Chapter 6
Consensus and Compromise: Cooperation Between Member States

Introduction
In contrast to chapter 5, which examined organizational outcomes when there was disagreement among OAS member states that resulted in one side or the other dominating the policymaking process, this chapter looks at those less extreme cases where there was consensus or compromise among members. As noted earlier, relations between the United States and Latin American members have often been cooperative rather than conflictual. Between 1948 and 1989 there have been ten cases where all member states were in agreement concerning the means to address the conflict and acted in a united fashion, and five cases in which compromises were reached despite disagreements between the United States and Latin American members over what actions should be taken by the organization (see table 5.1). Although the cases where there are significant disagreements among members provide strong test cases for the hypotheses, an examination of the cases where there is consensus or compromise among members provides important insights into the member dynamics within the organization. This chapter explores two cases where there was consensus among OAS members, and two cases where the member states reached a compromise on the actions to be taken. The cases of Costa Rica–Nicaragua (1955) dealing with anti-Somoza rebels, and Panama (1959) removing a small invasion force from the country, serve as examples of consensus within the organization. The Cuban (1960) and Caribbean (1959) cases reveal an outcome of compromise between members. In the Cuban case (1960), the United States and Latin American members come to a compromise agreement on the final wording of the resolution issued by the Seventh Meeting of Foreign Ministers that condemns international communist
intervention in the hemisphere. The Caribbean case (1959), dealing with extensive revolutionary activities in the region, is representative of many cases in which there is a moderate level of disagreement among members. The differences of opinion in these cases are not as stark as some of the cases with a low level of consensus (discussed earlier in chapter 5). Many of the mid-level consensus cases result in a compromise agreement that incorporates the preferences of all members, including the United States, so that there is full support for the final resolution.

Organizational Consensus

Although the cases where there is considerable disagreement among member states (particularly when the United States is challenged by Latin American members) receive the most attention, the most common outcome is a consensual agreement on the actions to be taken by the OAS. In ten of the 26 cases under consideration, the outcome has been consensual with high levels of agreement among member states on how to address the security concern. States in the hemisphere have long valued consensus when taking multilateral actions. Not only does agreement of all member states strengthen the influence of the organization, but also reinforces solidarity among members. Consensus is understood in this study to mean that members are in agreement about the interests of the organization in a particular case, and the means used to achieve them. In cases where “compromise” is the decisionmaking outcome, members frequently achieve a consensual agreement after debate and discussion of their different preferences on an issue. In those cases where there is a difference of opinion, it is usually over the means to an agreed-upon end. In these cases the difference of opinion usually results in a compromise in which some of the concerns of each party are addressed. The following examples illustrate two cases of consensus in which members were united in their response to security threats to the region. Because there are no indications of the United States using pressure to gain passage of the proposals when there was general agreement on policies, there is no way to test the individual hypotheses. The United States had no need to exert pressure to achieve its policy objectives in these cases. Thus, the cases in this section are discussed without specific reference to the hypotheses concerning the level of U.S. influence in the organization.

Costa Rica–Nicaragua (1955)

In early 1955 President José Figueres of Costa Rica and Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua were openly feuding. In January, an invasion of