previous one. This one was no different than military governments of the past. It was “an authoritarian regime centered in the armed forces and buttressed by repression of those who dare challenge the military’s hegemony.”177 The junta became isolated. Although El Salvador had its first civilian president in forty nine years at this point in José Napoleón Duarte, he

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174 Ibid., 1090.
175 Ibid., 1093.
176 Ibid., 1095.
177 Ibid., 1096.
was only in power because of military support.\textsuperscript{178} Duarte remained in power until 1989 when he lost the election to ARENA, to whom we turn next.\textsuperscript{179}

\textit{Nationalist Republican Alliance}

The Nationalist Republican Alliance Party (ARENA) began to become a major force within the government in 1979, being one of the forces that the government depended upon heavily. Its importance increased in the late 1980s when the party secured a legislative majority by winning the elections of 1988, followed by a victory in the next year’s presidential election by candidate Alfredo Cristiani. With these victories, ARENA became the dominant force on the government side of Salvadoran politics.

ARENA was founded in 1981 by Roberto D’Aubuisson. The party was formed from some previously organized groups, including:

The Broad Nation Front, made up of private business associations, antireform groups of coffee growers and cattle ranchers, young executives, a women’s association, and a right-wing nationalist youth organization; the old ORDEN network… and the civilian-military death-squad network that D’Aubuisson and the extreme right had organized.\textsuperscript{180}

ARENA represented “hard-liners in control of the armed forces, major business interests, [and] extremist anti-Communist ideologues.”\textsuperscript{181}

James LeMoyne referred to D’Aubuisson as “the pater familias of the death squads and godfather of hate.” The party was vehemently opposed to political change from its inception. And it possessed a “paramilitary wing whose death squads worked with army units to murder thousands of perceived opponents…”\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{178} Crandall, \textit{The Salvador Option}, 129.
\textsuperscript{180} Quoted in Mazzei, \textit{Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces?} 186.
\textsuperscript{181} Booth et. al., \textit{Understanding Central America}, 147.
\textsuperscript{182} LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
ARENA was the public face of the death squads according to Greg Grandin. The party represented the interests of the military and oligarchy who believed that “the country must be ‘destroyed totally, the economy must be wrecked, unemployment must be massive,’ and a ‘cleansing’ of some ‘3 or 4 or 500,000 people’ must be carried out” to solve the political crisis in El Salvador. According to Robert White, the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador during the Reagan administration, ARENA was “a violent fascist party modeled after the Nazis.”

The links between ARENA and the military ran deep. One of the leaders who helped found the party informed Washington of those links: “the military is with us. Those that are fighting are the death squads.” These links would go on to help the party when Cristiani took office as president, with his ARENA credentials giving him more influence over the military.

Paramilitaries/Death Squads

Paramilitaries, or death squads, are not unique to the Salvadoran Civil War, but they may be most infamous in this case. Paramilitaries are “political, armed organizations that are by definition extramilitary, extra-State, noninstitutional entities, but which mobilize and operate with the assistance of important allies, including factions within the state.” They are offensive forces whose purpose is to “eliminate those who are perceived as threatening the socioeconomic basis of the political hierarchy.” Organizations like ORDEN, the White Hand and FALANGE among other fall into this category.

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185 Booth et. al., *Understanding Central America*, 148.
186 Mazzei, *Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces?* 4-5.
The oligarchy began to fund death squads as the Left began to strengthen itself.\textsuperscript{187} Among the first and the most important of these death squads was ORDEN, or the Democratic Nationalist Organization. ORDEN was organized in the 1960s by the U.S. State Department, CIA, Green Berets, and USAID. It was “essentially a national civilian auxiliary of the National Guard”,\textsuperscript{188} “a rural militia charged with carrying out not only surveillance and infiltration of political organization but propaganda work as well.”\textsuperscript{189} It was part of a plan to preempt possible Communist action in the Third World.

ORDEN would become the “central nerve system” of the paramilitaries. It “quickly became one of the most dangerous and powerful organizations in El Salvador.”\textsuperscript{190} There was no paper trail establishing any official link to the state, but ORDEN was directly tied to it through ANSESAL\textsuperscript{191} and operated in a quasi-state fashion. ORDEN would go on to commit atrocious crimes and human rights violations. One example is presented when the Romero government sent ORDEN into San Pedro Perúlapan to terrorize peasants opposed to the government.\textsuperscript{192} The death squads also picked up the violence any time the government eased its repression.

Where ORDEN worked with the state’s permission, there were others who worked completely independent of it. Organizations like the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP) and the Agricultural Front of the Easter Region (FARO) began to establish paramilitary groups in the early to mid-1970s. The groups wanted to

\textsuperscript{187} LeoGrande and Robbins, “Oligarchs and Officers,” 1088.
\textsuperscript{189} Grandin, \textit{Empire’s Workshop}, 95.
\textsuperscript{190} Mazzei, \textit{Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces?} 153
\textsuperscript{191} ANSESAL (National Agency of Special Services) was “an intelligence agency designed to coordinate Salvador’s security forces.” It was founded alongside ORDEN by the U.S. State Department, CIA, Green Berets, and USAID. See Grandin, \textit{Empire’s Workshop}, 95.
\textsuperscript{192} LeoGrande and Robbins, “Oligarchs and Officers,” 1091.
“look beyond the official limitations of the State to organize militant groups that could not only combat the left, but also eliminate it altogether.” The Armed Forces of National Liberation-War of Extermination (FALANGE) was founded in 1975. The White Hand was also founded around this time. The groups had links to D’Aubuisson and the White hand was called an offshoot of ORDEN.\footnote{Mazzaei, \textit{Death Squads or Self-Defense Forces?} 156-157.}

In sum, the incumbent alliance was composed of the Salvadoran government, the Salvadoran military, ARENA, and the paramilitaries. The alliance was driven by ideology – the right wing ideologues generally held the alliance together. Ironically, the incumbent alliance helped unite the rebels who formed the FMLN and the FDR and eventually the FMLN-FDR alliances. The rebels will be discussed next.

FARABUNDO MARTÍ FRONT FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

The Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN) was formed in October 1980, taking its name from the Communist Party leader, Farabundo Martí, who led an uprising against the government in 1932, only to be executed shortly afterwards. The front was made up of five individual guerrilla movements that allied in order to overthrow the government of El Salvador. The five constituent groups are the Popular Forces of Liberation-Farabundo Martí (FPL), the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), the Armed Forces of National Resistance or simply National Resistance (FARN or RN), the Revolutionary Party of the Workers of Central America (PRTC), and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL); the FPL and ERP being numerically dominant.\footnote{See Michael E. Allison and Alberto Martín Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” \textit{Latin American Politics and Society} 54, 4 (2012) and LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”}\footnote{Wickham-Crowley, \textit{Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America}, 211.} Before 1980, these groups engaged in low level guerrilla warfare against the government.\footnote{\textit{}}
The guerrillas of the FMLN were considered “the best-trained, best-organized and most committed Marxist-Leninist rebel movement ever seen in Latin America,”196 with Crandall stating that it was “the most formidable insurgency in Latin America’s modern history.”197 Generally speaking, the FMLN was similar to the FSLN in that it was a nationalist organization. It believed that “the traditional Salvadoran elite and the army [could] never create an equitable, modern society, and that therefore [it was] the only savior of the country.”198

By the end of 1980, the FMLN claimed to have 6,000-8,000 guerrillas, 100,000 militia members, and over one million sympathizers. The rebels received financial aid and weapons from allies including Cuba and Nicaragua, but no one sent soldiers to assist in the fight.199 The guerrillas also received training from Cuba and Vietnam.200 Although “the world would understand the Salvadoran guerrillas to be the ‘FMLN,’” on “the ground and certainly in military operations the various groups routinely fought separately.”201 Each group shared a general affinity to Marxism-Leninism; they agreed on the struggle for socialism, they accepted the use of arms as a possibility for revolution, they shared a Marxist analytical and theoretical framework, they concluded that social democracy and reformism were not viable, the same with regard to elections, and they believed that it was impossible to achieve democracy, social justice, and progress for the benefit of the popular sectors within the limits of capitalism.202

They each had their specific ideological and strategic differences and “maintained [their] own statuses, conserved [their] own organic structure, procured [their] own financing and

196 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
197 Crandall, The Salvador Option, 1.
198 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
200 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
201 Crandall, The Salvador Option, 73.
202 Allison and Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” 95.
independently elected [their] leaders. Militants maintained discipline to their organization and not to the FMLN.”

We turn next to the individual groups.

**Popular Forces of Liberation-Farabundo Martí**

The FPL was born in 1970 after “the Salvadoran Communist Party split… in a bitter dispute over whether to lead an armed uprising.” Then-chairman of the Party Salvador Cayetano Carpio endorsed the picking up of arms to combat the ruling classes of El Salvador. He and his supporters believed that the Communist Party’s focus on the electoral route to power was unrealistic. After the split, Carpio and about a dozen other former Communist Party members founded the FPL with Carpio becoming the top commander.

Carpio supported a prolonged popular war instead of the more popular insurrection-style strategy. The influence for the strategy came from the “Chinese and Vietnamese experiences, whereby it [the FPL] would gain momentum and support in the countryside before moving to the cities.” The FPL sought to “overthrow the regime using ‘all methods of struggle,’ both violent and nonviolent.” Interestingly, Carpio liked to be called “the Ho Chi Minh of Central America.”

Because of Cayetano’s “rigid ideas on military insurrection and dogmatism concerning ‘correct’ political and military policy,” the FPL met opposition from the other groups of the FMLN. “For Carpio, El Salvador’s revolution would have to be Marxist-

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203 Quoted in Ibid., 95.
204 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
205 Allison and Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” 92.
207 Allison and Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” 92.
Leninist and represent the ‘triumph of the worker-campesino alliance.’ Carpio committed suicide in 1983 after “losing a characteristically bloody internal power struggle” where he was accused of “ordering the murder of Melida Anaya Montes, a colleague who held distinct opinions regarding the unification of the FPL with other leftist organizations.” Salvador Sánchez Ceren was the second leader of the FPL. After the change in leadership, the FPL became a “Marxist/Leninist party, with its members working intensely to incorporate large numbers of works and peasants into the organization.” The FPL would earn the applause of leftist intellectuals for its focus on building up cooperatives and participatory local governments.

**People’s Revolutionary Army**

The ERP was founded in 1972 by “Christian youth groups and dissidents from the Salvadoran Communists.” A large part of its membership consisted of members of the middle class and females. The ERP “believed that it was important for the people to experience the failure of reformism before they could support mass insurrection.” Where the FPL propagated a prolonged popular war, the ERP endorsed an insurrectionary strategy with strong emphasis on the military development of the organization.

The group was initially led by the revolutionary poet Roque Dalton, but he and two other guerrillas were accused of being CIA spies. As a result, they were convicted of treason and executed after a “kangaroo trial in 1975.” The executions were received

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210 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
212 Ibid., 33.
213 Ibid., 34.
215 Ibid., 92 & 93.
negatively by other revolutionary groups, but allowed Joaquin Villalobos to assume leadership.

Under Villalobos’s leadership, the ERP became “the most powerful military element within the FMLN,”217 or as Diana Villiers Negroponte said, “the most active and ruthless of the guerrilla organizations.”218 Villalobos went with a “Cuba-style foco strategy hatched from the isolated and under-populated mountain province of Morazán to promote a rapid revolution through popular insurrection.” He referenced Cuba and Nicaragua’s triumphant revolutions as influence and reason for his preference over the Chinese and Vietnamese-influenced strategy of the FPL.219

The ERP was the largest guerrilla group and the second largest organization, second only to the FPL.220 The ERP’s assassination of Dalton led to an internal split, with members departing in order to found the FARN or RN.

Armed Forces of National Resistance

The FARN (or RN) was formed after members of the ERP left citing disagreements over the execution of Dalton. From their point of view Dalton was executed because of questioning the ERP’s “neglect of significant political work.” “Those who agreed with Dalton’s criticism and were outraged at his murder quit and formed the RN.”221

Never reaching the size of the FPL or the ERP, the FARN was “known for its political targets, such as it’s kidnapping in early December 1978 of Japanese, Dutch, and

217 Ibid., 69.
218 Negroponte, Seeking Peace in El Salvador, 34.
219 Crandall, The Salvador Option, 69.
220 Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America, 224.
221 Allison and Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” 92.
British businessmen – brazen and lucrative acts that provided revenue to maintain its clandestine operations.”

The RN endorsed a strategy of revolutionary war and insurrection. It paid considerable attention to the political work it claimed the ERP neglected and “pursued a military strategy of urban warfare in hopes of provoking mass insurrection.”

Because of the circumstances under which the RN was founded, the organization and the ERP never had an excellent relationship, but the FARN did make “an awkward reconciliation with Villalobos’s ERP” after its leader, Ernesto Jovel, died in a plane crash.

*Revolutionary Party of the Workers of Central America*

The PRTC was established in 1976 in Costa Rica by students of the National University of El Salvador. This group was the smallest of all the FMLN’s constituent groups and operated primarily in San Salvador. When conflict arose among the member-groups of the FMLN, the PRTC acted as mediators.

Where the other groups were nationalists, the PRTC held a regional identity, what Allison and Alvarez called Central Americanism. Their revolutionary outlook involved all of Central America, not just El Salvador. The group also endorsed an insurrectionary strategy as well.

*Armed Forces of Liberation*

The FAL was created in 1980 as the armed wing of the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS). Despite the PCS being the oldest party, because of its early reluctance to

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take up arms against the government, it was the last to join the struggle (through the FAL), eventually feeling “forced to join the new generation of rebels in the FMLN or risk being left behind forever.”

The PCS was founded by Farabundo Martí in 1930, but was severely repressed after the 1932 uprising and execution of Martí. When the party re-emerged about a decade later, it had a Soviet orientation. Influenced by the Cuban Revolution, the PCS tried to raise an armed wing in the 1960s, but failed. This caused the party to turn to electoral politics as a route to power. That turn led to the departure of Carpio from the party and the ascension of Schafik Handal to the leadership.

The PCS participated in the elections of 1972 and 1977 as part of a coalition with the Christian Democrats (PDC), but “the official political party of the armed forces snatched victory from the PDC and the PCS and exiled presidential candidate, Jose Napoleon Duarte.” Handal went into exile as well, in Chile, and received “training in social mobilization and developed his skills as a writer and communicator to create a sizable personal following.”

Strategically, the PCS/FAL endorsed electoral competition, alongside insurrection-based methods. But because of its military capabilities – or lack thereof – “it remained subordinated to the other groups,” despite having the “longest history of political activity in the country.”

*Revolutionary Democratic Front*

The Revolutionary Democratic Front served as a civilian political organization “committed to seeking political advantage through diplomatic engagements and electoral

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226 LeMoyne, “El Salvador’s Forgotten War.”
228 Allison and Alvarez, “Unity and Disunity in the FMLN,” 94.
politics.” As such, it was opposed to the use of violence. Although the lines separating the FMLN and the FDR, as well as insurgency and political organization, were often blurred, fuzzy, and difficult to decipher, the FDR never lost its identity as an independent organization.

Much like the FMLN, the FDR was an umbrella organization uniting several different groups. In 1980, the PCS, the National Revolutionary Movement (MPSC), the National Democratic Union (UDN), and a few other minor organizations united to form the FDR. The unification was indicative of its objective “to unite the political parties and social organizations, gathered on the left and center-left of the political spectrum.”

The FDR served as the FMLN’s political wing, becoming the largest political movement in all of El Salvador. “Throughout the war, the FDR played an instrumental role as the FMLN’s international mouthpiece.” The FDR’s contention that “the successive democratic governments in the 1980s were in fact not representations of the people’s will” allowed it to establish new relations in order to secure funding for itself and the FMLN. Socialist parties and supporters from Western Europe, the United States and Mexico were among those with whom the FDR established relations. The Front’s work allowed the Salvadoran rebels to remain independent from the Soviet Communists and Fidel Castro, something that the *comandantes* of the FMLN were vehemently determined to do.

Looking at the alliances of the Salvadoran Civil War we see an incumbent alliance driven by the ideological desire to retain the status quo of the historical regime.

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230 Ibid., 35.
232 Ibid., 74.
On the other hand, we see the rebel forces, particularly the guerrillas, coming together despite ideological differences in order to combat the great power capabilities of the incumbents. This great power disparity would lead to a long, drawn-out, extremely brutish guerrilla war that we will turn to in the next chapter. The following chapter will detail how these alliances affected the post-war state; something especially important in this case study because of the method by which the war was ended.
Chapter 4: WARFARE

Here I am arguing that the methods of warfare utilized during civil war are determined by the distribution of power in the country before the civil war. This suggests that conventional wars will be fought when there is an equal distribution of power between the incumbent and rebels. This will be present in semi-democratic states or anocracies, but not in transitioning democracies. Following this logic, nations with power concentrated in one place (i.e. dictatorships and authoritarian governments) will experience irregular, or guerrilla, warfare. In nations where power is totally dispersed with no poles of power, symmetric non-conventional war will occur.

Costa Rica

The civil war in Costa Rica was fought conventionally. The control of territory and frontlines were important to the war’s outcome. This war saw units confront one another in open battles for the possession of cities and territory. This section will detail some of the major battles and changes of territorial possessions.

The forces of José Figueres declared the War of National Liberation on March 10, 1948. After this declaration, Figueres dispatched two groups, “one to block the Pan American Highway and the other to capture San Isidro del General.” By March 12 the rebels had secured the capture of San Isidro along with three DC-3 airplanes that would be used to transport arms and soldiers from Guatemala throughout the war.

In response to news of Don Pepe’s revolt, the government sent forces south on the Pan-American Highway. The force was ambushed by an ELN force suffering losses, three officers (the commander Colonel Rigoberto Pacheco Tinoco included) among the casualties. The rebels also took up defensive positions in an area called La Sierra along
the highway where they “withstood the initial government offensive and from their superior placement inflicted heavy casualties on their adversaries, forcing them to withdraw in general panic.”  

On March 13, Dominican commander Miguel Angel Ramírez arrived at Don Pepe’s finca, La Lucha Sin Fin, “to begin equipping and training the army.” He was appointed chief of staff of the ELN upon his arrival. Government forces attacked La Lucha on the morning of March 14. ELN forces under Ramírez defended their position against the “intense government attack,” eventually forcing the government forces to withdraw at nightfall because of unfamiliarity with the region.

Despite the successful defense of La Lucha, ELN headquarters was relocated to Santa María de Dota, deeper in the mountains. La Lucha was too difficult to defend; being “located in a canyon, government forces could advance upon it from two directions and attack it from above.” The government had also wrestled control of La Sierra from the ELN on March 14, placing pressure on La Lucha.

In an effort to sure up headquarters at Santa María de Dota, the ELN established defensive positions at Empalme. A victory for Don Pepe at Frailes, the strategic retreat to Santa Maria, and actions at Empalme established the northern front. The southern front was centered around San Isidro del General.

The government began an offensive on both fronts on March 20. “The attack against Empalme by the government’s Mobile Unit failed after forty-five minutes…” In the south, though, Communist leader Carlos Luis Fallas made an amphibious landing at

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234 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 149-150.
235 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 51.
236 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 150.
237 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 51.
238 Ibid., 52-53.
Dominical, the closest seaport to San Isidro, with “a force of three hundred men from among the banana workers of the south coast.” By night on the twentieth the government allied force held half of San Isidro. The ELN, under Ramírez, launched a counterattack the next morning, which led to the defeat of the forces of Fallas after three days of fierce fighting. With these losses, Picado travelled to Nicaragua to enlist the aid of Somoza, but ultimately rejected it, “being too patriotic to sanction a Nicaraguan intervention and too honorable to betray his allies.”

The government attempted to overrun Empalme again on March 30. The battle lasted until April 1. The rebels held the ridge against mortars and cannon, then counterattacked, eventually retaking La Lucha. On April 6, Archbishop Sanabria came to Santa María with news of a possible agreement. The agreement would make calderonista Dr. Julio César Ovares “interim president for a year, after which there would be new elections.” Figueres rejected the agreement and the second phase of the war began.

On April 10 the rebels began an offensive. A specially trained group led by Mayor Horacio Ornes left Santa María de Dota flying to Altamira in the Alajuela province, “only thirty-one miles from the Nicaraguan border,” as a diversionary tactic. This group was designated “La Legión Caribe” by Don Pepe. They then proceeded to Puerto Limón. Ornes took Puerto Limón by surprise on April 11. After a few hours, Ornes’s forces controlled the city “except for some resistance from Vanguardia Popular snipers,” suffering only two casualties. “The following day, they repulsed the government force sent to retake Puerto Limón, at the nearby town of Moín.”

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239 Ibid., 53.
240 Ibid., 54.
241 Ibid., 57.
242 Bell, Crisis in Costa Rica, 155.
Simultaneously, there was an operation taking place to take Cartago, Costa Rica’s second largest city. Because Cartago was an oppositionist town and many of the volunteers came from the city, Figueres expected to be welcomed, and he was. He planned to take Cartago “by infiltrating the enemy lines and taking it by surprise.” On the night of April 10, Don Pepe personally led his forces on the phantom march, starting just below Empalme at El Jardín. He crossed enemy lines and entered the city at six o’clock in the morning on April 12. The small garrison “holed up in the military barracks of Cartago] offered a half-hearted resistance.” Government troops up on the ridge advanced toward Cartago when they figured out they had been outsmarted, but a rebel battalion “met them a few miles out of town at El Tejar.” The rebels totally “crushed the will of the government” in “one of the bloodiest and most tragic battles of the entire war.” With both objectives completed simultaneously, a route from Cartago to the Caribbean was opened for the rebels to receive supplies.

By mid-April, the PVP was in control of San José. Picado “placed San José under the protection of the foreign diplomatic corps on April 12 and requested the diplomats to mediate the government’s surrender.” Father Benjamin Núñez, “an activist priest and head of the ‘Rerum Novarum’ labor union,” was appointed as chief negotiator for the rebels. When the two sides met in the Mexican Embassy in San José, the rebels realized that it was Mora and the PVP in control and not the PRN. “Mora and his labor brigades, which were far more formidable than the Costa Rican Army” were “threatening to raise a ‘Madrid-style’ defense of San José, to engage in house-to-house fighting.”

244 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 56.
245 Ameringer, The Caribbean Legion, 73.
The Pact of Ochomogo resulted from a meeting between Mora and Figueres on April 15 with Figueres guaranteeing to “preserve labor’s gains.” On April 19 the Pact of the Mexican Embassy was signed. Picado surrendered, “transferring the executive power to an interim president,” who in turn handed control of the government to Figueres. The rebels entered the capital on April 24.246

In this section I have given a brief summary of the war and warfare of the Costa Rican Civil War. As predicted by the work of Kalyvas and Balcells, the conventional war was short – Costa Rica representing an extreme case – and it ended in a total victory for the rebels. In the next chapter I will detail the termination of the war, explaining why I categorize this as a military victory for the rebels despite the fact that there was an agreement.

Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan or Sandinista Revolution has been considered a guerrilla war generally, as I will consider it here. In an effort to highlight the uniqueness of the Nicaraguan situation, some have emphasized the insurrections and refer to the violence of the revolution simply as “The Insurrection.” I consider the Revolution a case of guerrilla, or irregular, warfare because of the nature of the conflict. The Revolution featured guerrilla tactics utilized by the Sandinistas in rural and urban settings, as well as the insurrectional violence. Additionally, even the spontaneous uprisings featured non-conventional tactics against government forces. Besides a period of conflict in the south of the country towards the end of the war where the Sandinistas and the National Guard met in conventional combat, this was an irregular war. Next I will briefly review the

246 Ibid., 74-75.
insurrectionary nature of the conflict before recounting the warfare, demonstrating the irregular nature of the Revolution.

Comparing the Nicaraguan and Cuban Revolutions, Ricardo Chavarría notes that the two were qualitatively different. He argues that the Sandinistas presented a new, original revolutionary model with the popular insurrection. Instead of a purely guerrilla struggle as in Cuba where the fall of the previous government and the revolution were different events, “the insurrection in Nicaragua was accompanied by a revolutionary crisis which resulted not only in the fall of the dictator but also in the inauguration of a revolutionary regime.”

I will discuss the results of the rebel victory in more depth later, but now it is important to note the key differences between the guerrilla and insurrectionary models provided by Chavarría. First, the insurrection garnered more popular support than the guerrilla movement in Cuba. In Nicaragua the revolutionary movement was based on popular support, in contrast to a single, charismatic leader. Also, the insurrection was more widespread geographically than the traditional guerrilla approach.

Despite this, I still categorize the Nicaraguan Revolution as an irregular war. Throughout the hostilities rebels confronted the government on unequal footing – at a disadvantage – until the wars conclusion. The Sandinistas were aware that they were overpowered by the government and fought accordingly. I will demonstrate the irregular nature of the Revolution next by recounting, roughly, the story of the conflict. Although the guerrilla activities began in the 1960s with the founding of the FSLN, this activity

247 Chavarría, “the Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 25.
248 Ibid., 25-40.
was never significant enough to be considered war. The so-called War of Liberation (1978-79), which ended by military victory by the Sandinistas, will be the focus here.249

The War of Liberation began after the assassination of journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. Chamorro was the editor of the newspaper *La Prensa* and vocally opposed to the Somoza dynasty. After the newspaper published an exposé revealing a scandal involving the firm Plasmaferesis (owned by Cornelio Hüeck and Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero), it was determined that Chamorro needed to be exterminated. “On January 10, 1978, as he was driving to work across the ruins of old Managua, newspaper editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro died in a hail of buckshot fired at close range by a team of professional assassins.”250

This caused the upper class to begin to support the opposition. On January 22, there was a general strike that lasted for two weeks. After the strike was ended, the FSLN “assumed the initiative by attacking National Guard outposts in the cities of Rivas and Granada.” This was a common theme throughout the conflict; much of the action against the government was taken independently of the FSLN, but was done in spirit of the organization because of its vanguard position within the society. The organization eventually took the lead, but a great deal of fighting was still conducted by civilians in urban areas.

The next major event took place in February of 1978 in the indigenous *barrio* of Monimbó, in the city of Masaya. While holding a commemorative mass to rename a

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249 After early defeat, FSLN leaders realized that popular support was essential; a guerrilla war alone would not be enough to defeat and overthrow the government. Studying the writings of Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and namesake Augusto Sandino among others led to a shift in ideology and a restructuring of the movement. See Harry E. Vanden, “The Ideology of the Insurrection,” in ed. Thomas Walker, *Revolution in Nicaragua*, 41-62.

250 Walker, *Nicaragua*, 34.
small plaza in honor of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the National Guard interrupted the ceremony. The Guard “opened fire and threw several tear gas bombs into the crowd.” The conflict escalated into an “all-out rebellion” when residents of the neighborhood “closed off the main street entrance with a large FSLN banner.” This is yet another example of events happening without the direction of the Sandinistas, but in support of them.

Taking on a characteristic of urban insurgents, the Monimboseños pushed the National Guard out of Monimbó using “home-made weapons, machetes, clubs, and paving block barricades.” The Monimboseños held out from February 22 until February 27 against Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero with a command of 600 Guardsmen armed with machine guns, tanks, and helicopters. Casualties reached at least 200, but a clear message had been sent: “they were more determined than ever to oust Somoza.” This rebellion also demonstrated that neighborhood organizations were the foundation of revolutionary societies.

Because of the manner in which the government responded to the events in Monimbó, other rebellions began to take form. On February 26, a spontaneous rebellion broke out in the city of Diriamba. A few days later on March 3, another rebellion occurred in the indigenous community of Subtiava in León. Again, as in Monimbó, the government repeated its strategy:

holding back until well reinforced and prepared for attack, then throwing heavy ordnance and air strikes at the community prior to massive ground action to regain the territory and to mop up lingering resistance.

252 Ibid., 31.
253 Booth, The End and the Beginning, 161.
Students also led the “most massive and prolonged student strike in the history of Nicaragua” on April 6 with more than 60,000 students protesting. This made the student leadership the vanguard of the urban struggle.254

In early August, the FSLN had conducted a few operations, but because of internecine conflict, had not been able to make a major effect. Angered by a U.S. show of support for Somoza while he was massacring civilians, the Terceristas decided to act. The leadership of the Terceristas – the Ortega brothers and Edén Pastora – also wanted to “accelerate popular revolutionary momentum and to regain the military initiative from the regime.” So while the other tendencies were still timid because of their belief that the government was too strong, the Terceristas were planning Operation Pigsty.255

On either August 22 or 23256 twenty five armed Terceristas disguised as security for Anastasio Somoza Portocarrero entered the National Palace around 12:30 PM. Edén Pastora led the troops, disarming the guards calmly. Shots were fired after a guard captain caught wind of the deception, leading to his death. Within three minutes the National Palace had been secured by the small group of Sandinista Insurrectionalists. “The more than two thousand terrified hostages included most members of the Chamber of Deputies, twenty journalists, several high ministerial and judicial officials, hundreds of public employees, and hundreds of citizens there on business.”257 Somoza’s first cousin, Luis Pallais Debayle, the President of the Congress, was also among the hostages.

Over the next two days, Dora María Tellez – a Tercerista leader – conducted all negotiations with Somoza by telephone. Somoza gave in to most of the rebel demands in

255 Booth, The End and the Beginning, 163.
256 There is discrepancy as to what date the operation began.
257 Booth, The End and the Beginning, 164.
the end, agreeing to cease helicopter and sniper attacks on the palace, the release of fifty
nine prisoners from all three FSLN tendencies (including Tomás Borge), $500,000 in
ransom money, the publication and airing of a Sandinista manifesto calling for popular
insurrection, and safe passage out of Nicaragua for the assault team and the liberated
prisoners. With this victory, many Nicaraguans were finally convinced that the FSLN
could indeed overthrow Somoza.

The populace was electrified by the FSLN success in the attack on the National
Palace. “[O]vert popular resistance to the regime [ballooned] to a degree that stunned
even the FSLN.”258 In the aftermath, spontaneous and organized popular uprising began
to snowball, culminating in the September Insurrection.

On August 28, a popular insurrection reminiscent of Monimbó’s, erupted in the
city of Matagalpa. The spontaneous action was carried out by “youngsters armed only
with pistols, rifles, and home-made contact bombs, their faces covered with black and red
bandanas.”259 These youngsters, or muchachos, forced the Guardsmen back to their
barracks, holding out for two weeks. The Terceristas decided it was best to lead such
events, and on September 9 they sent columns into the cities of León, Managua, Masaya,
Estelí, Chinandega, and Chichigalpa. Instead of repeating earlier tactics, Somoza took the
defensive initially. He declared martial law across the country then began to bomb the
cities by air. The Guard then began taking one city at a time.

In each instance, the Guard would concentrate a large portion of its forces
at the target town or barrio. It would then surround the target zone and cut
off utilities and all traffic in order to curtail the insurgents’ ability to
withstand a siege. Next came anywhere from hours to days of artillery
shelling and aerial strafing and bombing, with explosives and

258 Ibid., 165.
incendiaries… Then the Guard would launch its ground assault to retake the rebel area.\textsuperscript{260}

The FSLN retreated in all cases. Casualties were astronomical: approximately 5,000 dead, more than 10,000 injured.\textsuperscript{261} The overwhelming majority of casualties were civilian, but the Guard suffered heavy losses as well, undermining its morale and discipline.

The genocidal Operation Cleanup “tended to deplete [Somoza’s] resources” and made him and the National Guard “the principal enemies of the People of Nicaragua.” The people “were now ready to convert their military defeat into a definite victory, both militarily and politically.”\textsuperscript{262}

Pressure from the international community after the events of September forced the government to the negotiation table with the rebels. Negotiations had ended in late November, with the FSLN strength now approximately 2,500. As the rebels prepared to resume hostilities, they also planned the re-unification of the FSLN, which would officially take place on March 8, 1979. At the same time, Somoza was attempting to strengthen the National Guard in a last ditch effort to save his position as his dynastic power was waver ing.

In late March-early April of 1979, two attacks were launched as a diversionary tactic. The city of Estelí was captured on April 9 by 250 troops and held for five days. The Sandinistas withdrew from the city by orderly retreat. Later in April, 150 guerrillas

\textsuperscript{260} Booth, \textit{The End and the Beginning}, 166.
\textsuperscript{261} Chavarría, “The Nicaraguan Insurrection,” 33.
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid., 33.
“while opening up a front which was supposed to draw the Guard out of its” position ended in failure, resulting in the deaths of about 100 guerrillas.263

Afterwards, five fronts were established by the FSLN: the Carlos Fonseca Amador Northern Front, the Benjamín Zeledón Southern Front, the Rigoberto López Pérez Western Front, the Carlos Roberto Huembres Eastern Front, and the Camilo Ortega Central Front. The Northern Front had the most important role in the Master Plan of the Insurrection; being tasked with wearing out the government forces.

The final offensive began in early June. “In little more than a week the FSLN easily controlled the northern third of the country, including the cities of Estelí, Jinotega, Matagalpa, and Chinandega.”264 On June 2, the Western Front entered León and wrested control of the city after two days of intense fighting. On June 6, the Northern Front turned its attention to Matagalpa.

The Battle of Managua began on June 9, and the Sandinistas held the city for seventeen days. Simultaneous operations were launched by mid-June, with the Eastern Front taking Juigalpa and the Central Front, Masaya. Somoza was forced to fight on three fronts, his previous strategy of taking one city at a time not viable now.

The creating of the Provisional Government was announced on June 16 via the Sandinista radio station. This led to the granting of official belligerency status to the rebels by several nations. The FSLN also demanded the resignation of Somoza.

After further strategic retreats and offensive action, the Sandinistas held approximately 80% of the national territory. Although Somoza refused to give up, the

263 Ibid., 35.
264 Booth, The End and the Beginning, 174.
Guard began to dissolve; most fleeing to Honduras and some 7,000 surrendering to the FSLN. On July 19 the Revolutionary Junta was proclaimed in Managua.

This conflict demonstrates an irregular war, as predicted in the hypothesis. Breaking with the prediction though, the conflict was fairly short; irregular wars are hypothesized to be among the longest enduring, something we will see with the Salvadoran war. But with that, the short conflict ended with a military victory as the hypothesis predicts. Next I will examine how the rebel military victory led to a democratic post-war state, but not one capable of avoiding a return to war; the relapse being cause by an unexpected, external intervening variable.

El Salvador

Beginning in 1980, El Salvador experienced twelve years of civil war. As predicted by the theory, owing to the huge disparity in power between the rebels and the government – favoring the government – guerrilla, or irregular, warfare was the form of warfare that consumed the tiny nation. The rebels all took up arms against the much stronger government in the only way they logically could, with guerrilla tactics. Influenced by the tactics of the Chinese and Vietnamese Marxist rebels, as well as the Cubans and Nicaraguans, the rebels of El Salvador faced off with the government. The government combatted the FMLN with the means of a superior military force, and with paramilitary groups, also known as death squads, like ORDEN.

Next I will give an overview of major parts of the Salvadoran war from different viewpoints, that of the rebels and of the government forces.
Rebels

According to James Dunkerley, if the Salvadoran War began in April 1980, “there is no precise point at which we can say this war ‘broke out’.” Because it was a guerrilla war, there were no large formations, ill-defined lines of control, and fluctuating levels of intensity. The first major action taken by the rebels was the so-called Final Offensive, to which we turn first.

The Final Offensive of the FMLN was launched on January 10, 1981 and lasted three weeks. Inspired by the FSLN and its victory, “More than 2,500 poorly trained guerrillas… initiated scores of attacks against [military] positions.” The FMLN timed this attack so that they could potentially seize power before Ronald Reagan took office in the United States. The fighting spanned the entire country, with the guerrillas “reporting 43 principal actions, some of which were battles lasting a number of days.”

Rebel forces were able to reach the city of Ilopango, a mere fourteen miles away from the capital. The government also lost control of Santa Ana after the first rebel attack. Within San Salvador, the rebels captured four radio stations, using them to broadcast propaganda messages. This fighting took the form of “hit-and-run street actions” and “appeared to be ‘everywhere.’”

The FMLN was able to occupy eighty two cities and villages, with San Salvador, Santa Ana, Chalcuapa, Chalatenango, and Zacatecoluca coming under heavy fire. In San

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266 Dunkerley, *The Long War*, 176. The conflict began with the rebels attempting to utilize the same strategy as the FSLN in Nicaragua: insurrection. This gave way after early failures. See Ibid., 162-205.
269 *insert story of mutiny* See Ibid., 176.
Salvador, the ruthlessness of government forces won the battle.271 Government forces were also able to hold out in Goltera, Perquín, Chalantenango, and Acatecoluca, among other areas. This resulted in the overall failure of the offensive.

Although the FMLN was defeated, it was not destroyed. As they had intended for this offensive to be a precursor to a mass insurrection in San Salvador, the rebels “admitted that too much had been attempted too soon.”272 This defeat proved that the guerrilla war, endorsed by the FPL, would take the prominent role.

Between the two major offensives – the aforementioned one, and the Second Final Offensive, to be mentioned – the guerrillas engaged in intermittent conflict with the military (FAES). According to documents captured by the FAES, the FPL “identified the use of elite commando units as a key element of the insurgent strategy.” The “crack troops” would be “the ‘tubeless artillery’ and ‘planeless bombs’ needed to carry out the stunning raids that would humiliate the Salvadoran military and remind the country of the guerrillas’ invincibility.”273

The war reached the department of Usulután in 1981 when the ERP expanded its activities from Morazán. The military had moved into the department as part of a new strategy to consolidate its control over areas of economic importance. The FMLN, in response, “carried out ambushes on advancing troops and sabotage on economic targets.” A rebel offensive that took place between October and December of 1982 resulted in the highest number of government casualties occurring in Usulután. An increased level of coordination between the five guerrilla groups was displayed during this time.274

271 Ibid., 177.
272 Dunkerley, *The Long War*, 177.
Another clear display of guerrilla tactics is an operation conducted against the FAES in December 1983. The 4th Brigade was headquartered at El Paraíso, one of the military’s “most secure and important military installations.” It was located “along the highway between San Salvador and the mountain town of Chalantenango.” Because of the base’s location – it was located in a valley, surrounded by mountain peaks – and the FAES’s belief that “small arms or homemade artillery would be out of range,” the base had not been fortified.

The FMLN had spies inside the base that supplied valuable intelligence. Guerrillas also dressed as civilians and “strolled by the base located near the main road in order to observe defenses without raising suspicion.” After six months of planning, the operation began on the night of December 30. Beginning with a diversion some 500 yards away from the base, two hours later the full assault began with 300 rebel troops. “The attackers utilized over 1,000 blocks of dynamite during the assault, resulting in the deaths of scores of stunned FAES troops.”275 This was an unquestionable success, one that exposed the ineptitude of the military. This operation was “only one of many large-scale operations that sent terror into the minds of Salvadoran officials” between 1981 and 1984.

At its peak strength at the end of 1983, approximately 12,000 FMLN guerrillas controlled about one quarter of the country.276 In 1983, the FMLN was responsible for about 1,300 government casualties, a number up from the 800 that the guerrillas were responsible for the previous year. The rebels had begun to decline in power by 1985 though. Despite the fluctuations in power, the guerrillas continued to carry out operations

276 Ibid., 366.
against government forces – blowing up bridges and disrupting the economy. The downturn also caused growing dissention among the guerrilla groups. By 1986, the “decreased military fortunes also sparked intense factional rivalries within the guerrilla ranks,” with a CIA report stating: “the FMLN’s military fortunes, in our view, have declined appreciably in the last two years and are at or near their lowest ebb since the onset of hostilities in 1980.”

In 1989, the FMLN launched another major offensive, a “Second Final Offensive.” This second, nation-wide offensive came after the FMLN had decided to turn, unquestionably, to a prolonged guerrilla struggle that would wait out the government. From the mid-1980s until this offensive, the guerrillas “intentionally [avoided] direct contact with FAES forces and [relied] more on hit-and-run raids” as well as kidnappings and assassinations. The planting of landmines was also an increasingly utilized tactic of the FMLN during this time.

The Second Final Offensive, “dubbed Al tope y Punto (‘all at once to the maximum’) began on the morning of November 11 when urban commandos launched mortar attacks against National Guard installations and FAES General Staff headquarters in [San Salvador].” Simultaneous attacks were launched on FAES positions throughout the country. The offensive, launched with “far more fury than had been attempted in the vaunted final offensive in January 1981” took the government forces by complete surprise. Having been transformed into a counterinsurgency force trained to combat

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279 Ibid., 366-367.
280 Ibid., 432.
guerrillas in the mountains, the FAES was totally unprepared for the urban warfare of this operation.

FMLN troops occupied upscale neighborhoods, believing that government forces would be reluctant to destroy these areas, but air power was used, resulting in guerrilla and civilian deaths. In San Salvador, the numerical advantage of government forces began to weigh on the rebels after three days. Using C-47 cargo planes equipped with Gatling guns, helicopters with machine guns, and jets with rockets for air support, FAES troops began “driving leftist rebels out of the city in block-by-block fighting…”  

Elisabeth Jean Wood briefly discussed the offensive of 1989 as it occurred in the department of Usulután.

During the first few days, ERP forces attacked the Sixth Brigade headquarters in the city of Usulután and military posts in Santiago de María and occupied smaller towns throughout the department, including Ozatlán, San Francisco Javier, San Agustin, and Santa Elena. Combat continued in the city of Usulután until December 29. Guerrilla forces shot down two planes near Ozatlán. A major battle on the southern slopes of El Tigre on December 17 and 18 left approximately thirty government soldiers dead.

“The three-week offensive resulted in the heaviest fighting the war,” but by early December the FMLN had been pushed out of the capital. The FMLN had hoped that the actions would cause a general revolt, like the one that failed to occur in 1981, but they were again disappointed. Although the offensive ended in failure, it proved that the rebels were still formidable, bringing the fight from the mountains to the cities, and it gave them political momentum.

This offensive, along with the end of the Cold War, and other atrocities including the massacre of Jesuit priests led to the ending of the conflict. Before turning to the

281 Ibid., 433.
termination of the war though, we will look at some of the actions and tactics of government and government-allied forces.

*Incumbents*

Throughout the war, forces loyal to the government utilized brutal tactics to combat the FMLN. From counterinsurgency, to brute massacres wiping out entire villages, the FAES and paramilitary death squads made the civil war in El Salvador one of the most infamous of all time.

The FAES eventually came to use counterinsurgency tactics to combat the rebels, and were moderately successful. But throughout the war, the military was criticized for the abilities it lacked. Initially, the army was said to have been “trained only to fight civilians,” noting that it was “brutally competent at the repression of unarmed civilians, but it couldn’t fight a war, even with all the hardware and training that the Americans gave them.”

As far as training, the FAES received significant training from the U.S. military. Noting that the military’s “training, moral, and fighting skills were marginal at best,” and the backwardness of the institution’s culture, the United States stepped in. The U.S. determined to train the officer corps of the Salvadoran military, in counterinsurgency and in military culture in order to break the ties with the oligarchy. The first of the battalions trained under U.S. supervision in counterinsurgency was the Atlactl Battalion.

The Atlactl Battalion completed its training in early 1981, and was activated on March 1, 1981 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Domingo Monterrosa Barrios. “The battalion grew to around 1,000 soldiers and became notorious for its violence and

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lack of discipline.” 285 After being embarrassingly defeated in December 1981 by ERP rebels under Villalobos in Morazán when raiding a rebel training camp, the Atlactl Battalion reacted brutally in revenge.

On the afternoon of December 10, 1981, units of the Atlactl Battalion arrived in the village of El Mozote… When the troops arrived in the village, they found, in addition to the residents, other farmers who were refugees from the mountain regions. They directed everyone out of the houses and into the square where they were searched facedown on the ground. The soldiers then ordered the villagers to shut themselves in their houses until the next day… At 5 AM on the morning of December 11, soldiers… began to take residents of the village of El Mozote out of their houses…

Throughout the morning, the men of the village were interrogated, tortured, and executed. At around noon, the soldiers began executing the women and children. 286

This type of violence was characteristic of the military and death squads throughout the war. The U.S. training did help to professionalize the military though, and, as a result, decrease the rate of human rights abuses and violations. 287

On the other hand, commander of the Atlactl Battalion, Domingo Monterrosa, tried to win the hearts and minds of the people; changing the strategy after the El Mozote massacre. The military enjoyed much success against the FMLN in Morazán under his leadership. He “took full advantage of U.S.-provided helicopters that drastically increased his troops’ mobility in this rugged mountain region.” 288 Monterrosa would be killed by ERP operatives after Villalobos determined that he needed to be eliminated before striking them again. 289

285 Ibid., 223.
286 Ibid., 224-225.
287 Ibid., 354.
288 Ibid., 230.
289 Ibid., 230.
The FAES would continue to use and improve upon counterinsurgency tactics throughout the war. Despite its efforts, there would still be examples of the military reverting back to its old ways, like during the Second Final Offensive when soldiers essentially broke and had to be corralled by U.S. personnel. The death squads would continue to massacre entire populations though.

The death squads essentially turned to guerrilla tactics like the rebels, but with more indiscriminate killing. They acted “outside the law like the Communists.” According to FALANGE: “we will support the security forces by killing the judges, the law clerks or the corrupt lawyers… The people must understand that this organization will act outside the limits of the law for the good of the population itself, and for its freedom.” 290 The tactics of the death squads (particularly indiscriminate killing of civilians) largely worked. By the first Final Offensive in 1981, the urban left had been all but totally annihilated, to the extent that “the guerrillas in fact never had a realistic chance of taking power.” Death squad activity began to wane in the mid-1980s because “there was simply no one else to kill.” 291

Here, I have detailed the tactics of warfare utilized by the belligerents, in effect showing that this was in fact an irregular war. As predicted, this irregular war endured for a relatively long time, clocking in at twelve years. Also, as predicted, the longer war resulted in a negotiated settlement. In the next chapter we will look closer at the settlement reached at the conclusion of the war.

As a recap, Costa Rica saw conventional warfare within its borders, as the rebels battled against a neo-patrimonial, semi-democratic state apparatus. The rebels eventually

290 Quoted in Ibid., 186.
291 Ibid., 192.
prevailed militarily, and we will see the consequences of that on the post-war state.

Similarly, Nicaragua’s conflict was ended by a rebel military victory after a little over a
year of fighting. The conflict broke the mold slightly, being irregular and short, but the
short duration led to the military victory as one would predict, similar to Costa Rica.

On the other hand, El Salvador was similar to Nicaragua in that it experienced an
irregular war as a result of a dictatorial pre-war state. But where the Sandinista
Revolution was brief, the Salvadoran conflict dragged on for twelve years, and ended
with a negotiated settlement. We will continue to follow the causal sequence next, with
method of war termination and the post-war state becoming the foci.
Chapter 5: WAR TERMINATION AND THE POST-WAR STATE

War termination – including victories by government or rebel forces and negotiated settlements – is a factor in the causal chain that has a direct causal relationship with the post-war state, working in combination with the alliances of the war. Where the alliances exert influence on the post-war state through their ideology, the method of war termination affects the stability of the (re)constructed state and determines which faction(s) will exert influence on that state. As we will see, the rebel victories in Costa Rica and Nicaragua led to the rebels being able to set the tone for the new state structure. The states in these two nations were also stable, and took steps towards democracy; unfortunately Nicaragua suffered from United States intervention.

On the other hand, the negotiated settlement that ended the war in El Salvador demonstrates how this method of termination gave both, the rebels and government, a place in the post-war state. This made El Salvador’s experience in the post-war period different from Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The peace in El Salvador called for the competing factions to work together in order to (re)build the state, where in the other cases the victorious factions were able to work on their own terms. Here we will see how these factors worked, influencing the post-war states in each case.

Costa Rica

The civil war in Costa Rica was concluded with a total victory by rebel forces. Officially, the conflict was ended by the Pact of the Mexican Embassy, signed on April 19, 1948.292 With this pact, Santo León Herrera became interim president, “and Picado

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292 The government forces had offered to negotiate with Don Pepe in late March, but Figueres rejected the offered deal and intensified his campaign. When the two sides came to negotiate the Pact of the Mexican Embassy, the rebels had added leverage, having captured Limón and Cartago. This allowed Figueres to attain a position of power in the coming junta. See Molina, “The Polarization of Politics,” 168.
and Calderón went to Nicaragua in exile.” José Figueres, becoming a member of Herrera’s cabinet, “was the man behind the government” until May 8 when the Junta of the Second Republic assumed power with Figueres at its head.293

I consider the Costa Rican Civil War an example of military victory because the rebels completely defeated the incumbent forces in the field. In addition to the victory in combat, it was supplemented with a total takeover of the state by the rebel forces. The Pact called for the victors to “maintain the legality of the Communist Party, and respect the lives and positions of Calderón and his backers.” But Figueres’s power allowed him to disregard these provisions, furthering the claim of a total victory by the rebels.294

Incumbent leaders – Calderón, Picado, and Mora – were forced into exile, leaving no room for their continued influence on politics within the country. From then on there were new political mainstays present in Costa Rica.

The change in leadership after the war allowed a completely new ideology to reign supreme. The Junta of the Second Republic governed from May 1948 until November 1949, when the government was handed over to President Otilio Ulate. It is from this point that Costa Rica became fully democratic and established a stable regime which would not succumb to further civil war.

In forming the post-war state the direct effects of the method of war termination and the alliances can be seen. As predicted, a complete military victory by the rebels resulted in a stable state that was able to establish a lasting peace – a peace lasting in Costa Rica since 1948 – as well as a democratic governing structure and inclusive institutions. The manner in which the state was (re)established was also heavily

293 Woodward, Jr., Central America, 226.
influenced by the victors’ ideological tilts. José Figueres, being the most influential leader during this period, along with his followers, was able to establish a state that reflected his social democratic beliefs.

Costa Rica represents the “success story” of the cases presented here. The peaceful nation has yet to return to war since the conclusion of its short, but bloody, 1948 civil war. This places Costa Rica safely within the “stable” category of post-war states, experiencing well over ten years of civil peace. According to the proposed causal chain, this is the predicted outcome following a rebel military victory. Also significant to the Costa Rican state’s post-war (re)construction is the rebel alliance.

As shown in the causal process, alliances directly affect the post-war state. In this situation, because the war was ended by a rebel victory, the rebels were able to (re)construct the state through their ideology. Although Otilio Ulate and his moderate-conservative party, the PUN, had significant roles in the first official regime of the “Second Republic,” José Figueres and his followers, with their social democratic ideology, were the real shapers of the new state.

Next, I will look at the way in which the state was developed from 1948 until 1958, first, under the governing junta led by Don Pepe, then under the Ulate administration. Don Pepe will come back into the story as president in 1952. In doing this, I will also examine the constitution adopted in 1949 and some of the features of the newly (re)constructed state.

After the war was concluded, a junta was established, headed by José Figueres. The junta was inaugurated on May 8. During the inaugural ceremonies, Figueres stated
that “the Junta would ‘reestablish individual and social guarantees… [and] recognize the Judicial Power.’” He also announced the positions/roles of junta members:

Figueres… would act as president of the Junta (he was also commander in chief of the army) and that the members of the Junta would bear the title of minister. Don Pepe was not the chief executive, and the ministers possessed greater authority and independence in running their respective executive departments than ordinary cabinet-rank secretaries of state. Figueres was without question the leader, but technically he was “first among equals” and the Junta government was supposed to function as a collectivity.295

This allowed for pluralism and avoided any one person attaining too much power in the style of a caudillo.

The junta “would oversee a transitional period during which order would be restored to the country.”296 During its existence, Figueres was able to use the junta to (re)make the state. Don Pepe wanted to purge the nation of the “evils” of the previous eight years and lay the foundations of a new order. Figueres was in the driver’s seat; “the ‘revolution’ was what Don Pepe made it.”297

The Revolution of ’48 was not very revolutionary; the junta only took two truly revolutionary acts: the nationalization of the banks and the ten percent tax on wealth. The nationalization of the banks was rooted in social democratic thought and was defended as “necessary to enable the Second Republic to control credit in order to undertake economic planning…” The tax was aid to be “an emergency measure designed to raise revenue for the ‘national reconstruction.’” 298

295 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 67-68.
297 Ameringer, Don Pepe, 69.
298 Ibid., 70.
Figueres attempted to have a social democratic constitution that he drafted ratified, but the constituent assembly, with a majority of PUN members, rejected it. They opted instead to modify the 1871 constitution.

The 1949 constitution made two critical contributions to democracy: First, the creation of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones, or TSE) would deepen democracy by ensuring clean elections. Second, the introduction of female suffrage substantially broadened Costa Rican democracy.

Arguably, the most important provision of the new constitution was the abolition of the standing army. This “virtually eliminated the military as a destabilizing force” in Costa Rica. So when new opposition forces arose, plans to overthrow officials were always thwarted before they really began, with Kirk Bowman stating: “without a military, the opposition did not have a means to overthrow him [Figueres].” The abolition of a professional, standing military is one factor in the stability of the Costa Rican state in the post-civil war period.

The ideological differences between Figueres and his followers (social democrats) and Ulate and his PUN began to become more salient during the junta period. The two sides sparred politically, with Figueres dominating the junta, and the PUN the legislature. The National Junta eventually handed power over to Ulate in 1949 as promised. Although Figueres was responsible for two of the most important provisions to the new constitution, and “was able to push through a number of important reforms” as well as implement a “vast institutional transformation which laid the foundations of

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299 “A clean election for a constituent assembly was held in which Ulate’s PUN slate took three-quarters of the seats.” See Booth, Costa Rica: Quest for Democracy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 48.
300 Ibid., 48.
contemporary Costa Rica,” he, along with the junta still failed to implement many of their revolutionary ideas.302

Figueres handing over power to Ulate as planned was an important step for democracy. “The transfer of power to Ulate reinforced the integrity of elections in Costa Rica and established the basis of an elite settlement that would consolidate itself within a few years.”303 This transfer also alleviated the fears of many ticos who thought that Figueres would become a dictator. Also important, neither Figueres, nor the PUN attempted to reverse the reforms introduced by Calderón which “had become surprisingly entrenched in the fibers of Costa Rican political culture in a very short time…”304

Don Otilio Ulate presided over the Second Republic until 1953 peacefully.305 “After leaving power in 1949, Figueres and his closest associates concentrated their attention on founding a social democratic political party that could serve as a successful electoral vehicle.” The Party of National Liberation (PLN) was the result of these efforts, and would dominate Costa Rica from 1953 until its decline in the 1990s.306

The PLN had a “democratic and socialistic program, which aspired to the fullest enjoyment of freedom for individuals and the widest distribution of the wealth produced by society.”307 The party supported a strong state and state intervention “to spread economic benefits,” as well as to “curtail the power of foreign capital.”308 It embraced a mixed economic plan. The Liberacionistas, as PLN members were/are called, were

302 Ibid., 168. Also see Booth, Costa Rica, 49.
303 Booth, Costa Rica, 49.
305 See Ameringer, “Interregnum,” in Don Pepe, 92-109 for more on the period of Ulate’s presidency.
feared as communists because of their plans to tax the rich in order to finance its development program.

Aviva Chomsky stated that Figueres, and the PLN by extension, was “virulently anticomunist” and set a “decidedly pro-business and anti-labor atmosphere” in the country. On the other hand though,

the PLN laid out a specific program of improved education and living standards for the poor, government programs to improve housing and health care, rising wages, control of foreign investment, and support of democracy throughout the Caribbean Basin.

José Figueres of the PLN won the presidency in the 1953 election. He garnered 121,509 votes, compared to the 66,874 votes of his opponent. The electoral victory consolidated important changes for national politics. First, the victory was based on the support of “middle-class political forces,” and ended the political hegemony of the nation’s economic aristocracy. The PLN was also able to further validate the electoral process when, in 1958, it turned over power after losing to the PUN’s candidate, Mario Echandi.

With the victory, Figueres was poised to make an impact on the post-war Costa Rican state. He came to power “with an overwhelming electoral mandate, a well organized party, and two-thirds of the deputies in the Legislative Assembly.” There were challenges to the democracy of Costa Rica during this period, as well as the stability of the state. Particularly, Costa Rican enemies of Figueres – Calderón, Picado, Ulate, Echandi, and Castro – conspired to remove Figueres from office by force. According to

310 Bowman, “Democracy on the Brink,” 177.
311 Booth, *Costa Rica*, 49.
Bowman, “There was no elite pact for democracy. Costa Rican culture did not inhibit a violent uprising. Institutions did not channel preferences toward support of ballots over bullets.” With no military with whom they could align themselves, these plans did not go far though. There was also an attempt by these enemies of Figueres to have Nicaraguan forces invade the country to remove Figueres, but this was ended before any real violence could breakout by the Organization of American States.313

In the ten-year post-war period, the Costa Rican state was (re)constructed as a stable democracy. There were definitely challenges; and the notion of true democracy was not just there among the movers and shakers of the national politics, it had to be curated; but the state survived intact, never again being seriously challenged with the threat of civil war. Next, I will briefly discuss some of the political institutions of Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is a unitary state, “dominated by a single, centralized government.” Its government is divided into three branches – legislative, executive, and judiciary – each with checks on the others. The legislative branch is occupied by the Legislative Assembly. According to the Constitution, “The power to legislate resides in the people, who delegate it, by means of the vote.” The legislature is a unicameral body, made up of fifty-seven members. Delegates “are elected in proportion to the populations of the nation’s seven provinces.” It is one of the stronger legislative bodies in all of Latin America, being able to: “legislate, amend the constitution (by a two-thirds vote in each of two successive annual sessions), declare war and peace, ratify treaties, approve the national budget, levy taxes, and suspend certain constitutional rights (by a two-thirds

313 Ibid., 178 & 180.
The Legislative Assembly can “require information from government ministers, impeach and censure high officials, appoint the powerful national comptroller, and override an executive veto.” These are checks the legislature holds over the other branches.

The executive of Costa Rica is the President of the Republic. After the balance of power between the executive and the legislature had favored the former from 1870 through 1948, the 1949 constitution “was designed… to diminish the powers of the President of the Republic.” The president can serve a single-term and cannot be re-elected. The holder of the office shares authority with cabinet members. There are also few formal powers that can be exercised by the president alone.

Finally, the third branch of government is the judiciary. It was given “considerable independence and effective power to restrain the other branches of government.” The Supreme Court of Justice is the highest court, in both civilian and criminal matters. Justices to the Supreme Court are appointed by the Legislative Assembly and serve eight year terms that are “automatically renewed unless the assembly votes (by a two-thirds majority) to deny another term.”

With its government assembled as such, Costa Rica was able to construct a modern, democratic post-war state that was stable. The establishment of a state that looked toward the citizenry and dispersed power across different branches of government allowed Costa Rica to avoid the dreaded return to war, a fate that Nicaragua was not able to avoid. The establishment of a strong, functioning state by the victorious rebel forces

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315 Ibid., 59-60.
316 Ibid., 64-65.
also allowed the nation to skirt the problems that plagued post-war El Salvador, namely the criminal violence.

Nicaragua

The Sandinista Revolution ended with a rebel military victory. The FSLN was able to completely destroy the military capabilities of the Somoza regime. Somoza was forced to flee the country as the rebels took control, signifying the totality of the rebel victory. Somoza resigned on July 17, 1979 and fled to Paraguay, where he would be assassinated the next year by Argentine operatives. The Sandinistas seized control of the government on July 19, installing a Sandinista-controlled junta the next day.

According to the hypothesis, Nicaragua would be expected to (re)construct itself as a stable state, in the least, if not move towards democracy and establish inclusive institutions as well. Surprisingly, the Sandinistas did eventually move towards democracy, but the state experienced a relapse into war with the Contra War beginning in 1981 and enduring until 1990. To explain this, I argue that the Contra War occurred because of an external, intervening variable: U.S. intervention and efforts to remove the Sandinistas from power.

Next, I will recount the course of events from the establishment of a junta immediately after the war to the breakdown of peace and the country’s return to war. I will also identify Sandinista efforts to (re)shape the state.

After the defeat of Somoza, the FSLN had a dominant role in the (re)construction of the Nicaraguan state. As such, they were dominant – the hegemon – but not the sole force. According to Bruce E. Wright, the FSLN “as the ‘vanguard party’ sees its function as guiding the revolution.” But despite this, the baggage that usually comes along with
“vanguard” (e.g. dictatorship of the proletariat, single party state, etc.) was not present in post-war Nicaragua. To the contrary, “the concepts of pluralism and of the vanguard [had] been synthesized in Nicaraguan theory and practice…” Pluralism is even guaranteed in the Nicaraguan constitution: “The state guarantees the existence of political pluralism,” and a multiparty system has been maintained.317

The FSLN was the vanguard of the “broad popular majority,” and aimed to “create a set of rules of the game which [would] allow all sectors of the society, including the bourgeois, to function but not allow the creation of a bourgeois hegemony.” The Sandinistas attempted to “create and maintain hegemony within” Nicaragua in order to promote the interests of the majority of Nicaraguans. “Within the Nicaraguan political system the state, as projected in the Constitution of 1987, guarantees a multiparty system with freedom of expression and a mixed economy.”318

Demonstrating the shift towards democracy, as expected by the hypothesis, Thomas W. Walker states: “the new political system not only involved, but actually depended upon, the mobilization and voluntary participation of hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens.”319 In addition to the pluralist, democratic tendencies of the new government, the FSLN also aimed to create a modern state. This further puts the situation in Nicaragua on a similar track to an end similar to that in Costa Rica, which quite possibly could have happened if not for outside interference. Nicaragua was a neo-patrimonial state under Somoza, and the task of the Sandinistas “was not merely to organize a political system, to replace the political power held by the existing regime, but

318 Ibid., 39-40.
319 Walker, Nicaragua, 90.
to create a fundamentally new state.” 320 The first steps taken by the FSLN after coming to power was not to make itself a party, nor become the government of Nicaragua, but to create institutions independent of itself – inclusive institutions. The FSLN understood that it would favor some interests over others, and therefore knew the “other parties are necessary to represent the less favored interests so that political decision making can function in a manner which takes into account the full range of social interests…” 321

Militarily, Nicaragua took a different route than Costa Rica, establishing a new institution after the destruction of the National Guard. It has been suggested that the military may have faded away if not for the Contra War. Reinforcing this sentiment, it has also been said that “Revolutionary transformations, especially those involving national liberation, will be opposed by substantial forces which have benefited from the prior regime or which fear the example that the revolution suggests,” suggesting that a military is needed, and making the Costa Rican option of abolition extremely unlikely. 322

The Sandinistas had their base in the military. 323 This is significant because of how it relates the people to the military. Where Somoza’s National Guard was clearly a separate entity from the people,

The military struggle against the Somoza regime was a popular one, not merely a confrontation between the FSLN army and its military opponent. The development of armed struggle was not merely the growth of a Sandinista army to confront and replace the National Guard; it was the expression of popular will to create a sovereign Nicaraguan state. 324

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320 Wright, “Pluralism and Vanguardism in the Nicaraguan Revolution,” 45.
321 Ibid., 47.
322 Ibid., 50.
323 Ibid., 49.
324 Ibid., 50.
Being “conscious of the fact that it was important not to convert itself into an army but to be the head of an armed people,” the FSLN created the Sandinista Popular Army, the Sandinista Police, and the Sandinista Militias. These institutions “stood as a guarantee that the revolution would not easily be reversed.” The new military would integrate the people with “a military force that it could see as its own rather than as the instrument of an internal or external enemy.” The military is not an instrument of the FSLN, but serves as an intermediary between Nicaraguans and the organization.

The (re)construction of the Nicaraguan state was first handled by the Provisional Junta of National Reconstruction, which became the Governing Junta of National Reconstruction after the Sandinista defeat of Somoza. There was an election held in 1984, in which the Sandinistas won. By 1986, the government had turned to some repressive means in order to maintain control and order, but this was a result of the recurrence of war in Nicaragua – the Contra War.

Nicaragua was well on its way to establishing a stable state with inclusive institutions, moving in a democratic direction after the defeat of Somoza. But because of foreign intervention, particularly that of the United States, war flared up once again in the nation.

Two of the greatest threats to the Nicaraguan state after the revolution were ex-National Guard units and right-wing guerrillas. The forces that came to challenge the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua were known as the contras, short for

325 Ibid., 50.
327 Wright, “Pluralism and Vanguardism in the Nicaraguan Revolution,” 51.
330 Gorman, “Power and Consolidation in the Nicaraguan Revolution,” 144.
contrarevolucionarios or counterrevolutionaries. Speaking of the contras, President Ronald Reagan said: “So I guess in a way [the Nicaraguan rebels] are counterrevolutionaries, and God bless them for being that way. I guess that makes them contras and so it makes me a contra too.”\textsuperscript{331} The contras were a collection of anti-Sandinista groups, ranging from ex-National Guard, to right-wingers, indigenous peoples, and former Sandinistas who had become disillusioned with the revolution. The contras were used by the United States to “take the revolution out of the hands of the revolutionaries.”\textsuperscript{332}

I consider Nicaragua a failure in reaching a success similar to Costa Rica’s only because of an external, intervening variable: U.S. intervention. Although there were internal opponents to the Sandinistas, they posed little threat. The contras were “almost totally dependent on the United States and even subject to significant U.S. control to keep their war effort going.”\textsuperscript{333}

After the revolution in Nicaragua, U.S. Republicans deplored the “Marxist takeover of Nicaragua…” and pledged to “never support U.S. assistance to any Marxist government in this hemisphere.”\textsuperscript{334} In this vein, on July 15, 1980, “barely one year after the Sandinistas had taken power in Managua, Republicans adopted a platform calling for their [the Sandinistas] overthrow.”\textsuperscript{335} So the party that would come to power in 1981, with Reagan at its head, would be focused on defeating the Sandinistas. Their goal, as they saw it, was to liberate Nicaragua and replace the Sandinistas.\textsuperscript{336}

\textsuperscript{331} Quoted in Crandall, The Salvador Option, 306.
\textsuperscript{332} Quoted in Grandin, Empire’s Workshop, 89.
\textsuperscript{333} Krauss, “Revolution in Central America?” 566.
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., 49.
The anti-communism of the American Republican party, along with the Nicaraguans arming of the Salvadoran rebels pushed them to this uncompromising position. They also accused the Sandinistas of a military buildup. This aligned perfectly with Reagan’s foreign policy.

Reagan’s foreign policy philosophy was global anticommunism, and it translated into three ambitious policy goals – regaining U.S. military superiority, rolling back Soviet strategic gains in the third world, and preventing further Soviet advances.337

The Contra War, fought by Nicaraguans, would be a proxy war for the United States. The Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN), for example, would be created under American auspices in 1981.

The contras were able to tie the “Sandinistas down in a small war,” but they were unable to make any military or political advances. The contras also engaged in fraud, human rights violations, and drug trafficking.338 The Sandinistas successfully waged a counterinsurgency campaign, relocating citizens away from the border with Honduras and conducting “sweeps picking up suspected contra collaborators.”339

Nicaragua’s war ended with the FSLN driving the incumbent forces from the battlefield and out of the country. This gave the Sandinistas the ability to (re)shape the state as they saw fit. As a result, the Sandinistas were able to establish institutions to their liking and begin to institute the principle of pluralism. Although it would be expected to remain stable, with war being absent, Nicaragua experienced a recurrent civil war when the U.S. determined to intervene and support potential anti-revolutionary opposition forces. This extended enough capabilities to the contras for them to break the peace.

337 Ibid., 23.
339 Ibid., 570.
El Salvador

The civil war in El Salvador is unique among the case studies present in this study in its method of termination. Where the conflicts in Costa Rica and Nicaragua were brought to an end by rebel military victories, El Salvador’s war was ended with a negotiated settlement. While the rebels in Costa Rica and Nicaragua were allowed near-complete, unopposed ability to (re)shape their respective states, the situation in El Salvador was slightly different.

Where military victories allow the victors to shape, or reshape, the post-war state through their own ideology, a negotiated settlement brings multiple belligerents to the negotiating table, resulting in multiple, competing ideologies influencing the new state. This is also known as power sharing. In the case of El Salvador, the military, oligarchy, government, death squads (through ARENA), and the FMLN and FDR were represented in the peace process and the settlement reached in 1992.

In the following section I will detail the end of the Salvadoran conflict, touching on the peace process, including negotiations and the subsequent settlement reached by the parties involved. Following this, I will discuss the post-war Salvadoran state, which has remained stable, avoiding a return to warfare, but has not been able to establish effective institutions or a strong state and has seen extreme levels of violence.

The FMLN’s Second Final Offensive of 1989 proved that it was very capable militarily, and that although the FAES had been equipped and trained by the United States, it could not defeat the rebels. After a decade of warfare, both belligerents realized that neither could attain a political or military victory, and following the prediction of the
hypothesis, the guerrilla war lasted longer (twelve years) than the other cases, leading to a 
negotiated settlement.

For wars to end by negotiations, there are certain conditions that must be met.

Negotiations tend to occur when

(1) neither side perceives a possibility of near-term victory, (2) all the 
combatants perceive high immediate costs to continued fighting, and (3) 
all the combatants are uncertain that they can maintain sufficient resources 
to avoid defeat in the medium and long term. Under such circumstances 
all the parties may settle for minimum, rather than maximum objectives. 340

These conditions were present in El Salvador. After ten years of bloodshed, the enduring 
military parity eliminated the possibility of a swift victory of either side. There was also 
pressure from the public and changing international conditions applied to the combatants 
to end the war through negotiations.

The war was ended officially on January 16, 1992, when “in Mexico City’s ornate 
Chapultepec Castle the government of President Alfredo Cristiani and the rebel 
Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) formally signed a comprehensive 
peace treaty, putting an end to 12 years of conflict.” 341 The sentiment for negotiations had 
taken hold years prior. “By 1987, 83 percent of the population favored a negotiated 
peace” after the government proved itself to be “unable and unwilling to curb the 
violence, much less to develop an economic development program.” 342

The active participants’ perspectives began to shift as well. The leadership of the 
FMLN began to change its thinking after a tour of Latin American and Eastern European 
countries. “The Latin American leaders urged the FMLN to give up their dream of a

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342 Toft, Securing the Peace, 77.
Marxist state, and after visiting Eastern European countries, the FMLN leadership witnessed the corrosive effects of Soviet ideology…” On the other hand, new president Alfredo Cristiani, of ARENA, called for peace talks in his 1989 inaugural address.

This change of heart by both, ARENA and the FMLN led to the two sides coming together in Mexico in September 1989 to “discuss the outline of a peace deal.” The two met again in October in Costa Rica. At the same time though, the FMLN was planning its Second Final Offensive. Talks broke down when the offensive was launched in November. According to Cristiani, the FMLN was “talking about peace but stepping up the war.”

As stated before, although the offensive was defeated, it proved that the government still could not defeat the rebels. Any continuation of warfare would be long and drawn out like the previous decade. This also proved that “the military was unable to defend the wealthy from the FMLN,” reinforcing “overall civilian distrust of the military.”

The rebels were also forced to make certain realizations in the aftermath of the offensive. Their inability to overthrow the government, as well as international developments – “The demise of the Soviet Union,” and “the electoral loss of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua” – and pressure from the world community forced the FMLN to accept negotiations as their only option.

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343 Ibid., 77.
344 Quoted in Crandall, The Salvador Option, 434.
345 Toft, Securing the Peace, 77.
346 Ibid., 78.
With the moderation of both belligerents, as well as pressure from civilians, wealthy and impoverished alike, El Salvador was poised to reach a settlement. Terry Lynn Karl describes the scene after the signing:

In Mexico City, after unexpectedly signing the peace agreement in person, President Cristiani strode across the podium to shake hands with all five FMLN commanders as participants on both sides cried openly. In El Salvador a sea of FMLN flags filled San Salvador’s Civic Plaza in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral, where the army once massacred political dissidents; the cathedral itself was draped with an enormous banner of the assassinated Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. A ceremony held to observe the commencement of the formal ceasefire was especially poignant: army officers and rebel commanders stood together at attention to sing the Salvadoran anthem on a dais decorated with flags of El Salvador, the ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and FMLN. The rival commandants then accompanied President Cristiani to light an eternal flame in commemoration of the more than 75,000 Salvadorans who aided in the tiny country’s war.347

The agreement demonstrates how the two opposing sides came together, making concessions and agreeing to work together in the (re)construction of El Salvador.

In an attempt at power sharing, the ARENA-led government agreed to accept FMLN participation in the new security force of the state. Up to twenty percent of this force would be FMLN members. The National Guard, Treasury Police, Customs Police, and National Police were also dissolved. Elite infantry battalions, like the Atlactl Battalion, and paramilitary groups were dissolved as well. The military was reduced too, and rid of “human-rights violators and others unsuited to the new form of military…”

Alternatively, the FMLN made sacrifices for the sake of peace as well. “For the FMLN the most unfavorable outcome of the negotiations was the continued existence of the Salvadoran military…” On top of that, the organization also agreed to demobilize and

cease to be a military force.\textsuperscript{348} The FMLN would go on to become a political party and take part in electoral politics.

The settlement brought major changes to the country, among them: “the democratization of the political system and its opening to the entire spectrum of political forces for the first time; and the ending of the military’s dominant role in society and the impunity of the armed forces.” Although Alvaro de Soto, the lead UN mediator during the negotiations, and Terry Lynn Karl have referred to the settlement as a “negotiated revolution,” Hugh Byrne disagrees. According to him, the agreement fell shy of a revolution in two ways: “Political power and a monopoly of the legal means of coercion remained in the hands of the Salvadoran government; and the agreement did not affect a fundamental social and economic transformation of the society.”\textsuperscript{349}

The Chapultepec Accords would “drastically reduce the army, demobilize the guerrillas, dismantle the repressive security apparatus, create a new police force, and for the first time, allow all Salvadorans to participate openly in the political life of their nation.”\textsuperscript{350} The creation of a new police force – the National Civilian Police (PNC) – was one of the most important measures of the accords. It was supposed to be “a new force, with a new organization, new officers, new education and training mechanisms and a new doctrine.” Civilians had to make up at least sixty percent of PNC officers, and only twenty percent could be former military or FMLN. Members would be “drawn from the community and would continue to be part of the community.”\textsuperscript{351} This would also allow

\textsuperscript{348} Byrne, \textit{El Salvador’s Civil War}, 192.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 193.
\textsuperscript{350} Karl, “El Salvador’s Negotiated Revolution,” 147.
\textsuperscript{351} Toft, \textit{Securing the Peace}, 82-83.
for the military to be specialized to handle international security only. Civilian control of the military was instituted as well.

On paper, El Salvador is a success story. It has not been in a state of war since the conclusion of its civil war in 1992 and it has even moved towards democracy. The FMLN became a political party and participates in electoral politics.352 Despite this, El Salvador cannot be considered a complete success. Even though it has not been in a state of war, the violence within the country has been astronomical, in some cases reaching higher levels than during the period of war.

El Salvador has become notorious for the levels of violence that plagues it, continuing a trend that has made its name synonymous with violence. Instead of political violence though, the tiny nation has been plagued by gangs, or maras, since the civil war was ended. After the civil war, El Salvador suffered a public security gap, “where the government or interim political authorities have not asserted control over the territory and a chaotic environment prevails.” Post-war periods reveal “populations brutalized by their wartime experience and in many cases thirsty for revenge against those who harmed them. At the same time, many of the normal constraints on violent behavior – for example, the threat of police action or judicial sanction, even shame – have not yet been restored.”353 This is usually carried out by returning refugees, former fighters, and criminal opportunists. There is/was also instrumental violence present in El Salvador in the aftermath of the war’s conclusion. “Instrumental violence can be conducted by individuals or groups seeking some form of personal advancement,” and includes “all forms of directed action toward any personal or criminal (but nonpolitical) goal.”

352 The FMLN actually won control of the national government in 2009.
form of violence includes personal violence, mafia or criminal violence, and some types of looting. Organized groups use the “chaos of post-conflict states to pursue avenues of criminal gain with limited risk of sanction from law enforcement,” and they act “instrumentally, and in some cases rationally, in response to incentives in their environment.” These characteristics can be seen in El Salvador, as well as the maras that terrorize the nation.

The maras were created in the United States. During the civil war, many Salvadorans fled their homes arriving in the U.S., particularly Los Angeles. While in the U.S., the youths picked up on the local gang culture. In 1992, one of the most prominent maras, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) was a “little-known group of Salvadoran immigrants.” By 1996, the U.S. began to deport immigrant and foreign-born American felons. To get an idea of how many people were deported, “Between 2000 and 2004, an estimated 20,000 young Central American criminals… were deported to countries they barely knew.”

Deportees arrived in Central America with nothing but their gang ties to MS-13 or 18th Street gang, which is known as Mara 18 or M-18 in Central America. The new arrivals were characterized by “their outlandish gang tattoos, their Spanglish, and their authoritarian attitudes.”

The maras began to grow rapidly. They became “powerful, cross-border crime networks.” Along with the violence brought by the gangs, “The isthmus has [also]

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354 Ibid., 28.
356 Ibid., 100.
357 Ibid., 101.
358 Ibid., 98.
become the key transit point for drugs coming into the United States from the Andes.”

Governments throughout the region have had trouble dealing with this problem; El Salvador is no exception.

El Salvador has been challenged by “drug traffickers, organized crime syndicates, and the maras.” “The quantity of ready cash and the ruthlessness of the criminal organizations result in a relatively weak state.” Utilizing weaponry left over from the civil war, the maras have become increasingly sophisticated. The population is still living under fear of death as MS-13 and M-18 battle it out.

According to the UNODC Homicide Statistics 2012, in 1995, just three years after the peace agreement, El Salvador recorded 7,977 murders at a rate of 139.1 per 100,000. The following two years, the country recorded 6,792 and 6,573 murders at a rate of 117.3 and 112.6 for 1996 and 1997 respectively. To put it in perspective, approximately 6,250 people were killed annually during the civil war. By 2002, the murder rate was actually down to 47.3, culminating in 2,835 total murders. In comparison, in 1995 Nicaragua and Costa Rica boasted 707 and 184 cumulative murders and rates of 15.2 and 5.3 respectively.

This expressive and instrumental violence is present in El Salvador as a result of its history. New institutions that could prevent criminal activity “through effective policing, independent judiciaries, and a penitential system that effectively deters and punishes criminal behavior” are hampered by “centuries of authoritarian and patriarchal rule.” This problem manifests itself particularly in the police. The police forces began to patrol neighborhoods, versus the armed forces of earlier eras, but they are under paid,

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359 Grandin, Empire’s Workshop, 206.
361 This is actually the lowest the murder rate in El Salvador was between 1995 and 2011.
under trained, and under equipped. They are also denied the power needed to combat the violence because of memories of the role played by police during the civil war.\textsuperscript{362} This is indicative of strong institutions not being established in the country.

In a situation such as that in El Salvador, it cannot be said that the state is in complete control of its territory. So despite the political progress made, the nation is standing on shaky ground, not completely stable, but not failing or in a state of war either. Although this does not prove that negotiated settlements are more likely to return to war, it does make them appear less effective than military victories in establishing stable, non-violent states. In the words of Michael J. Boyle, El Salvador is a deeply violent society, “but not [one] in which organized political actors are agitating to restart the conflict. In other words, [it is an example] of [a] ‘successful’ peace [settlement],” but remains highly violent.\textsuperscript{363}

Because of the negotiated settlement and the power sharing, the state was unintendedly weakened. Because no one alliance was able to take a hegemonic role and construct the post-war state, power sharing led to the parties attempting to construct institutions that appeased everyone, but in the end were hollow allowing a different set of problems to take hold.

\textsuperscript{362} Negroponte, \textit{Seeking Peace in El Salvador}, 168.
\textsuperscript{363} Boyle, \textit{Violence after War}, 57.
Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

Today, as civil wars rage across the globe, we have an increased incentive to understand these conflicts. Syria, Yemen, and Libya, among several other countries, are in the midst of violent civil wars right now, with thousands upon thousands being slaughtered. So far the international community has remained on the sidelines both, politically and militarily. Recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have embedded deep-seated fears of never-ending involvement in civil wars. But I contend that this is an example of one fearing what one does not understand.

Consequently, I believe that if there was more understanding of the entire process of civil wars – from before the outbreak of hostilities, through to the end of the conflict and the (re)establishment of a post-war state – the international community would be able to take action in the event of civil wars. Next I will summarize the case studies, following with a discussion of the lessons to be learned from this study. Finally, I will discuss the policy implications of this thesis.

I argue that post-civil war state stability is predicated on the entire process of the preceding civil war. Examining civil wars in their totality allows for better understanding of, not only how a state can reach post-war stability, but how conflicts develop.

Where most previous studies have tended to hone in on one specific aspect of civil war – whether that be outbreak, conclusion, or the inner workings of conflict\(^\text{364}\) – my hypotheses aim to synthesize all aspects of civil wars in order to better understand them in totality. My work can also assist others in the international community in their handling of specific aspects of these conflicts.

\(^{364}\) For example, alliances and violence. See works by Laia Balcells, Stathis N. Kalyvas, Fotini Christia, and James Raymond Vreeland among others.
Here, my main goal has been to create a series of causal hypotheses that sequentially link variables from the period prior to the occurrence of civil war to the (re)establishment of the post-war state. By doing this, I sacrificed depth on certain points (i.e. causes of civil war, patterns of violence, the formation and reformation of alliances), but have gained in other areas. I tie the post-war state directly to the civil war itself, something only hinted at, if at all mentioned, by other scholars.

Nicaragua represents the only case study that failed to stabilize after concluding its civil war. Nicaragua began with a neopatrimonial state under the dictatorial Somoza dynasty. The Somozas used the state as their personal property, as well as a profit-maker. The dynasty enforced its will over the country with the National Guard, which had become, for all intents and purposes, the personal armed force for the family.

As a result of the organization of power, when the opposition arose it took the form of the FSLN, a Marxist-Leninist organization. The organization eventually split along ideological lines into three factions, or tendencies. These tendencies would eventually reunite, before taking control of Nicaragua. Because of the Somozas’ power and the nature of the Nicaraguan state, the FSLN waged a guerrilla war against the government. The rebels, contradicting the hypothesis, were able to defeat and wrestle power from the government in a considerably short period of time: approximately a year. But the short duration of the war did result in a military victory. With the conflict ending as a result of the rebels destroying government forces, the FSLN had control of the (re)building of the state.

365 By causes of civil war I am referring to, for example, greed versus grievance arguments, state failure, and revolution etc. For more on this see work by Robert H. Bates, Jack A. Goldstone, Theda Skocpol, James Raymond Vreeland, and Stewart Patrick, etc.
366 For work on political violence see works of Kalyvas, Balcells, and Jessica A. Stanton, etc.
In agreement with previous knowledge, the FSLN moved to construct a modern state, with democratic, pluralist tendencies. The FSLN, through its governing junta established immediately after the war, moved to create institutions independent of itself, including military forces. Nicaragua, arguably, was on its way to being a stable, pluralistic, modern state. But there would be an unexpected detour.

Nicaragua, again, found itself in the midst of an even longer war shortly after the Revolution. With the assistance and direction of the United States, a number of Nicaraguans with anti-Sandinista sentiments emerged as the *contras*, attempting to undo the Revolution. This unexpected intervention derailed the expected road to post-war stability. So absent U.S. interference, I contend that Nicaragua was on the road stability. With that being said, although Nicaragua become engulfed in another civil war before the end of the ten year period after which the nation could have been deemed stable, Nicaragua does not disprove the theory. All the evidence leads one to believe that with the absence of U.S. intervention, Nicaragua would have met ten year threshold fairly easily, something we see more clearly in the case of Costa Rica.

El Salvador, on the other hand, is officially a stable, democratic state. Despite this view from the surface, El Salvador is not the same as Costa Rica. The fact that El Salvador has not returned to a state of warfare is commendable, but it also masks the fact that the violence within the country has run awry since the conclusion of the sanguinary war.

The violence present in El Salvador is not “an attempt by the former combatants to explicitly challenge the government or restart the conflict.” Criminal gangs, some “composed of former paramilitaries,” but many of which are made up of “desperate and

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368 See Toft, *Securing the Peace* and “Ending Civil Wars.”
unemployed young men,” are responsible for the violence.\textsuperscript{369} The country is experiencing expressive and institutional, instead of strategic violence, reducing the chances that war returns to El Salvador. This does not make the violence any less real though.

In the post-war period, El Salvador has consistently been atop the rankings of most violent peacetime nations. In some years, the tiny nation has recorded more murders than it did during the roughly decade-long war. For this reason, El Salvador, although stable, is not a strong, fully functioning state in the same was Costa Rica is. There are institutional elements that go into this and contribute to this state of existence. This particular outcome was not a certainty though. Let’s review El Salvador’s journey through its bloodbath of a civil war.

El Salvador was a neo-patrimonial, military-led dictatorship prior to the war. The military, in alliance with the oligarchy, had controlled the nation since the early twentieth century. The oligarchy, with U.S. assistance in some instances, would take charge of the creation of paramilitary or death squads. The nature of the state led to the rise of five separate, independent, leftist guerrilla organizations in the 1970s that would eventually unite to form the FMLN in 1980 in order to wage war against the government. The FMLN would also align with the FDR politically.

With the military exerting control over the state and state power, the rebels were force to combat the incumbent regime using guerrilla tactics. As expected, the guerrilla war was a long, drawn out affair; it lasted twelve years, costing approximately 75,000 lives. This in turn led to the wish of all parties involved, as well as the international community, to reach a settlement of the conflict via negotiations, which ended the brutal contest for power in 1992 with a power sharing agreement.

\textsuperscript{369} Boyle, \textit{Violence after War}, 57.
The fact that the war was terminated by a negotiated settlement would lead one to expect the recurrence of war, but El Salvador was, and still has been, able to avoid that fate. The negotiated settlement also had another effect; there was no one alliance that had a monopoly because of a military victory, so both alliances had to work together in the (re)construction of the state. This in turn weakened the newly (re)established state in the long run, allowing the extremely high levels of criminal violence to develop and persist.

Finally, we come to Costa Rica. Costa Rica represents the case study that demonstrates the process of civil war resulting in a modern, stable, democratic state.

Here we saw a nation that was ruled by a semi-democratic regime with patrimonial tendencies, led by the PRN, almost making the state a single-party polity. The military was not particularly strong a result of reforms made earlier in the nation’s history. Because of this, when the civil war began, parity existed among government and rebel forces. This led to a conventional war being waged for control of the Costa Rican state.

As this war developed, the alliances broke down as the governing PRN and the communist PVP on one side, facing off against the moderate-conservative PUN and the social democratic dominators of the period: the PSD and the ELN. The anti-dictatorial Caribbean Legion was also aligned with the rebels.

Because of the conventional nature of the combat during the civil war, it was a quick one. This case study is actually an extreme example demonstrating that conventional wars tend to be shorter than irregular warfare. The Costa Rican Civil War

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370 See Mahoney, *The Legacies of Liberalism* for more on the Liberal Reform period and Costa Rica’s development in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
clocked in, astoundingly, at a little over one month in length. And as expected, the shorter duration of the conflict led to a military victory; a victory by the rebels.

For this reason the alliances had a similar effect on the post-war Costa Ricans state as they had in the Nicaraguan case. Because the rebels completely defeated the incumbents, there were no power sharing agreements and negotiations as there were in El Salvador. The victorious rebels, dominated by social democratic forces, had free reign to (re)construct the Second Republic in their own image. After a short stint of PUN rule, the PLN – a new party created from the remnants of the ELN and PSD – came to power and dominated the politics of Costa Rica for the next four decades. The rebel victory also led to increased democratization, with Costa Rica finally becoming a genuine democratic state with inclusive institutions in the war’s aftermath. This could have been possible in Nicaragua, but the U.S. intervention stunted any potential progress that may have occurred as the Sandinista Revolution was consolidated.

These findings are significant because the same method can be replicated with other cases to see if the same conclusions can be drawn. Because factors like region, culture, type of civil war, and era were all controlled for here, we can assume that the generalizations drawn here are indeed externally valid and can be applied to other potential areas of interest, whether it be a sectarian war in Yemen, or an ethnic conflict in Sudan. We can be sure that the variables have been isolated to ensure the best of our abilities that they are the driving forces in the causal process.

In sum, what has been demonstrated is that there is a clear path in civil wars that begins with pre-war ruling regimes and ends with the construction, or reconstruction, of the post-war state. It we follow each step of the causal train, from pre-war ruling regime,
to type of warfare, to duration, to method of termination, to the post-war state and from pre-war regime to alliances, and from alliances to the post-war state, we can see a clear sequence of causation producing a post-war state that, from which, we can now know what to expect.

In the following section, utilizing the conclusions drawn from this study, I will make policy suggestions based on these findings.

**Policy Implications**

Here, I am not arguing that the process I propose is the end all be all to studying civil wars and their relations to the post-war state. Rather, I am asserting that this is a lens through which to look at civil wars as they develop as a way of predicting in what direction they will go and what outside interference can achieve or prevent.

Today, the civil war in Syria began in 2011, amidst the Arab Spring, when Syrians came out to protest against Bashar al-Assad, the latest dictator in a dynasty similar to that of the Somozas’ in Nicaragua. The protesters moved towards warfare when the incumbent regime (al-Assad) began to violently suppress the political challenges to its rule.

As a result of years of the Assad’s grasp of power, as well as their Alawite religion and the patrimonial nature of the regime, the rebel factions that arose were driven by political and ideological reasons. Two primary forces have arisen on the rebel side: the Free Syrian Army and the al-Qaeda-influenced elements like al-Nusra Front.

Despite the war being called an insurgency, it has developed into a conventional war. According to Balcells and Kalyvas, “conventional wars entail pitched battles, artillery contests, and urban sieges across clearly defined frontlines.” This can be seen
“[in] news from Syria,” where there are “clear-cut victories in battles indicating that the war is being fought conventionally.” In the Syrian conflict there are “large contiguous areas that are militarily held by the rebels or the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Many cities are being fought over, with frontlines bisecting them.” This conventional war developed out of a weakened state.

As of 2017, the war is on-going, putting the conflict in its sixth year. This makes the conflict appear to be on the road to a stalemate, as well as termination by negotiated settlement. One cannot say for sure where events will end though. The war has become a proxy for regional powers Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran who are jockeying for geopolitical supremacy in the region. Saudi Arabia and Turkey, along with others, support the rebels and Assad is backed by Iran and Russia among others. This outside interference has leveled the playing field; the parity has been increased.371

In order to deal with the problem at hand, there are a few options that could be taken. In one possible route to a solution, there would need to be a situations in which the majority of foreign parties would exit the conflict, with one side receiving enough aid to give it an edge militarily, similar to the Libyan conflict of 2011. In another scenario, the international actors could come together and reach an agreement, then exert pressure on the Syrian belligerents, forcing them to the negotiating table and facilitating a peace agreement.

Looking at the First Sudanese Civil War can also give us a clue as to how this study can be applied. When the conflict began in 1955, the south was rising up against an order imposed by the British and Egyptians followed by the regime from the north of

Sudan. With this war being a secessionist conflict, the alliances were largely based on location and identity. The incumbents in the north were largely Arab and Muslim while the rebels from the south were African and Christian or followers of native African religions.

As predicted, the warfare took an irregular form. The warfare also endured for a long time, only ending in 1972. Also as predicted, the war was ended with a negotiated settlement, with the Addis Ababa Agreement being signed in February 1972. The agreement stopped the fighting for a while, but did not address the root problems and conflict reignited in 1983; a war that lasted for twenty two years and cost 2 million people their lives.

My argument shows that civil wars follow a general trajectory that, with the proper knowledge, can be followed and even predicted. This allows us to be able to anticipate, instead of simply reacting to events on the ground. If we do not use this knowledge, there will be more situations like Sudan, where millions of people lose their lives in the initial conflict and are driven right back in a recurring war. Situations like Libya can be avoided as well. We will also be able to end conflicts in their first incarnation for good, and not suffer the ever costly recurring wars.

For now, though, it is too early to tell the direction the civil war will take. We can use this causal process in order to make predictions and possible evaluations for potential policies.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


