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The Adaptation of the FSLN: Daniel Ortega's Leadership and Democracy in Nicaragua

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the capacity of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) to adapt to a changing Nicaraguan political environment over the last three decades. It focuses on the FSLN's transformation from the 1980s until its recent return to power. The analysis uses the tools offered by studies on the transformation and adaptation of political parties in adverse contexts. It concentrates on the four key stages of the FSLN's transformation: the 1980s, the five-year period following the FSLN's defeat in the elections (1990–1995), the following decade in opposition (1996–2006), and the return to government. The key elements of the FSLN's adaptation relate to the centralization of party resources around the undisputed leadership of Daniel Ortega.

The elections of 2006 for the presidency of the Nicaraguan Republic handed power over to Daniel Ortega, after he had spent 16 years as the FSLN's leader in opposition. The results for deputies in the National Assembly (elected by a national list as well as by departments) also gave a simple victory to the FSLN, although not control of the legislature.

The FSLN that won that election had very little in common with the guerrilla organization that took power by force in 1979, or with the "semistate" and corporative organization that it gave way to in 1990 after defeat at the polls against a coalition of 14 parties called the Unidad Nicaragüense Opositora (UNO).[1]

Precisely for this reason, we need to ask how the FSLN managed to evolve from a "cadre party" that led a revolutionary process to an electoral party that, despite multiple internal conflicts, finally managed to win the presidency.[2] It is not easy to give a simple answer, but we can gain a fuller picture with an analysis of the organizational and discursive change that the Sandinistas experienced (and promoted), as well as Ortega's leadership style.

Therefore, this article interprets the FSLN's organizational mutation as a political group and its strategic performance over the past two decades. The reason for approaching the FSLN's party organization is that it adapted to an unexpected and adverse environment after losing

the elections in 1990. This process of adaptation has brought about pro-
found internal changes in order to fulfill the new roles brought about
by the different circumstances. As a result of these organizational deci-
sions, the FSLN went from being a large bureaucratic apparatus that
overlapped with the state to a relatively centralized organization, totally
faithful to its leader, with a great capacity to negotiate in different polit-
ical arenas, and, as of 2007, with, once again, a hold on power. This
process of adaptation has meant the transformation of the FSLN's orga-
nizational format, militancy, leadership, discourse, and strategy.

The data used to elaborate this study have been obtained via indi-
rect and direct sources. The former include newspaper and magazine
archives (from Nicaragua and Central America), which have charted the
FSLN's internal debate and the Sandinistas' discourse, as well as aca-
demic articles. With regard to direct sources, the data come from inter-
nal material in the FSLN itself and interviews carried out, sometimes sys-
tematically and sometimes more casually, during different visits to the
country throughout the period analyzed here (more specifically in 1991,
1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2006, and 2009).

This study also utilizes the literature that analyzes the processes of
evolution, adaptation, and organizational balance in parties (Panebianco
1990; Katz and Mair 2007; Montero and Gunther 2007; Sferza 1994;
Alcántara 2004; Levitsky 2003; Alcántara and Freidenberg 2001), both at
the formal and informal levels.[3] Since Przeworski and Spague (1986)
raised the concept of the "electoral dilemma of social democracy,"
meaning the loss of traditional grassroots electoral supporters and a new
appeal to all social classes, a series of new studies have analyzed the
processes by which parties change and adapt. This type of analysis has
been particularly pertinent in the context of Latin America, which is
characterized by the fluidity and instability of party systems. The analy-
sis of the FSLN here will consider Steven Levitsky's proposal (1998,
2001, 2003), which relates party adaptation to the degree of institution-
alization of organizations as well as their roots in society. It is true, as
Kitschelt (1994) points out, that there are other variables that affect par-
ties' capacity to adapt, such as the competition within and fragmenta-
tion of the party system. However, this study chooses to follow Levit-
sky, since his work focuses on party organization, and to leave the
sphere of party systems to one side.

More specifically, this study focuses on the party's organizational
dimension, following Katz and Mair (1993) and Panebianco (1990),
regarding one of the faces offered by parties: the organization's internal
face (the party in the central office). This does not mean, however, that
the other faces are not considered important—the organization as a
group of affiliates (the party on the ground), its performance in elec-
tions (the party in election), or its presence in public institutions. To

understand the FSLN's adaptation, however, it is better to focus on its organizational apparatus.

Although we agree with Katz and Mair (2007, 114–15) that "over the last few decades, the party dynamic has led to a logic of greater personalization and professionalization, of lesser bureaucracy and internal democracy, and to the decrease in weight of the organization's affiliates," we do not agree that in the case of the FSLN this process is due—as the literature generally suggests—to the privileged position of its core members in public office and the "natural" adaptation to a competitive electoral context.[4] Instead, the hypothesis developed in this article is that the FSLN's process of adaptation has been a result, above all, of the capacity of its leader and his closest colleagues to promote informal decision-making procedures and to concentrate power in the figure of the leader.

To test this hypothesis, this study uses some of the indicators that measure greater or lesser formality (or informality) of party organizations, as suggested by Freidenberg and Levitsky (2007, 545–49) in the case of Latin American parties. In this sense, this study focuses on the case of the FSLN, analyzing respect for internal rules and procedures, the location of authority, the greater or lesser centrality of the party bureaucracy, the local subunits' degree of autonomy, the clarity of organizational boundaries, the tendencies of careers in the party, and the nature of party membership.

At the same time, this study is indebted to Levitsky's pioneering work (1998, 2001, 2003) on the Argentine Partido Justicialista's capacity to mutate and adapt to a context that was seemingly adverse but that opened a "window of opportunity." Later, Levitsky's research opened up another "window of opportunity" for studies on the success (or failure) of political groups in Latin America that faced changing and turbulent contexts. Levitsky (2003) argues that a party's capacity to adapt to unexpected circumstances is related to the extent to which its organization is institutionalized. Likewise, he claims that parties with lower levels of institutionalization have a greater capacity to adapt and survive changes in the external environment.[5]

In this sense, Levitsky (2003) suggests that parties that have a flexible structure and procedures that have not become standard practice have a greater capacity to adapt in contexts of crisis.[6] According to Wills-Otero (2009, 130), this capacity depends on three factors: the renovation of leadership and the capacity to remove from the party an old guard that resists reforms; the autonomy of leadership; that is to say, the capacity to do away with the procedural constrictions that party elites face when carrying out decisions; and the "structural pliability" of the party organization when adapting to the environment.

Starting from this position and as a result of his fieldwork, Levitsky (2003) argues that populist parties with a wide social base (mass-based

populist parties) have a greater capacity to adapt because they combine a flexible bureaucratic structure with the disposition of a wide social base that offers unconditional support to their leaders. On the contrary, Marxist-Leninist groups, organizations with much more standardized and rigid routines, have a more limited capacity to establish strategies to adapt to a changing environment.[7] However, the case analyzed in this article seems to contradict this statement, given that in the 1980s the FSLN was a typical Marxist-Leninist organization with guerrilla origins, yet managed to adapt successfully to subsequent changes.[8] Replying to this dilemma (or paradox) is one of the objectives of this study, as well as the analysis of party change at different levels.

To highlight where the FSLN started out from, this article begins by describing the structure of the Sandinista organization during the 1980s, when it was at the head of a revolutionary project. Then the article analyzes how the FSLN changed from 1990 until 2009, over three periods that were important for its organization as a party. The first of these moments was the period between 1990 and 1995, which began with the FSLN's electoral defeat and continued with intense internal battles, leading to the evident victory of the faction led by Daniel Ortega. During the following period (1996–2006), informal networks gained strength within the party, and the leader managed to concentrate organizational power and enjoy a free rein over internal affairs. The last period corresponds to the FSLN's performance during the first years of Ortega's second administration (2007–9). From this analysis, some tentative conclusions can be drawn about the keys to the FSLN's adaptation and what this case can offer to literature on party change.

THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION: THE PARTY-STATE AS A STARTING POINT (1980–1990)

The FSLN, a guerrilla organization founded in 1961, came to power as a result of starting a popular insurrection. Like any other guerrilla group, the FSLN was a political-military organization, very hierarchical, clandestine, and with a vertical leadership structure. However, with the triumph of the revolution in July 1979, the FSLN became the hegemonic political actor of the new era that was beginning and that the Sandinistas themselves baptized as the Sandinista Popular Revolution.

Not long after the triumph of the insurrection, Nicaragua's different state institutions came under the FSLN's control. As of 1979, its leaders occupied the key posts in the state administration.[9] Later, after the first presidential and legislative competitive elections in November 1984, the government still included many members of the guerrilla: five leaders, nine members, and four activists. At the same time, throughout this period, the FSLN controlled 60 percent of the seats in the legislative

body (called the Consejo de Estado until 1984 and subsequently the Asamblea Nacional).

Thus, although the Estatuto Fundamental de Derechos y Garantías of July 1979 set out the nature and relationship between the different powers of the state, the political system was characterized progressively by a fusion of the state with the party. In turn, all of this was reinforced by the FSLN's conception of itself as a "vanguard party," like the Marxist-Leninist formations that defended "democratic centralism." This idea was based on three pillars: the presence of an undisputed leadership, called the Dirección Nacional (DN); a party apparatus with a reduced number of militants; and the existence of many social organizations, the so-called Organizaciones de Masas (OM), which were organically linked to the party. Inevitably, all of this pushed the FSLN toward a vertical and centralized decisionmaking system.

The party's organizational core was structured according to a simple and brief statute, which had several loopholes.[10] The party was organized on four levels: national, regional, zonal, and grassroots. At the national level, the DN was in charge, with its nine Revolutionary Commanders, carrying out political directives with complete autonomy.[11] The authority that this organism enjoyed was such that in the 1980s it was common to hear *¡Dirección Nacional ordene!* (by order of the Dirección Nacional). At the national level, there was also the Asamblea Sandinista (AS), which had both representative and deliberative functions. It was made up of party officials (who varied in number from 77 to 110), the majority of whom held positions of responsibility in the state administration.

The intermediate party organisms could be found at the regional and municipal levels, reflecting the territorial division of the state administration. The party organization at the regional level was the Comité de Dirección Regional (CDR), the highest-level party organ in each geographical zone, and its members were appointed directly by the DN. The CDR enjoyed the organizational support of different auxiliary departments, as did the DN. The same type of party organization appeared, in a somewhat subordinate position, at the local level with the Comités de Dirección Zonal (CDZ), headed by a political secretary. At the fourth and lowest level were the Comités de Base (CdB), comprising between 5 and 20 members and including, by requirement, at least one FSLN militant.[12] According to their statutes, the CdBs' functions were to assure the "presence, action, and political mobilization of the FSLN."

This entire organizational framework was articulated around the figure of the "member." This in itself was a highly hierarchical concept, since the statutes distinguished between aspirants and militants, the latter of which were divided into historical militants (who were given greater moral authority) and normal ones.[13] Those who wanted to be

members of the FSLN had to apply and join a CdB as aspirants for between 6 and 15 months. This process was intimately related to the FSLN's hierarchical, reduced, and selective conception of militancy. In this way, the Frente was never a "mass party" but rather a limited cadre party, behaving as if the FSLN and its militants were a reduced group.[14]

During this time, the party's militant activity took place within the state administration, the armed forces, the party itself, and the OMs. Moreover, with the new outbreak of violence—due to the war against the Contras, or counterrevolutionaries—and the deepening economic crisis, the FSLN demanded greater help from its officials in the tasks of mobilization and proselytism.

With regard to the FSLN's number of members, estimates made before the 1990 elections suggested that they totalled about 50,000, which is not excessive in comparison with other similar groups in other countries. However, taking into account that in 1981 the Frente was composed of 1,500 members and that in 1978 just 67 people fought in the war, the number of militants in 1990 shows impressive growth (*Envío* 2009). This suggests that there had been a rapid process of "adaptation" to a social environment in which belonging to a party entailed certain privileges. As a result, up to a certain point, the FSLN can be called a "selective party of followers"—following Duverger's terminology (1951)—since it never aimed to be a mass party.[15] Nevertheless, the gradual increase in the number of militants meant that the FSLN became similar to Latin American corporate groups, such as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in Mexico.

The third pillar of the Sandinista apparatus was its organic links with the OMs, which included trade unions and social organizations made up of neighbors, youth, children, or women. The FSLN always considered that "the masses" had to join social organizations that, although not part of the party structure, were nevertheless organically linked to it. These organizations had a very important role in bringing together large groups for revolutionary tasks. Their functions were never clearly defined, although the party statutes said that their task was to "protect and encourage the strengthening of the revolution and to become real instruments for the expression and channeling of the most pressing needs of the masses." In this context, many of the "organizational tics" of the former guerrilla organization were also present in the FSLN's party organization.[16]

With this selective party of followers, which became increasingly corporate in nature, and a wide network of OMs, which enjoyed very little autonomy, the FSLN ran for competitive elections in 1990. For the first time in the country's history, the Nicaraguan authorities offered space to all the other opponents, in order to carry out an open electoral campaign. The context could not be considered normal, however. The

campaign took place in the very unusual context of a nation that had suffered military attacks, the threatening declarations made by high-ranking U.S. officials about the future of Nicaragua if the Sandinistas won, and the profound economic crisis, heightened by the U.S. financial and commercial embargo.

In these circumstances, the FSLN's strategy of launching a discursive attack, which declared that "things will get better" and justified "bad things" as a consequence of the war, was the nail in the coffin for the party's electoral hopes.[17] Furthermore, in this scenario, any possible channels of self-criticism were closed, to such an extent that the FSLN was completely unaware of a possible electoral defeat.

Before considering the next period, however, it is necessary to highlight the FSLN's organizational characteristics during the decade it was in power. The degree of formality that the party developed during this phase was very intense, for several reasons. It had well-defined rules in brief and rigid statutes that were rigorously observed; it also exerted an absolute authority, which lay in a collegiate group of nine commanders, the Dirección Nacional, with internal debates on decisions that, once adopted, could not be questioned. The party bureaucracy, although it overlapped with the state bureaucracy, was conscious that its power was not in its status as a group of civil servants but as Sandinista militants. The party's local units had a total lack of autonomy, since the authorities were chosen by the national governing body.

In this environment, moreover, trade union organizations (the OMs) were allied to the party. Party members had clearly defined tendencies toward political careers, and members were differentiated according to promotion and status—that is to say, the heroic, historic, ordinary, and aspiring militants—and these different ranks were publicly registered and acknowledged. All of this leads to the conclusion that during this period the FSLN was a solid, rigid organization with such a consistent level of formality that it was clearly completely fused with the very state that it controlled.

The FSLN thus had the classic characteristics of a Marxist-Leninist group, as well as offering little autonomy to its leaders, since the nine Dirección Nacional members frequently disagreed. This collective composition of leadership neutralized any intentions to renovate the party's leadership, structures, or symbols, since on many occasions, one of the nine commanders preferred to veto changes rather than lose his share of power. Precisely for this reason, the FSLN's organization and structure did not change in organizational terms throughout the whole decade, despite the growth in the number of militants and the transformation in the state's organization as a result of the approval of the Constitution of 1987.[18]

REMOVAL FROM OFFICE: INTERNAL CONFLICT, CLASHES, AND EXIT (1990–1995)

The result of the 1990 elections was unexpected: they removed the FSLN from power. Electoral defeat shook the party up, and it immediately reacted with concern. This led to a process of internal discussions, later known as the "Sandinista internal debates," which initially took on violent and personal connotations.

Militants did not just ask why they lost the elections but also what factors separated the FSLN from society and why the Sandinista leaders distanced themselves from their grassroots members. Another common topic of debate was the rapid, chaotic, and sometimes abusive way the Sandinista government awarded state properties and resources in the last weeks it was in power, a situation that became known popularly as *la piñata*.[19] Thus, from frustration at defeat, the Sandinistas began to make mistakes in public.[20] A graphic example of this can be found in the transformation of the motto *¡Dirección Nacional ordene!* into *¡Dirección Nacional, escuche!* coined by the popular singer Luis Mejía Godoy.[21]

The first open and ordered expression of the debate occurred in the National Assembly of FSLN militants on July 17 and 18, 1990. The Assembly took place in El Crucero and was the last of a series of grassroots meetings at the local and departmental levels that were called spontaneously due to the passivity of the previously omnipresent DN. The conclusions of the meetings referred to the causes of the electoral defeat as well as the lack of receptivity shown by the FSLN's party apparatus during the 1980s, the party's bureaucratic and vertical nature, the OMs' lack of autonomy, and the lifestyles of certain leaders, as well as the effect of the fall of the Soviet bloc (*Envío* 1990b). Yet beyond this verbal outpouring, the FSLN had to reconsider three important questions: its organizational composition, its discourse, and its new strategy as an opposition party.

On the organizational level, the FSLN's loss of control of the government meant that the party-state structure that had been established over a decade was destroyed. The defeat meant that the FSLN changed from a large, bureaucratic party to a weak one, with few paid employees. For example, out of five thousand professional members who were originally paid by the party, after just a few months, only about five hundred of them were left.[22] Party structures that overlapped those of the state administration also collapsed, creating a considerable organic crisis that affected the DN's leadership capacity and the search for consensus in the organization.

In order to direct this process triggered by defeat, a National Congress (denominated the Congreso Nacional "Carlos Núñez Téllez") was

called for July 19–21, 1991, the first in the FSLN's history (see *Envío* 1991). The congress's main objective was to give the party new statutes and a political program. However, the congress did not respond to the enormous expectations for renovation that had been aroused during this period. The Dirección Nacional had sufficient power to control the congress and limit changes but could not prevent a divide from forming between those who preferred continuity and those who backed greater renovation (Santiuste Cué 2001).

With regard to the FSLN's organization, the new internal structure was formalized, with the aim of leaving behind a group that had overtaken the state and creating rules to channel the disagreements between the different internal groupings. In this way, the FSLN's first statutes were created as a truly "party" organization, and they made far-reaching changes. At the national level, the DN ceased to be the "maximum organ of leadership" and moved to third place in the party hierarchy, after the National Congress and the Asamblea Sandinista (AS), which had previously been just a simple organ for consultation. The National Congress, which was an entirely new creation but thereafter became the sovereign and supreme organ of the party, was made up of 600 delegates and had the tasks of defining the party's program and principles, the approval and reform of statutes, and the election of the DN and the AS. The Asamblea Sandinista (made up of 120 members who met at least 4 times a year) was to be the maximum instance of deliberation and decision whenever the congress was not in session. The DN, which had up to then been the FSLN's keystone, took charge of representing and leading the party.

At the intermediate level, the FSLN was articulated via departmental and municipal congresses which, in turn, would elect Sandinista Assemblies in each department and municipality, as well as the departmental and municipal governing bodies. With regard to the grassroots bodies, for the first time, grassroots assemblies were formed, with territorial boundaries that corresponded to the electoral districts. In terms of members, the statutes maintained two categories (militants and affiliates), although the symbolic separation and distance between them were smaller.

The new statutes dealt with the resources inherited by the FSLN, the organic autonomy of the social organizations and movements that supported the Sandinistas, and the need to respect the Constitution of the Republic. Thus, the statutes created a structure that was exactly equivalent to the left-wing parties that still compete today in liberal democracies.

The new statutes did not solve the FSLN's internal conflicts, however. For more than a decade, the party consensus was established by the DN; but after the electoral defeat of 1990, it never managed to recover its cohesion or leadership. Consequently, the internal discrepancies heightened after the Congress of 1991, to the extent that the FSLN

was obliged to hold another, extraordinary conference to resolve the serious disputes that divided members and leaders.

These rapidly positioned themselves in two factions, known as the renovating faction and the principle-oriented faction. The former included FSLN members who had institutional and representational roles and defended the position that it was necessary to hold dialogue with other political forces to consolidate the nascent and fragile rule of law in Nicaragua. Its leaders were the former vice president of the republic, Sergio Ramírez, and the former minister of health, Dora María Téllez, who at that moment were leaders of the FSLN's parliamentary group. They had the support of Henry Ruíz, a Revolutionary Commander, who chose to create a political group made up of different classes and who sought a social consensus. The latter faction, which called itself the Izquierda Democrática (ID), maintained control of the party apparatus and the organized grassroots associations. Its leaders were the commanders Tomás Borge and, above all, Daniel Ortega. This faction preferred to maintain a belligerent opposition to the new authorities and asked for "greater and a more active commitment on the part of the FSLN toward the poor, its revolutionary vocation and vanguard nature" (*Barricada* 1993).

In this context, an extraordinary congress was held May 20–23,1994 (with the slogan "For Sandinista Unity"). It featured a public and open clash between the two factions that competed to control the party. During this congress, the ID emerged as the strongest faction, and Daniel Ortega was elected the party's secretary-general.[23] However, the new DN included members of the "renovating" sector. Therefore, the outcome did not imply the absolute control of the ID, yet neither did it achieve the long-awaited organizational stability. On the contrary, internal conflicts heightened until they caused a complete split in the party.

The organizational crisis broke out months afterward, due to certain decisions taken by Sergio Ramírez in the National Assembly. As a result, the Asamblea Sandinista sacked Ramírez as chief of the parliamentary fraction on September 9, 1994, and his seat was occupied by Daniel Ortega (since Ramírez was his reserve). However, the Sandinistas' formal division was confirmed on January 8, 1995, when Ramírez and other officials left the FSLN. Several months later, on May 21, a new political party called the Movimiento Renovador Sandinista (MRS) was founded, providing the final nail in the Sandinista coffin, although its poor results in the 1996 elections gave the Sandinistas' entire symbolic legacy to the FSLN.[24]

The division that occurred in 1995 marked the beginning of a new stage for the FSLN. Yet this change was not in the sense of consolidating a party with official rules (the aforementioned statutes) and predictable procedures for settling disputes between factions (in the colle-

giate leadership bodies and congresses), but vice versa. As of 1995, the work carried out by the different sectors to reduce the power and personal ambitions of the leaders was completely reversed. Thus, the "total victory" of the group headed by Ortega and the "renovators" meant that the total control of the party lay in the hands of a leader and his faithful followers.

Thus, between 1990 and 1995, the FSLN's system of rules and regulations played an essential role in diffusing the internal conflict; and in that sense, we can say that it was the only period following the FSLN's defeat when the party looked as if it was becoming "formalized." However, this process began to take steps backward from 1995 on. This was not simply because the FSLN became a political party that was oriented toward elections (Santiuste Cué 2001), but because the deliberate process of deinstitutionalizing the party, once unity had been recreated around the leader, reinforced the Nicaraguan political culture linked to the caudillo, or strongman.

Consequently, we can conclude that during this period, an important paradox occurred. The so-called renovating sector, which aimed to institutionalize the FSLN, fought to keep the party from falling into the hands of an omnipotent leadership, to renew its leaders, and to accept internal procedures and rules according to the demands of the rule of law, which was beginning to work in the country. In contrast, the sector that claimed to stick to the Sandinista principles and essential ideals focused its strategy on exalting the traditional leader, Daniel Ortega, and offering him unrestricted leadership.

PLACING THE PARTY UNDER ITS PATRON: THE EMERGENCE OF "DANIELISMO" (1996–2006)

The FSLN's articulation around the figure of Daniel Ortega rapidly created some very peculiar features in the organization. The existing mechanisms for internal control disappeared, and the procedures and collective decisionmaking bodies became more relaxed. The DN no longer met at fixed intervals, and when it did, only three of the nine "historic" members attended: Tomás Borge, Bayardo Arce, and Daniel Ortega.[25] The other DN members—those who remained and those who were elected in the Congresses of 1998 and 2001—no longer had (and no longer aimed to have) the same role, but rather supported the decisions taken previously by the party's secretary-general, Daniel Ortega.[26] Thus, the existence of a body such as the DN lost any meaning. Therefore, it was logical that, in the statutes drawn up after the Fourth Ordinary Congress of the FSLN (March 17–18, 2002), the DN should be eliminated.

After the division, between 1998 and 2006, six national congresses were held. In contrast to the previous ones, these congresses were car-

ried out with great calm, which indicates the control and docility of the party apparatus in the hands of its secretary-general. The exception to this dynamic was the 2005 congress, when Herty Lewites, a former Sandinista mayor of Managua, aimed to compete for the presidency of the republic in 2006, facing Daniel Ortega in the primary elections. The outcome was Lewites's expulsion from the FSLN.

Therefore, we can state that the aim of the almost-annual congresses (from 1996 until 2006) was to legitimate the decisions taken by the secretary-general, ratifying his way of doing politics with "random" pacts or approving the candidates who presented themselves in the different electoral contests.[27]

With regard to the reform of the FSLN's statutes in 1991, which was actually carried out in 2002, there were no important changes. The most relevant features of the new statutes were their notable length (138 articles, with an ample section on dogma; 10 titles; and several transitory dispositions), their emphasis on discipline, and their centralization of power in the hands of the secretary-general.

As a result, we may conclude that between 1996 and 2006, power was increasingly concentrated into the hands of Daniel Ortega and his informal circle (also called the ring of iron), drastically reducing the influence of the party officials and other members. An important moment in this process was when the FSLN's headquarters moved to Ortega's own house; his wife, Rosario Murillo, gradually gained importance as the director and coordinator of the electoral campaign in 2006.

With regard to the registering and evolution of militants, no official or public data exist.[28] The only relevant information on the party organization during this period was that Bayardo Arce was the person in charge of finance and Lenín Cerna was in charge of the party structure. Arce had been a member of the DN during the 1980s, a deputy, and a representative of the "business" sector of the Sandinistas. Cerna had been in charge of the state security agency in the Ministry of the Interior during the 1980s and had important ties with the armed forces and the police.

To understand the FSLN's process of adaptation during this decade, however, it is also necessary to highlight the party's influence in the national political arena as an opposition group. In this sense, the FSLN became particularly active, so as to conserve and increase its share of power. Its pattern of behavior between 1990 and 1995 was very different from that of the following decade, 1996–2006.

While Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was president (1990–96), the FSLN mobilized its grassroots members against the policy the government was implementing to dismantle the social achievements of the revolution, although later it informally negotiated agreements with the same executive.[29] This logic of mobilization gave the FSLN an aggressive and popular image, on which Daniel Ortega capitalized.

Yet with Arnoldo Alemán's administration (1997–2001), which was characterized by clientelism and corruption, Ortega stopped mobilizing his grassroots members and focused on a negotiating strategy.[30] He looked for two-way guarantees to gain impunity against the grave accusations that were made against both the liberal leader and him.[31] With this dynamic of "no aggression" and convergence of interests, the two caudillos sealed an agreement, known as the Pact, in January 2000. Its fundamental elements were two-party control of the three key institutions of the state (the Contraloría General de la República, the Corte Suprema de Justicia, and the Consejo Supremo Electoral), the restriction of space for political representation, and a reform of the electoral law.

The electoral reform included a striking change in the criteria for the necessary conditions to win the presidency. The reform lowered from 45 percent to 40 percent the percentage of votes necessary to win without going to a second round, and if the difference in votes between the first and second candidate was more than 5 percent, it was necessary to win only 35 percent of the votes. This change was an explicit demand made by Ortega, since it was a necessary condition for him to be able to win the presidency, given the FSLN's electoral limit.[32] In a sense, the pact was between two majority groups in Nicaragua, with the aim of controlling the institutions, reinforcing the insiders' position in the face of external threats, and restricting pluralism, with the excuse of generating stability.[33]

Subsequently, during the administration of Enrique Bolaños (2002–6), Ortega negotiated with both factions of liberalism, which came face to face as a result of the clash between Bolaños and his predecessor, Alemán.[34] As a result, the liberal bloc split between Alemanistas and Bolañistas, and the division extended to the liberals who held the top posts in all the state institutions. The FSLN thus became the political force with the highest representation in the National Assembly, controlling the rest of the public institutions, including the judicial system.[35] It also thereby became the key player in Nicaraguan politics.[36]

Thanks to this dynamic of political agreements with both sectors of liberalism, in 2003 the FSLN had control over the country's institutional authorities, with the exception of the presidency of the republic. Also as a result of this dynamic, a new cleavage arose in Nicaraguan society (those who favored the Pact versus those who opposed it), in addition to the traditional cleavage of those in favor of or against the Sandinistas, which had divided Nicaraguan society since the 1980s.[37]

In this context, a disciplined FSLN that was organized around its leader obtained a double victory: "anti-Sandinismo" split into two party options, and the party obtained a formula for the election of the president that worked according to a plurality logic.[38] This strategic performance by the FSLN, despite its costs for public opinion, in the end gave it magnificent political yields. This scenario, with a polarized

dynamic between four groups and two different cleavages, had no precedent in the country's recent history, and therefore, from the beginning of 2006, the possibility existed of a change in the political logic that had predominated since the revolution itself.

Thus, in the presidential campaign of 2006, the FSLN presented itself with a campaign designed by Ortega's wife and with a considerable amount of resources. The party even posted billboards that showed the figure of Daniel Ortega against a pink-colored background, avoiding the red and black of the Sandinista flag. The FSLN also avoided using its acronym and presented itself in the elections with the name Gran Alianza Nicaragua Triunfa and a discourse based on a message of "love, reconciliation, and forgiveness," covering up themes such as "social conflict" or "social class" and aligning itself with the more conservative sectors in the Catholic Church with regard to moral issues.[39]

The elections held on November 5, 2006 gave the presidency to Ortega with a simple majority. Various factors explain the FSLN's victory, but it is worth singling out two main ones. One was that the double cleavage did away with the traditional two-party system, meaning that votes were not concentrated into just two options, as in all previous elections. Furthermore, this fragmentation favored the "faithful and hard" vote of the FSLN, which, although it suffered with the reappearance of the MRS, was concentrated mainly on Danielismo. Daniel Ortega could win despite having obtained relatively fewer votes than in all the previous elections. On the other hand, the liberals (who presented two candidates with the PLC and ALN) divided their vote by almost half (26 percent and 29 percent). In this situation, the electoral law described above gave Daniel Ortega an "unexpected" victory with 38.07 percent of the vote.

The second factor was the solidity of the FSLN's party machine, which, in the end, was the political group with highest levels of cohesion, obedient to its leader and spread throughout the country. Furthermore, the party showed an absolute flexibility in elaborating its discourses and strategies according to the political context.

THE FSLN'S RETURN TO POWER: THE FIRST STEPS OF ORTEGA'S SECOND ADMINISTRATION (2007–2009)

Once he had taken possession of the presidency of the republic, in January 2007, Ortega designed a low-profile cabinet, giving a preeminent role to his wife.[40] There were no historic (or relevant) officials from the Sandinismo of the 1980s or, indeed, from the period in which the party was in opposition.[41] Most of the ministers who were designated were Sandinistas with a limited public profile and therefore a weak position against the president.

Key features of this design of government were the first lady's considerable influence, the figure of the secretary of the presidency, and the president's "direct advisers," who dealt with social groups and trade unions and who enjoyed greater power than the ministers, who, in turn, simply executed policies. This, together with the presence of the children and grandchildren of the "Ortega-Murillo" family in different state roles and public functions (as well as their presence on diplomatic journeys), introduced the issues of privilege and nepotism into national political debate. This was no small thing, considering the long history of members of the same family participating in Nicaraguan politics.

With regard to public policy, Ortega's first messages as president were contradictory: he announced a roundabout turn in the sphere of social policy, but he also revealed a total continuity with the macroeconomic policies of previous administrations.[42] The about-face on social issues was based on two axes. The first was making primary and secondary schools, as well as access to health and hospitals, completely free.[43] The second was the launching of focused social policies in order to alleviate poverty through programs such as Hambre Cero, Usura Cero, Desempleo Cero, and Calles para el Pueblo.[44]

These programs had a considerable impact on the FSLN's organization, as they were implemented via new "political-administrative" instances with an intense partisan bias, created in 2007 by presidential decree.[45] These instances were created under the "Pueblo Presidente" plan promoted by the Consejo de Comunicación y Ciudadanía of the presidency, presided over by the first lady. They were named Consejos de Poder Ciudadano (CPCs), and were platforms designed to represent citizens in different areas of the country and to implement most of the focused social policies designed to combat poverty.[46]

Although the format of the CPCs is reminiscent of the Comités de Defensa Sandinistas (CDS) that were created during the decade of the revolution, if they are analyzed in more depth (taking into account how they actually work), they appear to be places where public goods are distributed among citizens. One characteristic of the CPC model, furthermore, is that decisions are reserved for the heads of the participative organ (in the National Cabinet of the Poder Ciudadano), while the other levels have only the capacity to make proposals.

With regard to the FSLN's party apparatus, Lenín Cerna was still secretary of the party organization. But some of his functions overlapped with those of the first lady, since, as president of the CPCs, she attained a great capacity to relate directly with the Frente's officials and grassroots organizations. Furthermore, according to declarations she made in June 2008, the FSLN's party organization in the municipalities and departments had been integrated (or subsumed) into the CPCs.[47]

Despite the overlapping functions, however, the organization's sec-retary never questioned the strategy employed by Ortega and his wife.[48] Furthermore, shortly before the National Sandinista Council in Septem-ber 2009, Cerna declared, "up to now the FSLN's political strategies to reach power have been successful, although we need to design new plans so that the party can advance via new routes and in new ways, always under Ortega's leadership" (*Nicaragua Hoy* 2009). Two of these "new party strategies" were particularly striking: the designation of pop-ular candidates for public positions and the campaigns for mass affilia-tion.[49] Obviously, these practices—the massive recruitment of militants and the personal choice of the presidential couple when appointing candidates—eroded the few tools for accountability and control that were present in the party's structure.

The combination of Ortega's belligerent declarations in international forums and his change in foreign allies increased the polarization between Nicaraguans who were for or against him (Danielistas or anti-Danielistas).[50] Yet despite this clash, after almost three years of Ortega's administration, the solidity of his alliance with ex-president Alemán, established with the Pact of 2000, persisted. The continuity of this agree-ment was crucial for Ortega to get legislation passed in the National Assembly and for Alemán to dream of getting out of jail in order to return to politics. But this rather unnatural alliance, which gave life to Danielismo, also generated an unexpected image of the FSLN, an image that had little to do with the guerrilla organization as it was in 1979 and with the formation that lost power after the elections of 1990.

On the FSLN's "Successful" Adaptation

In the significant amount of contemporary literature on the organiza-tional structure of parties, their programs, their ideological orientation, their recruitment mechanisms, and the way they interact with the elec-toral and legal rules that restrict them, many works have analyzed spe-cific case studies with the aim of understanding parties' strategic behav-ior when encountering adverse circumstances and adapting accordingly (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Greene 2007; Langston 2006; Levitsky 2003). In general, the debate has revolved around discovering what have been the key tools with which parties can transform themselves and adapt to the challenges posed by the external environment.

Many studies have highlighted the importance of party renovation, organizational malleability, and centralization of leadership, three ele-ments that, later on, could offer the grouping an organic and discursive flexibility. In the case studied here, the centralization of leadership is key to understanding party adaptation. Indeed, thanks to this central-ization, it was possible for the FSLN to completely transform its party

organization. To understand the mutation of the party organization that took place between 1990 and 2007, it is necessary to highlight the concentration of organizational power in the figure of Ortega. This process occurred because the party demanded unconditional loyalty to the leader and expelled all those who intended to challenge him or simply disagreed with him.[51]

Undoubtedly, from 1990 on, the FSLN had to adapt to an environment in which organizational resources depended increasingly on the capacity to obtain (and retain) institutional positions, mainly elected ones. This demand meant an organizational "diet" and a change of political officials. However, this move toward a more personalized and professionalized party, as well as the reduction in the power of the bureaucracy and in the number of affiliates, was the result not only of the demands of the "environment" but also of its leader's capacity to "deinstitutionalize" the party; that is, to promote informal decisionmaking procedures and concentrate power in himself and his allies (see Levitsky 2003). Yet this outcome was not coincidental (or inevitable), but instead due to multiple internal battles (which occurred during the 1991 and 1994 congresses), in which the groups that preferred a formalized, consistent, and plural organization lost.

In summary, it is difficult to say what type of party the FSLN has turned into. In some ways, the Frente has elements of a professional electoral or catch-all party, since it responds to a wide range of interests, obtains resources from the state, houses a dominating class within the party, has diluted its ideological orientations, and continuously extols its leader.[52] On the other hand, the FSLN relies on fragmented and informal electoral support, has established ad hoc alliances with tactical and short-term reversals, and has turned the party into a personal and domestic apparatus. Table 1 shows the transformation of the FSLN in each one of the stages in this study.

Therefore, we should conclude that although it has been "successful," the FSLN's adaptation left virtually nothing of the actor that started the popular uprising in 1979 or the party that lost the 1990 election. Today's FSLN has a weak party organization (despite managing public resources), has made its structures (which often overlapped with state institutions) more formal, and recruits *en masse* (as well as demanding absolute loyalty to the leader and expelling dissidents). Therefore, we can state that the FSLN has become a party platform, based on the personality of its leader, that uses public resources from social policies implemented by the CPCs. In this sense, the new FSLN is similar to the ad hoc party organizations created by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela or Rafael Correa in Ecuador with the aim of sustaining their respective political projects. Following Panizza's argument (2009) when distinguishing between the different lefts in Latin America, according to his

Table 1. Changes in the FSLN (1979–2009)

	1979–1990	1990–1995	1996–2006	2007–2009
Where authority lies	Dirección Nacional	National Congress, Secretary-General	Secretary-General	Secretary-General, First Lady
Nature and origin of party officials	State Administration	Representative posts	Representative posts and state agencies	State administration and agencies
Membership	Reduced (elitist) and stratified	Broad and stratified	Broad	Massive
Organizational environment	Mass organizations, massive, obedient	Decreasing, faithful, progressively autonomous	Limited, autonomous, and conciliatory	Faithful, with public resources, massive?
Discourse	Rigid, ideological	In "discussion"	Adaptive	Adaptive
Party strategy with regard to the environment	Dominance	Conflict and negotiation	Negotiation and adaptation	Adaptation and imposition

"logic of representation" (societal, party, or personalist), the FSLN there-fore would be similar to the Venezuelan case (Panizza 2009, 83); that is to say, personalist.

In a sense, it is possible to claim that Ortega won the presidency but lost the FSLN as an organization. But how did Ortega manage to win? To understand the process by which the FSLN's personalist leadership was created, it is important to acknowledge that ever since its founding in 1961 (and up to 1990), the Frente always had a collegiate leadership (formed by the nine commanders) with the aim of escaping a dominating leader. Nevertheless, during the electoral contest of 1984, the figure of Daniel Ortega stood out, because he was the commander who presented himself as a candidate for the presidency (in tandem with Sergio Ramírez). After serving as president for six years and presenting himself as a candidate in the 1990 elections (with a long campaign focused entirely on his persona), Ortega definitively emerged as *primus inter pares*.

Ortega, however, was ultimately acknowledged as the undisputed leader of the FSLN after having publicly accepted the defeat of the San-dinistas in the 1990 elections and announcing that he would "govern

from below." With this discourse and the message that the FSLN would not give up, Ortega personified the figure of the combatant committed to the people's interests and the revolutionary orthodoxy. Therefore, the sectors in the party that preferred to engage in some self-criticism, revise their ideological positions, and reconsider the relationship between party and society were considered traitors to the revolutionary cause and the Frente's historical legacy.

Thus, from 1990 until the exit of the party's renovators in 1995, Ortega took on the role of the leader who would defend the essential principles of Sandinismo from party control, mobilizing grassroots members when necessary. However, after its second defeat, in the 1996 elections, the FSLN (now completely controlled by Ortega) changed strategy and focused on conserving and widening the share of power that the Sandinistas enjoyed in public institutions and on consolidating Ortega as the indisputable leader despite various accusations against him. It was with these objectives in mind that the Pact with Alemán was drawn up, with which the Sandinista and liberal control of the institutions would be sealed and the authority of both leaders over their parties would be reinforced.

After the FSLN's third electoral defeat, in 2001, Ortega, aware of his party's electoral limitations, focused on negotiating with both Alemán and Bolaños in order to increase the FSLN's power. During the same period, Ortega aimed to neutralize some of his traditional enemies by making pacts with them.[53] He designed an electoral campaign based on his persona and a discourse that called for national reconciliation, peace, and love. It was in this context, marked by "made to order" electoral rules, by the division of liberals into two different groups (the ALN and the PCL), and by control of most of the state institutions, that Daniel Ortega became president of the republic in the elections of November 2006. As a result, we can say that the FSLN's victory in 2006 was the result, above all, of Ortega's efforts to transform an initially adverse scenario into a favorable one. However, this transformation occurred by increasing control over all the centers of power under his control, creating in this way a highly personalized leadership or, paraphrasing Panizza, a personalist "logic of representation" (2009, 82–83).

The conclusion is that Ortega's leadership from 1990 until 2007 was not consolidated by greater public acceptance from organized civil society or the electorate or by the construction of a formalized, consistent, and solid party, but rather via the deinstitutionalization of and tight control over his party.[54] Therefore, the FSLN's successful adaptation to an environment that was initially hostile was based on achieving a total autonomy of the leadership and the absolute eradication of formal restrictions, in order to transform the party in all its sectors and decisions, including some elements of its ideological identity.[55]

If we go beyond the case studied here, however, we need to ask what it can offer to the relevant literature. Wills-Otero (2009, 130) discusses whether a party's capacity to adapt is due to the possibility of joining together the three elements identified by Levitsky (renovation, autonomy of leadership, and organizational flexibility), or if some groups have been able to adapt successfully by altering just one of these elements. The answer, in the case of the FSLN, is yes, this group has been able to carry out a bewildering organizational and ideological transformation, based on the autonomy gained by its leader. However, in contrast to what Levitsky claims, this phenomenon happened in a party that was "mass populist." The FSLN was originally a typical guerrilla organization of the 1960s and 1970s, which, having conquered power, became a Marxist-Leninist "vanguard party."

Another issue is how to characterize FSLN today. Clearly, it is not a catch-all party or enterprise party. It is, however, similar to the party projects that Latin American leaders have created from power (and with international resources) with the aim of controlling everything, such as those of Chávez or Correa. It is no surprise that these figures, in turn, are the most faithful guardians and allies of the "new" Sandinismo.

The conclusion of this study agrees with Sferza (1994, 47) that the context determines critical conjunctures, which parties have to face and to which they try to adapt by both changing and staying the same. Furthermore, it agrees with Levitsky (2003) that in Latin America, most parties are organized informally and are not highly institutionalized, and that these supposed deficits can actually be advantageous, since they suppose a greater capacity to adapt. However, the case studied here is probably rather extreme. It can only be understood completely by taking into account the political culture in Nicaraguan society, which extols a strong, caudillo-type figure and perpetuates the structural weakness of state institutions. In this sense, it is possible that the FSLN's success does not imply an improvement for Nicaraguan democracy.

NOTES

1. However, these results show a country divided between Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas and, more important, liberalism split between urban "modernizers" and rural "populists." Furthermore, if we observe the electoral results more closely, it becomes evident that the right-wing groups (el Partido Liberal Constitucionalista, PLC, and the Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense, ALN) obtained the majority of the votes (almost 56 percent).

2. The FSLN's classification as a "cadre party" refers to Duverger's work (1951), where it is used to refer to communist parties in the postwar era.

3. Over the last decade, analyses of the informal dimension of parties have appeared, particularly in Latin America. According to this literature, it is necessary to see what happens behind the formal structures. See O'Donnell 1996; Stokes 2006; Levitsky 1998, 2001, 2003; Freidenberg and Levitsky 2007.

4. These changes in party dynamics have been due to the public financing of parties and campaigns, the personalization and increasing importance of professional experts in campaigns, and the mass media (Müller 2000, 317–19).

5. Most of the meanings of the concept of institutionalization are inspired by Huntington's classic definition (1997) that it is the "process by which organizations acquire value, stability, and procedures," considering it to be a question of degree. To measure it, Huntington proposes different variables, including adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence. According to this conception, an organization is institutionalized when it becomes flexible and able to adapt, and therefore to survive in a changing environment. Along the same line, Panebianco (1990) defines the concept as "the process through which an organization acquires value in itself, beyond its own objectives." However, this article uses the concept as defined by Levitsky; the term as used by Huntington is rather tautological, because adaptability is one of the variables that make up the concept itself.

6. Levitsky (2003, 18) defines the concept of institutionalization as "the state in which the rules and procedures of an organization are publicly known, accepted and carried out." Institutionalization relates to how stable the recruitment mechanisms are, how predictable political careers are, and how rigid the procedures to introduce reforms or modifications in the statutes and ideology are.

7. One of the most paradigmatic examples used by Levitsky (2001, 29) compares the successful adaptation of the Chilean Socialist Party with the case of the Communist Party.

8. A similar case in terms of its initial ideological matrix and its success in adaptation is the Movimiento Tupamaro in Uruguay. On the other hand, the process by which the Uruguayan group adapted has been very different. On this case see Garcé 2006.

9. There is a considerable amount of literature on the FSLN's process of consolidating power during the 1980s. This article emphasizes the hypotheses developed by Close (1988) and Martí i Puig (1997).

10. There are few studies on the FSLN's formal organization during the revolution and after losing the elections in 1990. See Martí i Puig 1992.

11. In 1979, the DN's commanders were nine young *guerrilleros* born toward the end of the 1940s, with the exception of Tomás Borge, who was 40 when the revolution was won and was the only survivor among the FSLN's founders. The nine commanders were Borge, Bayardo Arce, Henry Ruíz, Jaime Wheelock, Luís Carrión, Carlos Núñez, Daniel Ortega, Humberto Ortega, and Víctor Tirado. Symbolically, the DN represented the second generation of Sandinista leaders, since during the fight against Anastasio Somoza García's dictatorship, most of the initial leaders had been killed. For further information about the DN and the individual profiles of the commanders, see Christian 1986, 194–99.

12. To be founded, the CdBs needed the previous approval of the CDZ. Generally, the CdBs organized themselves around the workplace, and if there was more than one of them in the same center it was possible to create a Central Committee.

13. The historical militants belonged to the Second Promotion (or second generation), since the First Promotion was considered to be the one made up of members who fell in the fight against Somoza.

14. There are different studies on the FSLN as a political actor that examine its organizational structure, militants, and discourse in light of different theories on political parties. In this sense, see Gilbert 1988; Martí i Puig 1997; Prevost 1997.

15. Neither the formal structure derived from its statutes nor the "demands" or "tasks" that were required corresponded to that definition. The restrictive nature of the militancy made the assimilation of members from the middle and upper social classes easier, due to the necessity for qualified staff to direct the state apparatus. According to a study carried out by Gilbert (1988), after 1981, more than 30 percent of Sandinista militants were professionals and well-known surnames always appeared among the party leaders.

16. War is not a particularly appropriate framework for democratization, and in this sense, Bayardo Arce declared that "as the situation became more tense, the spaces for freedom with which the revolution had wanted to operate and in fact was born, began to close" (quoted in Invernizzi et al. 1986, 196).

17. There are many articles on the reasons for the FSLN's defeat in 1990. However, the studies by Vickers (1990) and Vilas (1990) explain most clearly the contradictions in a festive and frivolous electoral discourse, particularly for many who had fought in the revolutionary process. The most systematic and detailed study on the behavior of the Nicaraguan electorate is by Anderson and Dodd (2005, 39–206). The first and second parts of the book are dedicated to empirically exploring voters' attitudes in a particularly critical context. The authors conclude that the vote of Nicaraguan citizens was rational and reasoned: in 1990 they opted to end war and want.

18. For an exhaustive analysis of Nicaragua's type of government, the characteristics of the state created by the 1987 Constitution, and the later constitutional reforms, see Alvarez and Vintró 2009.

19. The *piñata* was the private appropriation of properties that, during the revolutionary decade, belonged to the state. This process involved certain justifiable acts, such as the distribution of lands among peasants, but there were also several abuses, thanks to which previous revolutionary leaders turned into wealthy landowners or business entrepreneurs.

20. On the so-called debate see Vilas 1991; *Envío* 1990a, 1992.

21. "By order of the Dirección Nacional" to "Dirección Nacional, listen," a play on words in Spanish.

22. There are few detailed analyses of the organic mutation of the FSLN after its defeat. See Martí i Puig 1992; Díaz-Lacayo 1994; Santiuste Cué 2001. The last author points out that the FSLN's accelerated transformation meant that it became standardized, "just another party."

23. Ortega received 287 votes against 147 for Henry Ruíz.

24. In 1996, the MRS obtained 0.44 percent in the presidential elections and 1.33 percent in the elections for the National Assembly.

25. As of 1995, five of the nine Revolutionary Commanders stopped attending: Víctor Tirado, Luis Carrión, Henry Ruíz, Jaime Wheelock (who did so of their own free will), and Humberto Ortega (Daniel's brother), because his role as the maximum authority of the armed forces was incompatible with party militancy.

26. These members were—with the exception of some historic militants who were always faithful to Daniel Ortega, such as Doris Tijerino, Gladis Báez, Miguel D'Escoto, Manuel Coronel, Edwin Castro, and Gustavo Porras—low-profile leaders, such as Emilia Torres, Martha H. Valle, Bladimir Soto, María Ester Solís, Roberto Calderón, Benita Arbizú, Fidel Moreno, Roberto González, Mario Rivera, and Meyling Calero.

27. On the other hand, it should be noted that since the 1996 elections, the candidates for the municipal presidencies (with the exception of the mayor of Managua) got their posts through primary elections, although in many cases this created conflicts with party grassroots members. This reflects a degree of local autonomy in the party, as long as leaders showed an unconditional loyalty to Ortega and the FSLN leaders.

28. In 2007, the author of this study asked members of the CNS and party leaders but never received a clear reply. The figure that these officers estimated for 2006 was 140,000 members, although this could never be corroborated.

29. In order to illustrate the combination of this aggressive and negotiating logic, see the studies by Close (1999) and Martí i Puig (1997, 167–83). This method of carrying out opposition can also be seen by reading the memoirs of the minister of the presidency during this period (Lacayo 2005).

30. There is little academic literature on Arnoldo Alemán's administration, but the analyses by Close and Kalowatie (2004) and Dye (2001) are worth consulting.

31. It is worth pointing out that the Sandinista leader also had various legal suits against him. Out of the different cases, the "Zoilamérica case" stood out for its international visibility; it accused Daniel Ortega of having sexually abused his stepdaughter since she was a teenager.

32. In all the elections since 1990 (1996, 2001, 2006), the FSLN was never able to obtain more than 45 percent of the votes, which meant that it would lose when the opposition joined together.

33. *A priori*, the Pact was a triumph for the PLC, which was the majority party. Alemán's aim was to create a party system in which the PLC would become dominant and the FSLN would be in opposition, having to negotiate. At that time, no one expected that the liberals would fight among themselves and that the victor of the pact would be Daniel Ortega. See Hoyt 2004.

34. This division of the anti-Sandinista bloc was unforeseen when the Pact was signed. In 2002, Bolaños accused Alemán and several of his confidants of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. From then on, the confrontation between the two (who had run together in 1996) was constant.

35. The president needed the FSLN's votes in the National Assembly because the liberals' division left him with a minority.

36. The PLC needed to maintain "friendly" relations with the FSLN because Juana Méndez, president of the district court of Managua, who was handling the

case of the corruption charges against Alemán, supported the Sandinistas, and therefore the decision on the process was negotiated with the leader of the FSLN.

37. The new cleavage produced a new party dynamic that set the "pactistas" (FSLN and the PLC) against the "antipactistas" (MRS and the Bolañistas).

38. Few analysts (and citizens) were aware of the extent of the divide between the liberal groups ALN and PLC, because most surveys represented the urban population that mainly favored the ALN. Many observers thought this division would not be symmetrical with regard to popular support and that in the end, one of the groups would bring together the "useful" anti-Sandinista vote; therefore the FSLN would not win in the first round, and the results on November 5, 2006 would lead to a type of primary election within the anti-Sandinista bloc. As a result of this reasoning, neither of the liberal leaders took seriously the proposal by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Nicaragua (and supported by the U.S. ambassador at the time, Paul Trivelli), which said that the liberal candidate who enjoyed greater popularity (according to surveys carried out by the Chamber of Commerce) should lead a united platform called Unidad por Nicaragua to avoid the possibility of Ortega's winning in the first round.

39. For an analysis of the 2006 electoral process in Nicaragua, see Martí i Puig 2008; Ortega Hegg 2007.

40. Rosario Murillo became the coordinator of the Consejo de Ciudadanía y Comunicación, an executive organization in the president's office that controlled, among other things, the government's advertising budget.

41. None of the three most important party officials who still belonged to the FSLN (with the exception of Ortega) had more power than the first lady. Tomás Borge was the furthest away from power, despite being one of the FSLN's founders and vice secretary-general of the party, since he was posted to Peru as Nicaragua's ambassador. More powerful members were Bayardo Arce, who became the president's economic adviser, and Lenín Cerna, ex–intelligence officer of the Ministry of the Interior, who maintained his position as FSLN secretary of organization. Other members of Ortega's inner circle included Manuel Coronel Kautz, who is vice chancellor; Gustavo Porras, trade union leader and deputy; and Rafael Solís, currently a magistrate in the Supreme Court of Justice.

42. When defending the 2008 budgets in the National Assembly, Ortega claimed that he had "a just, left-wing heart and a responsible, right-wing mind" (*Envío* 2007a).

43. The measures designed to offer free services did not receive sufficient public support, and this, together with the prohibition of health care and educational professionals from charging their clients, created wide discontent among these sectors, which carried out strikes during the first three months of Ortega's administration. It is important to add that the discontent of the trade unions had a long past; previous liberal administrations had undercapitalized the public sector.

44. For an in-depth analysis of social policy, see Spalding 2009.

45. The passing of this decree (3-2007) was particularly controversial; a majority of legislators opposed it and voted against it. Ortega then resorted to the Supreme Court of Justice and obtained a resolution in his favor. To understand how this period developed, see Martí i Puig 2009.

46. According to the presidency, these groups were based on the direct participation of citizens. Their functions were to "design policy, plans, programs and actions to promote the formation of citizenship and guarantee it in practice throughout the national territory via the neighborhood, district, municipal, departmental and regional Consejos de Ciudadanos, in coordination with the Consejo de Políticas Nacionales, the Consejos Ciudadanos Intersectoriales and the Consejo Ciudadano de Gobierno Nacional, with the aim of creating a democracy of citizens by means of direct democracy" (Decree 3-2007).

47. The first lady declared, "From the start we have made clear that the FSLN's political secretaries are the Delegates of the Poder Ciudadano in the different departments. . . . I have the impression that we are assuming that the power of the citizens is outside of the FSLN. That's impossible! We have to acknowledge that without the Frente Sandinista there is no citizen power" (*Envío* 2007b).

48. One of the episodes that show the discretion with which Ortega and Murillo ruled the FSLN was the selection of the candidate for mayor of Managua for the elections of November 2008. Against the opinion of the majority of the FSLN's officials and without holding a formal consultation, the "presidential couple" opted for the popular boxer Alexis Argüello to head their list. Officially he won the elections, but on July 1, 2009 he committed suicide, which generated notable speculations about his death.

49. One of these campaigns took place during the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the revolution (July 19, 2009). Titled *Somos Millones* (there are millions of us), it aimed to affiliate more than a million citizens, with the argument that the party needed to be inclusive. The first wave of recruitment took place among public administration employees and the people who participated in the CPCs.

50. At the 17th Summit of Iberoamerican Heads of State and Government, celebrated in Santiago de Chile in November 2007, Ortega decried U.S. imperialism and accused the Spanish government of representing the interests of Northern countries. He also proposed the creation of an organization of American states other than the OAS and headed by Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. The new "friendly" countries, meanwhile, were Venezuela, Libya, Cuba, Iran, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

51. In this sense, according to the dilemma posed by Hirschman (1982), there was never a "voice" within the FSLN, since its militants had to choose between "royalty" and "exit."

52. According to Panebianco (1990) and Puhle (2007), a professional electoral or catch-all party (in contrast to a vanguard party or a bureaucratic mass party) is characterized by the central role played by professionalized public officials, its link with the electorate (and not with its militants), its financing from public funds and via interest groups, and the focus on issues (rather than ideologies) and its leader in electoral campaigns.

53. He did this with the Catholic Church and Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, and with certain sectors of the former Nicaraguan resistance (known as *La Contra)*. Through such alliances, Ortega aimed to avoid potential enemies' mobilizing votes against him.

54. Recalling, nevertheless, that the two liberal parties that competed in 2006 (the PLC and the ALN) split the vote by 26 percent and 29 percent, respectively, against the Frente's 38 percent (Martí i Puig 2009, 524–28).

55. The FSLN's turnaround and ideological uncertainty over the last decade have been so abrupt that the sociologist Torres-Rivas (2007) has considered the possible existence of a right-wing Sandinismo.

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