Challenges to Political Democracy in El Salvador

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As El Salvador descended into civil war, few observers expected that political democracy would result. With a brief exception in the 1940s, El Salvador's regime had been authoritarian for decades prior to the civil war: while elections were held, political competition was strictly limited and the outcome merely an endorsement of the continued rule of the official military party. The longstanding alliance between agrarian elites and the military meant that even modest attempts at reform were repeatedly vetoed, as hardline elements of the military carried out coups against reformist military elements and violently suppressed nascent social movements demanding change. Rather than bringing political development in its wake, economic diversification after World War II was accompanied by renewed political exclusion and economic concentration. The regime met the widespread social mobilization of the mid 1970s with brutality and violence rather than compromise. That the only contender for power in the aftermath of the repression was a revolutionary guerrilla movement also did not auger well for a democratic outcome.¹

Nonetheless, a negotiated peace settlement not only ended the civil war in 1992 but brought democratizing reforms to the regime and state, culminating in
the country's first inclusive elections in 1994. Since then, political competition has increased as the erstwhile guerrilla movement gradually solidified its new identity as a political party, winning control of 28 percent of the country's municipalities and becoming the leading party in the national legislature in the 2000 elections. The required reforms to military, police, judicial, and electoral institutions have been carried out to a significant degree. And in some areas of the countryside, an unprecedented civil society actively pursues campesino interests. In short, political democracy appears alive (if not at all healthy) in El Salvador.

El Salvador is an unusual case in which a transition to democracy was forged from below. The country's surprising advance toward democracy followed an insurgent path wherein an insurgent movement eventually 1) constitutes its leadership as an insurgent counter-elite whose participation in negotiations is necessary if the enduring political crisis is to be resolved, and 2) transforms elite economic interests such that hitherto recalcitrant elites come to favor compromise with insurgent forces. In polities such as El Salvador, victory by the insurgents is highly unlikely given the cohesiveness of economic and regime elites (in contrast to countries with personalist regimes such as Nicaragua under Somoza). While falling short of revolutionary success, insurgent mobilization may culminate in a
negotiated transition to democracy. The outcome -- capitalist democracy -- is an instance of the classic democratic bargain in which both parties gain something valued by their adherents: insurgent forces achieve political inclusion and agree to politics by democratic means, while economic elites protect their control of assets through constitutional provisions that (in a liberal world economy) diminish any prospect for widespread nationalization even if the erstwhile insurgents came to power through elections.

Yet such “war transitions” -- dual transitions from war to peace and from authoritarianism to democracy (Karl, Maphai, and Zamora 1996; Call 1999a) -- in unequal and exclusionary polities leave legacies that undermine the consolidation of the new democratic regime. While reforms may liberalize police, judicial, and electoral practices to a significant extent and political competition may ensue, the long history of rule in the service of the few rather than the many is not easily superceded. Not only does the immediate past history of violence pose immediate challenges of demobilizing armed combatants and accounting for human rights violations, the agenda of institutional reform may prove inadequate to the longer term challenges of the postwar period, particularly reducing longstanding patterns of social exclusion and confronting the escalation of criminal violence and crime.
While the extraordinary influx of remittances from the US continues to provide resources to families and the economy generally, rates of poverty and extreme poverty remain high and are no doubt substantially higher in the wake of the two major earthquakes earlier this year. Moreover, voter turnout in elections since the founding 1994 elections has been low and decreasing.

In this paper I first account for El Salvador’s unanticipated transition to democracy. I then analyze the postwar process of institutional reform and discuss advances in democracy to date. I then discuss the outstanding challenges to consolidation of democracy in El Salvador. Throughout the paper I use material from fieldwork carried out in the department of Usulután between 1991 and 1996 to illustrate the argument.

An Insurgent Path to Democracy

The peace agreement that ended El Salvador’s civil war outlined an agenda of profound change to the core institutions of the state and regime that would if fully implemented constitute a democratic political regime. At the heart of the agreement was a political bargain between the government and the leftist insurgents: the guerrilla organization would lay down their arms and pursue their
political agenda as a political party in competitive elections while the government agreed to carry out reforms to the military, judicial, and electoral institutions that would make political competition possible. While the insurgent forces acquiesced to existing constitutional provisions protecting private property from expropriation, some land would be transferred to ex-guerrilla combatants and their civilian supports (as well as to demobilizing government soldiers).

The provisions of the peace agreement reflected the class conflict underlying the Salvadoran civil war. The civil war broke a long-standing pattern of state enforcement of coercive labor relations, which had been forged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as coffee cultivation rapidly expanded in areas of dense indigenous settlement, a pattern unique in Latin America (Roseberry 1991: 359). Rather than the gradual workings of land market or the lure of wages, in El Salvador the factors of production for the expansion of coffee were secured by a deliberate redefinition of property rights by fiat and by direct coercion (Lindo Fuentes 1990, Williams 1994; Stanley 1996). Police forces founded to enforce the new property rights dispossessed indigenous communities, some of whose members settled on the new estates as a quasi-bound labor force. Thus in El Salvador, along with Guatemala and Honduras, national police forces were founded before the institutional consolidation of the armed forces, with deleterious
consequences for development of the rule of law autonomous from landed interests (Kincaid 2000).

By the 1920s, the landed elite together with immigrant families that invested in coffee mills and export firms began to coalesce into an oligarchy of a few dozen families. Although the economy grew more diverse and oligarchic families became more numerous after World War II, economic power remained extremely concentrated as this expanding but still small elite controlled the financial sector, the agricultural sector, and the slowly expanding manufacturing sector (Colindres 1976 and 1977; Sevilla 1985; Paige 1987). From the suppression of a largely indigenous rebellion in 1932 until the civil war (with brief exceptions), military officers ruled, usually through a veneer of tightly controlled elections always won by the official party, the Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PCN), while economic elites controlled economic policy as ministers of various cabinet posts. Though riven by divergent interests on some issues, this oligarchic alliance agreed on the bottom line: the maintenance of the country’s rigid class structure and exclusionary political regime. The development of cotton, sugar, and cattle production after World War II did little to diversify economic participation: the same elites controlled cultivation and processing of the new crops as of the old.
While reformist factions of the military occasionally attempted to modernize land tenure and labor relations (in 1944, 1960, 1972, and 1976), the core alliance of landlords and military hardliners repeatedly defeated such attempted reforms (Stanley 1996). Most rural Salvadorans labored for little pay with little access to education or medical services. Although patron-client relations were gradually replaced by wage labor, close relations between local landlords and military commanders, which included the permanent billeting of state security forces on some individual estates, endured until the outbreak of civil war in 1980.

One result of the longstanding oligarchic alliance was a highly unequal distribution of land and a high incidence of rural poverty. In 1971, farms larger than 200 hectares constituted a half of a percent of all farms, but they held over a third of farmland; while farms smaller than a hectare comprised 50 percent of farms but held just 4 percent of farmland (Dirección General de Estadística y Censos 1974, vol 2: 1). Population increases were one reason for increasing landlessness after World War II, but the landless fraction of the rural population rose much faster as a result of the expansion of cotton and sugar cultivation and the increasing concentration of property rights throughout the export agriculture sector (Durham 1979: 47-8). Data from the 1961 and 1971 agricultural censuses
illustrate the declining access to land resulting from these processes (Seligson 1995: 62). The proportion of the economically active agricultural population that was landless increased -- in just a decade -- from 40.0% in 1961 to 51.5% in 1971. The proportion with access to more than 1 hectare of land declined from 28.5% to 14.4%. Access to land declined still further after 1971 with the return of a hundred thousand Salvadorans from Honduras after the brief "Soccer War" between the two countries.

A further outcome of longstanding practices of political and economic exclusion was a political culture among campesinos of apparent quiescence, in which attitudes of self-deprecation, fatalism, conformism, and individualism were pervasive (Montes 1986, Martín-Baró 1983). Given the high degree of social control in the countryside, campesinos had little reason to expect any change in life circumstances; fatalism and conformism reinforced each other. Schooling provided little opportunity for social mobility as few attended school past the first grade or two, as indicated by the 63 percent illiteracy rate in 1971 (Montes 1986:98, citing the 1971 population census).

While the process of economic diversification after World War II did not
lead to a parallel process of political development, it did fuel the emergence of a small, urban middle class. A limited process of regime liberalization soon followed. While a few minor parties with little organization or widespread appeal had been tolerated since the 1940s, after the introduction of proportional representation for the 1964 election opposition parties were allowed to compete for seats in the national legislature and some mayoral offices, including San Salvador. The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) built up a significant party apparatus through José Napoleon Duarte's three terms as mayor of San Salvador (Karl 1986, Eguízabal 1992). When widespread fraud denied candidate Duarte the presidency in 1973, political disaffection rapidly increased, leading a few urban youth and intellectuals to found or join guerrilla movements.

Pastoral practices informed by liberation theology overcame campesino quiescence in many areas of the countryside, impelling a wave of popular mobilization as priests such as Rutilio Grande in Aguilares and José Inocencio Alas in Suchitoto brought to their new work among the poor an unprecedented emphasis on social justice (Cabarrús 1983, Cardenal 1985, Gordon 1983, Montgomery 1995a, Pearce 1986). By the late 1970s, networks of church workers, PDC members, and covert members of the guerrilla organizations
provided the political coordination for massive demonstrations and marches in the streets of San Salvador.

The brutally repressive response of the Salvadoran state to this mobilization led some activists to support the hitherto tiny guerrilla forces. The threat posed by mobilization, repression, and the growing potential for armed conflict led to a coup by reformist officers in 1979. While the reformists were soon marginalized, the deepening insurgent threat led to the formation in 1980 of a new governing alliance between the military and the PDC, supported by the United States (Stanley 1996). However, the breaking of the ruling alliance did not displace the will and capacity of the security forces for violence against popular organizations: violence worsened in the wake of the coup, culminating in the assassination of several opposition political leaders in November 1980. The indiscriminate nature of the violence, as well as its brutality, led still more people to support the guerrilla groups, allied as the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Some were driven by moral outrage at the violence, others perceived relative safety in proximity to the armed guerrilla forces, some grasped the opportunity to defy oppressive social authority, some judged violence a legitimate means toward the realization of social justice in the circumstances,
some undoubtedly sought vengeance (Wood 2002).

After an attempted final offensive failed in 1981 and violence decimated urban opposition groups, the guerrilla organizations consolidated their forces in the countryside. For the first few years of the war, the FMLN maintained a significant presence in widespread areas and developed a rural intelligence capacity that outperformed by far that of the government (Bacevich et. al. 1988). Efforts to undercut rural mobilization included an extensive agrarian reform launched in 1980. In contrast to previous initiatives, the 1980 reforms endured: in the eyes of the U.S. and Salvadoran policy makers, reform was necessary because of the ongoing military capacity of the FMLN. In fact, some reform beneficiaries continued to support the insurgents covertly; this was true, for example, of many members of agrarian reform cooperatives located on the coast plain of the municipality of Jiquilisco, Usulután. The government responded to the insurgency’s growing military capacity by increasingly if sporadically following a counterinsurgency strategy that emphasized civic actions to win civilian hearts and minds. The FMLN responded in turn with a new strategy, dispersing guerrilla forces in smaller, more mobile units that attempted to build political organizations among civilians, a distinct departure from their previous focus on military capacity
per se. Under this *doble cara* strategy, clandestine FMLN cadre developed legal organizations with no ostensible link to the FMLN that provided ?cover? for the building of networks of supporters (Byrne 1996: 133). For example, beginning in 1986, insurgent campesinos in contested areas of Usulután founded ? and in many cases legally constituted ? cooperatives to formally seize abandoned land that they had been cultivating surreptitiously. Despite the billions of dollars of US assistance, by the mid-1980s a military stalemate was in place; this was made dramatically clear in 1989 when the FMLN attacked San Salvador and occupied a number of wealthy neighborhoods for several days.

Thus ongoing insurgent political mobilization and the FMLN?s military capacity gradually constituted the FMLN leadership as an insurgent counter-elite: the war and its ongoing political crisis could not be resolved without their participation at the negotiating table.

Military stalemate and the emergence of an insurgent counter-elite do not alone create conditions for the enduring resolution of civil conflict, as the ongoing wars in Angola and Colombia demonstrate. In the Salvadoran case the civil war had dramatically reshaped the economic structure of the country, thereby laying the structural conditions for compromise. Insurgency, together with the state's counterinsurgency policies, had two economic effects. First, national output
rapidly declined from the 1978 peak: the (real) per capita domestic product fell 28% between 1978 and 1982. Capital flight contributed to the fall as wealth holders sent assets abroad. While a further decline was arrested (in part by massive international assistance), production stagnated between 1982 and 1989. Second, a very significant shift in the relative contributions of economic sectors to the gross domestic product took place: export agriculture comprised 13 or 14% of GDP in the early 1970s, increased to almost 25% in 1978, declined sharply to less than 5% by 1989 and fell to about 3% by 1992. As agriculture declined, the commercial sectors (but not manufacturing) surged: commerce increased from pre-war levels ranging from 20 to 25% of GDP to over 36% in 1992.

This sectoral shift occurred for several war-induced reasons. The guerrilla forces targeted export crops for sabotage and extracted war tax payments that eroded profits. The 1980 land reform resulted in the expropriation of about a quarter of all farmland in the country, including 38% of the land planted in coffee on large farms (greater than 100 hectares in area), 28% of all land planted in cotton, and 11% of that in sugar. Moreover, in a classic instance of Dutch disease, an extraordinary inflow of dollars (both official U.S. transfers and a growing flood of remittances from Salvadorans relocated to the United States to avoid the war) caused the price of non-tradables to soar compared with those of
As a result, the profitability of the agro-export sector relative to other uses of capital declined sharply during the years of the war. The decline in agro-export profits would have been even greater had it not been for the labor policies maintained throughout the war: real wages for agricultural workers declined by 63% between 1980 and 1991 (Boyce, 1996, Table A.12).

These economic trends were the result of insurgency (and the counterinsurgency measures it prompted), as a comparison with neighboring countries demonstrates. In particular, the decline of export agriculture in El Salvador was not due to world market, climatic, or other conditions shared by its neighbors, whose coffee sectors prospered during the war years: while yields in El Salvador fell almost 13 percent between the beginning and end of the civil war, yields increased in Costa Rica by 14.4 percent and in Honduras by 27.6 percent. Similarly, production fell 15.8 percent in El Salvador over the same period, while it increased by 50.0 percent in Costa Rica and by 57.7 percent in Honduras. Yields and production also increased in Guatemala, by 19.4 percent and 14.2 percent, respectively, reflecting the lesser intensity of that country’s civil war in areas of export agriculture.
As a result of this structural transformation, by the late 1980s economic elites in El Salvador drew much more of their income from the commercial sector than from traditional export agricultural production and processing. Interviews with wealthy Salvadorans (Wood 2000) indicate that most families that had failed to diversify were marginalized economically and politically. The prospect of increased investments through participation in free trade agreements was a further incentive to resolve the war lest trade and investment go to other countries (Paus, 1996, p. 270).

Of course a transformation of elite economic interests and the emergence of a structural basis of compromise does not in itself lead to political compromise: elite political actors must emerge who recognize that in the country’s new situation, the returns to peace may exceed those of continued war. Perhaps ironically, such an actor eventually emerged from its origins in the profound political violence of the early years of the war. In the early years of the war, with the financial help of wealthy Salvadoran exiles in Miami, rightist hardliners led by Roberto D'Aubuisson developed death squads to deter political mobilization through intimidation and violence; they also founded the National Republican Alliance party (ARENA) to contest for power in elections. Founding a political party to directly represent elite interests rather than continuing to rely on
governance by the military was a new development in El Salvador. The subsequent limited electoral competition under conditions of civil war had unintended outcomes: in the 1982 constitutional assembly elections, U.S.-promoted political liberalization resulted in an ARENA victory - i.e. a win for precisely those hard-line elements that the counterinsurgency reforms were designed to undermine.\footnote{11} After the United States made clear its strong opposition to D'Aubuisson's nomination as interim president, a compromise was reached whereby ARENA gave up the presidency but took control of the Ministry of Agriculture and the agrarian reform institutions, effectively ending agrarian reform. The rift in the oligarchic alliance was made decisive when the military recognized the PDC's victory in the 1984 presidential election - a necessary step if U.S. aid was to continue.

No longer able to rely on military allies to govern, ARENA leaders sought to broaden the electoral base of the party by appealing to new constituencies, including middle-class voters and small businessmen. A significant step in this process occurred in September 1985 when Alfredo Cristiani replaced D'Aubuisson as party president, signaling a shift within the party away from the hardliners of the Miami group. Cristiani's faction with its diversified economic interests was more tolerant of democratic norms and aspiration than were those
members of the elite with interests narrowly based on coffee cultivation, as documented by Paige (1997) in his extensive interviews with Salvadoran elites. For these moderate elites, the decline of export agriculture lessened their perceived reliance on coercive labor practices? urban unemployment and labor market competition would adequately discipline labor in the booming service and commercial sectors? and thus made compromises imaginable.

With the help of a U.S.-funded think tank, the Cristiani faction developed and proposed a set of neoliberal policies (Johnson, 1993). Neoliberalism was attractive to these elites for several reasons: its emphasis on private sector innovation could justify re-privatizing the nationalized sectors, its agenda of neoliberal reforms would render the state incapable of threatening elite economic interests even if a hostile party governed, and liberalization of capital flows would discipline the state against redistributive measures (Wood, 2000: 244-6). In the 1989 presidential elections, the revamped ARENA party appealed to voters more than the PDC or the social democratic alternatives, and Cristiani was elected president.

By the end of the war, economic elites were doing very well, capturing a remarkable share of national income: profit rates for non-agricultural enterprises
increased from less than 10% in 1980 to well over 20% by 1991. In contrast, between 1980 and 1993, minimum wages for seasonal agricultural workers fell by more than 80%; average wages for workers affiliated with the social security institute fell 60%.  

The FMLN's 1989 offensive in San Salvador brought home the realization that the insurgents would not disappear with the Cold War (Gibb and Smyth 1990). Subsequently, negotiations to end the war began in earnest under U.N. mediation. These led to a series of interim accords that culminated in the signing of the final peace agreement on January 16, 1992. In 1994, the first inclusive elections in El Salvador's history led to a victory by the ARENA presidential candidate (after a second round of voting), but the FMLN made a respectable showing, winning 25% of the vote in the first round.  

Thus, democracy was forged from below in El Salvador via two processes set in motion and sustained by popular insurgency. Sustained insurgency eventually constituted the leadership of the FMLN as an insurgent counter-elite; at the same time, it also laid the structural bases of compromise via the shift in elite economic interests. The result was a transition to democracy despite the country's history of elite recalcitrance, political exclusion, and civil war. Class-based civil
conflicts such as that of El Salvador and South Africa are much more likely than conflicts such as those in Angola and Colombia to culminate in a negotiated settlement and enduring democratic rule because the economic interdependence underlying such conflicts may come to comprise a structural basis for conflict that is absent where insurgent forces control diamonds and cocaine (Wood 2000 and 2001).

Of course other factors also contributed to the negotiated resolution of the civil war. The regional peace process provided additional impetus for compromise, as regional and international attention made possible the return of Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora from exile in 1987. The killing of the six Jesuit priests by the government's Atlacatl Battalion during the FMLN's 1989 offensive resulted in renewed congressional opposition to U.S. funding of the Salvadoran military (Whitfield 1994). Because (thanks to the insurgent threat) the military was dependent on U.S. funding, a shift in U.S. policy toward negotiation ensured the military's compliance. As the military stalemate dragged on, moderates within the FMLN gained influence. Thus the end of the Cold War reinforced the domestic dynamics pushing the parties toward compromise. While it is possible that the military stalemate, together with the end of the Cold War but without the shift in elite economic interests emphasized here would have led
eventually to a resolution of the Salvadoran civil war, it is quite doubtful that a transition to democracy would have occurred as it did, with remarkably little political violence after the signing of the peace agreement. Had the shift in elite economic interests not taken place, it is highly unlikely that crucial elements of the negotiated settlement, particularly the founding of a civilian and relatively autonomous police force and the transfer of significant land to FMLN supporters, would have been acceptable to ARENA negotiators.

Postwar Achievements: Peace and Democratic Transition

Postwar El Salvador faced demanding challenges, some the legacy of the country’s long history highly unequal economic and political development and others the legacy of the civil war. Most important of these challenges were the demobilization of combatants, accounting for human rights violations during the civil war, the consolidation of democracy, and ameliorating the grinding poverty in which many Salvadorans lived.

The war and its negotiated resolution left positive legacies as well: El Salvador commanded significant resources with which to confront these
challenges. First, international actors actively supported the peace process. The United Nations mounted an extraordinary mission in El Salvador, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL, 1990-1995, thereafter smaller missions with changed names): its role evolved from mediating the negotiations, to verifying human rights conditions throughout the country, to verifying compliance with the peace agreement, to institution-building through detailed involvement in several key institutions and processes. Bilateral and multilateral donors committed significant financial resources for spending on the peace process and reconstruction (Boyce 1996, Orr 2001). While coordination between the various international actors was sometimes inadequate (de Soto and del Castillo 1994, Boyce 1996), international actors met many of the costs of the peace and reinforced its benefits through ongoing, comparatively close scrutiny of compliance with the peace agreement.

Second, though the exodus of Salvadorans to the U.S. imposed hardships on individual families and entailed a significant flight of human capital, it also brought an ongoing influx of remittances that provided important economic resource for the postwar period.
A third and key resource was the high degree of consensus among Salvadoran elites—economic elites, political elites ranging from ARENA leaders to the FMLN counter-elites, and many military officers—that renewed war should be avoided even if uncomfortable compromises might have to be made in the implementation of the peace agreement. The unprecedented acceptance of electoral competition by many actors on the right reflected not only the structural bases of compromise forged during the civil war but also the process of political learning during the course of the war (see above). Involvement with liberal international actors, initially as a result of US insistence on liberalizing the political regime and promoting neoliberal policies in the 1980s and later as a result of UN mediation and peacebuilding, was essential to this increasing acceptance of liberal political norms (Peceny and Stanley (2001). By the early 1990s, ARENA had built a formidable party base and had proved very successful in competing on the new electoral terrain.

A fourth, though uneven legacy was the profound transformation in rural social relations in some areas of the countryside. In these areas (among some residents -- about a third in the contested areas of Usulután), more than a decade of political mobilization left behind a legacy of political participation, a network of
civic organizations, and a new political culture based on values of citizenship, entitlement, and a rejection of deference toward rural elites (Wood 2002, Hammond 1998, Lungo Uclés 1995). In interviews in the contested areas of Usulután, for example, insurgent campesinos (civilian supporters of the FMLN, not guerrilla combatants) expressed a profound sense of pride in their collective achievements during the war (Wood 2002). A leader of one of the self-constituted cooperatives in the coffee highlands north of Santa Elena stated, “There were so many deaths of cooperative promoters? half a battalion of dead for the simple crime of lending help to the cooperatives. But I would say that this `crime` has been, simply, my accomplishment.” In the interviews, assertions of political and social equality accompany these expressions of pride, contrasting sharply with campesinos characterization of pre-war social relations, particularly their bitter memories of landlords’ contempt for them. Of course memories of violence against themselves, family members, and neighbors continued to deeply trouble many of the interviewees. Yet remarkably given the level of violence? activists in the contested areas of Usulután had continued to organize during the war.

Further evidence of this new political culture comes from two sources. First, in interviews carried out during the cease-fire, several erstwhile landlords of properties in contested areas expressed concern that should they return to their
properties after the war without the traditional support of local security forces, they would face assertive and well-organized workers supported by a panoply of new organizations. For example, one landlord of coffee estates and a mill in the Las Marías area described how his grandfather and father built the enterprise and continued, "I was born on the property; now it's a museum of weapons for the FMLN. How could I work it again, with [FMLN] ex-combatants at my shoulder?" Such concerns together with the compensation in cash made available by international donors convinced many landlords to sell their properties under the terms of the peace agreement.

Second, additional evidence comes from surveys of living conditions carried out after the war. In a 1991 survey of a number of contested areas in El Salvador, campesinos who had occupied land by the end of the civil war expressed a distinctly more rebellious set of political attitudes than farmers who owned land, agrarian reform beneficiaries, or tenants. For example, 69 percent of the tenedores stated that they trust the army "almost never", compared to only 19% of the owners, 17 percent of the renters, 11 percent of beneficiaries of the land-to-the-tiller component of the agrarian reform, and 15 percent of the members of the agrarian reform cooperatives (Seligson 1993: 2-23 - 2-25). A 1995 survey (Seligson and Córdova Macías 1995) found participation in municipal meetings to
be much higher in FMLN areas than elsewhere (ibid: 96). Residents of FMLN zones were also more politically tolerant, attended municipal meetings at a much higher rate, and characterized municipal services much more favorably than other groups, a striking result given the absence of services in many of those areas (ibid: 57, 95-6, 102). Finally, the results of another survey also suggest that it was participation, rather than other factors that accounts for the emergence of an insurgent political culture: Vincent McElhinny (2000a: Chapter 6) found that respondents in a region of San Vicente where the FMLN had been very active (the municipality of Tecoluca) tended to be more politically active, expressed a stronger sense of personal political efficacy, participated more in development projects, and remained more committed to revolutionary social change and equity than respondents in the other nearby municipalities that had been dominated by government forces during the civil war.

However, the importance and strength of this participatory legacy varied significantly even across areas whose wartime history was similar and over the near-decade since the signing of the peace agreement. For example, in an area of Usulután known as ?Las Marías,? where many campesinos actively supported the FMLN during the war, networks of activists continue to organize collectively, bargaining with various agencies and NGOs over the terms of development
assistance. In contrast, insurgent campesinos in Jiquilisco became deeply disillusioned within a few years of the peace agreement as a result of the extensive manipulation of local organizations by the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), the guerrilla organization that was most active in the area at the end of the war. Only in the wake of the January 13, 2001 earthquake did local organization re-emerge to any significant degree.

Finally, the peace agreement was itself a resource for sustaining the democratic compromise in the postwar period, because it served as a touchstone (an evolving one) of agreed-upon reforms and provided the initial legitimacy and mandate for ONUSAL. The terms of the peace agreement and its antecedents together laid out an agenda of reform as well as a process of implementation. Though both were contested throughout the peace process, these agreements defined constitutional reforms to the mission and prerogatives of the military as well as to the judicial and electoral systems, including the founding of a human rights office, the Procuraduría Nacional para La Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, the strengthening of the election supervisory body (TSE) toward broader political party representation and increased autonomy from the executive, and the strengthening of the autonomy of the National Judicial Council. The peace
agreement also mandated the founding of a new, civilian police force (PNC) and a new police academy, as well as the dissolution of two infamous security forces, the National Guard and Treasury Police. The parties agreed that two extraordinary commissions would assess human rights violations during the course of the war. The Ad-hoc Commission would evaluate the officer corps and make recommendations concerning officers found to have significantly violated human rights to President Cristiani. The Truth Commission was given the broad mandate to document human rights violations by all parties. The recommendations of both commissions would be considered binding addendums to the peace agreement.

The FMLN would become a political party, some members of the FMLN would join the new police force, and ex-combatants of both sides (as well as civilian supporters of the FMLN occupying properties in conflicted areas) would have the opportunity to buy land on credit. The agreement's limited socio-economic section also stated that a National Reconstruction Plan (PRN) would target the ex-conflicted zones and include programs to facilitate the reincorporation of the members of the FMLN into civilian life (Wood 2000: 87-100.)

The provisions of the peace agreement were largely implemented by 1995, though unevenly and incompletely. The demobilization of ex-combatants went
forward, though with significant delays and crises as both parties interpreted the terms of the peace agreement in light of their interests. Crises occurred around the government’s apparent reluctance to dissolve the National Guard and Treasury Police, the scope and pace of the transfer of land to insurgent supporters, the extent of demobilization benefits to ex-soldiers and para-military forces, the channeling of international reconstruction funds, and the discovery of a large covert FMLN weapons depot in Managua. The recommendations of the Ad-hoc and Truth Commissions also brought political crises in their wake. Extraordinary international pressure was brought to bear on Cristiani before he carried out the Ad-hoc Commission’s recommendation that he dismiss more than a hundred military officers for human rights violations. The Truth Commission’s report caused further furor (particularly on the right) after its release in March 1993, as it held government and allied forces responsible for 85 percent of human rights violations, named those deemed responsible for well-documented cases of violations, recommended that those named be excluded from political office for 10 years, and recommended various reforms to the judicial system, including that the entire Supreme Court resign. The judicial reforms were only carried out after long delays (Popkin, Spence, and Vickers 1994, Popkin 2000); however, by mid-1994, a new Supreme Court was inaugurated with an unprecedented breadth of political
representation. Conflict also occurred over reconstruction issues, principally whether civil society organizations (particularly NGOs allied to the FMLN) would participate in the PRN and whether international funds would be channeled to them directly. Perhaps ironically, the most overt conflict took place over the scope and terms of demobilization benefits for members of the various government forces: ex-combatants and demobilized members of the National Police, security forces, and civil defense patrols repeatedly paralyzed the government on a number of occasions from 1993 to 1995, sending thousands of protestors to occupy government buildings demanding land, severance indemnity, and other benefits (Stanley and Holiday 1997: 32-3; del Castillo 1997: 355-356).

Whether or not the government was commitment to the new police force also occasioned ongoing controversy (Call 1994, Call 1999b, Stanley 1995 and 1999). For the first years, funding for the PNC was far from adequate and the National Police refused to cooperate with the new force. Donors provided some financial resources but many were reluctant to provide significant funding without clear evidence of government commitment. The transfer of two entire units from the National Police into the PNC threatened the integrity of the new force as members of the units did not pass through the new police academy as required
under the terms of the agreement. Despite ONUSAL objections, the FMLN agreed to the transfer in exchange for concessions on other issues. Thirteen of the one hundred members of one of the transferred units, the Special Investigative Unit, were eventually implicated in politically motivated murders or their coverup (Call 1999b). Intense international pressure culminated in their mass resignations after receiving generous pensions.

These crises were addressed in a wide variety of fora during the first years of the peace process. The National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), a group composed of representatives of political parties, the FMLN and the government, was mandated by the peace agreement to supervise the implementation of the agreements, verify compliance, and draft necessary legislation. Increasingly, however, discussions by COPAZ were superceded by private bilateral negotiations between the government and the FMLN mediated by ONUSAL, with ongoing extraordinary involvement by other actors including the US, the UNDP, and the office of the UN Secretary General.

In summary, the emergence of an insurgent counter-elite, the structural basis for the resolution of the conflict, political learning by elites across the
political spectrum, and extensive international involvement and support for the peace process together proved sufficient for a transition to democracy despite the country's long history of authoritarian rule. Two outcomes must count as the principal achievements of the peace process: the withdrawal of the military from governance, and the inclusion of the political left.

While the military retains a high degree of institutional autonomy (Stanley 1996, Williams and Walter 1997), both the military as an institution and individual military officers appear to have little influence in governance or within the main political parties. Since 1992, the military has accepted an unprecedented civilian purging of its officer corps, a limited degree of civilian input into military training, and a significant reduction in size, budget, and mandate (ibid, also see Call 1999b). In the judgement of Héctor Dada Hirezi (1998: 268) in the 1997 electoral process and its aftermath,

La ausencia de aparatos policiales y militares como garantes de resultados predeterminados, y la claridad con que fue percibida su poca disponibilidad para evitar la apertura de espacios de participación y la obtención de cuotas de gobierno por la vía electoral son signos positivos, que indican que la
mayor responsabilidad en el proceso de construcción de la democracia ha pasado a manos de las organizaciones sociales y políticas.

One exception to the declining role of the military is its ongoing participation in internal security in the form of patrolling areas against crime, usually jointly with the PNC, a practice justified in the eyes of many elites and civilians by the country's high crime rate.

Political inclusion and competition, the *sine qua non* of democracy, is a second achievement of the past decade. Not only is the left now pursuing political power via elections, the degree of electoral competition is increasing at both the national (in legislative though not in presidential elections) and the municipal levels. In coalition with other parties, the FMLN made a respectable showing in the 1994 presidential elections, forcing the presidential election into a runoff round (which it lost to ARENA by a wide margin). On its own, the FMLN won 21 of the 84 seats in the legislature. However, the FMLN split soon after the elections, when the leadership of the ERP (renamed Expresión Renovadora del Pueblo) together with some leaders of the Resistencia Nacional (RN) dramatically broke with the FMLN in the inaugural session of the new legislature. The group
subsequently founded a new party, the Partido Democrático (PD); the FMLN lost 7 of the 21 seats in the split (Montgomery 1995: 267-8; Ramos 1998: 30, 42-44; Zamora 1998: 250-7, 298-305). However, this move by the ERP proved a severe miscalculation as most supporters remained with the FMLN, or switched back to the FMLN after the PD leadership entered into a pact with the governing party ARENA to support an increase in the value added tax. The PD’s coalition with the PDC won only 3 seats in the legislature and 4 municipalities in 1997; that with the CD in 2000 again won 3 seats and 4 municipalities. The PD has not even retained its traditional stronghold of Morazán: of the 21 ex-conflicted municipalities in the department, the PD (and coalition partner CD) won only two (Meanguera and Yamabal) in the 2000 elections, while the FMLN won 4 (and 1 non-conflicted municipality). The party’s share of valid votes in 1987 was an abysmal 1.2% for the legislature and 1.0% for mayoral elections (Acevedo 1998: 217).

Despite the split, the FMLN has made a surprisingly effective transition from a guerrilla army to a political party, increasing its share of votes (except in presidential races), legislative seats, and municipalities from election to election (Table 1). In 1997, the FMLN won 27 seats in the legislature, only one less than
ARENA's 28 seats. The party performed poorly in the 1999 presidential election, failing to even force a second round, perhaps because of the well-publicized divisions between the two party factions (the renovadores and the ortodoxos) in choosing a candidate (Spence, Lanchin and Thale 2001). Since the March 2000 elections, however, it is the leading party in the national legislature, holding 31 seats to ARENA's 29. However, this lead position has not translated proportionally into power over policy as the recovering PCN usually votes with ARENA as often does the still-declining PDC.

Table 1. Legislature and municipal elections, 1994, 1997, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seats (out of 84)</th>
<th>Mayors (out of 262)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN coalition</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCN</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDC</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDC-PD</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD (&amp;PD '00)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Legislature: Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 5; Municipal: personal communication, Jack Spence, April 18, 2001.
Particularly striking is the FMLN's increasing ability to compete in municipal elections. The fraction of municipalities the party governs (either solely or in coalition) has increased nationally from just over 6 percent in 1994 to 21 percent in 1997, to 28 percent in 2000. There appear to be two underlying patterns to the FMLN's growth at the municipal level. The party has broad appeal in urban areas (Zamora 265-7): for example, in coalition with other parties it has governed San Salvador since 1997. The party won the 2000 municipal elections in 13 of the 15 largest municipalities while ARENA did not win any (the PDC and the PCN won 1 each; Spence, Lanchin and Thale 2001: 5). And the party has increasing appeal in some ex-conflictive zones: of the 115 municipalities that were conflicted during the war, the FMLN (by itself or in coalition) won 14 in 1994, 30 in 1997, and 37 in 2000.  

The FMLN's growing control of political offices reflects to some extent its ability to take advantage of ARENA's decline: in absolute terms, ARENA lost more than 200,000 votes between 1994 and 1997, a decrease of 34.6% whereas those of the FMLN increased about 82,000 (22.2%), significantly more than the increase in other parties (Cruz 1998a: Cuadro 20, see also Cruz 1998b: 140). Where the FMLN's vote share is growing mostly strongly is precisely where ARENA's votes are declining (Zamora 1998: 88-89). According
to Dada Hirezi (1998: 243), ARENA’s vote share has declined due to voter perceptions of the party’s internal power struggles, the loss of business support for the government, the party’s inadequate leadership, a series of corruption scandals, the lack of transparency in governance, and the negative effects of its economic policies on many sectors.

Other opposition parties have proven significantly less appealing to voters than the FMLN. The PDC’s vote shares, legislative seats, and municipalities governed have declined nearly monotonically from the mid-1980s; however, between 1997 and 2000, the party appears to have stabilized its shares, albeit at a low level. While the Democratic Convergence (CD) party increased its votes by 50 percent between 1997 and 2000 (Spence, Lanchin and Thale 2001: 4), the center-left party struggles to convert the high -- and urban -- visibility of its leaders into votes (Zamora 1998: 296). Party leader Rubén Zamora lost his seat when the coalition between the CD and the PD failed to win more than one seat in San Salvador, which went to PD leader Juan Ramón Medrano who was first on their joint list (ibid: 10).

An exception is the PCN, which appears to be recovering a degree of electoral appeal after its eclipse on the right by ARENA in the 1980s. In the 2000
elections, the party won 14 out of the 84 seats in the legislature and the number of municipalities it governs increased from 10 in 1994 to 33. There appear to be two reasons for this increase in vote share. In late 1996 and early 1997, a series of internal conflicts (concerning among other things its overzealous implementation of the peace accords and its abandonment of policies to promote agriculture) culminated in the departure from the party of a group of prominent leaders who joined the PCN, arguing that the latter was the party truer to conservative values and denouncing the control of the former by a small group of capitalists (Acevedo 1998: 211-213, Ramos 1998: 12-16, 23-24). Seventy-five ARENA mayors as well as some prominent businessmen followed them into the PCN (Acevedo 1998: 212). Second, the party’s share of seats in the legislature is significantly higher than its vote share, reflecting its leveraging of a bias of El Salvador’s PR system, effectively converting small numbers of voters into seats in the legislature through its strength in small departments with a disproportionate number of seats (Spence, Lanchin, Thale 2001: 6-7).

Challenges to the Consolidation of Democracy in El Salvador

Has the transition to democracy been consolidated in El Salvador? On some definitions, the response would be positive. Two presidential elections have
been held (sometimes advocated as a mark of consolidation) and democracy seems to be the only game in town? (Przeworski 1991). Few influential voices at national or local levels call for any abrogation or lessening of elections as the principal of governance, ARENA has accepted the results of elections that sharply reduced its control of the legislature (Orr 2001: 163), and most social mobilization is channeled through democratic institutions via strikingly ordinary processes of coalition building and lobbying, as in the campaign for the forgiveness of agrarian debt.23 Democratic values such as political tolerance (Seligson, Cruz, and Córdova Macías 1999: 58-61) and support for the (democratic) system (ibid: 78-86) increased strongly between 1991 and 1999. Moreover, irrespective of political party membership, Salvadorans polled in 1997 strongly agreed with the statement that even if people do not vote intelligently everyone should be allowed to vote (IUDOP 1997: Cuadro 5).

Other -- and in my judgement more persuasive -- arguments suggest that democracy is not consolidated in El Salvador. Until ARENA loses a presidential election and withdraws from power, we will not know whether democracy is consolidated. Moreover, while elections may be free, they are far from fair for several reasons. Campaign finance regulation is weak, which advantages ARENA and the PCN given the relative wealth of their members compared to the FMLN.
Further, the winner-take-all nature of municipal elections may undermine democratization as it lessens the opportunity for local political leaders to experience the give and take with members of other parties that both reinforces the ordinariness of democratic politics and trains leaders for future higher office thereby deepening participation and democracy. (On the other hand, after the 1994 elections, Salvadorans appeared more satisfied with the performance of local governments than national governments, Seligson and Córdova Macías 1995: 114, Cruz 1998a: Figure 3).

Moreover, the political processes internal to many political parties is far from democratic: control is centralized with little role for the party rank and file and there is little transparency concerning party financing (Zamora 1998: 315-231). Noting the high degree of internal conflict within all major parties and the lack of legitimacy of political parties (of which more below), Rubén Zamora (1998: 318) characterizes the situation as one of crisis:

En los últimos años el país ha modificado de manera importante su vida política, pero los partidos, que han sido actores de estas transformaciones, no las han interiorizado en el sentido de revisar sus supuestos de operación,
sus estructuras legales y sus modos de operación, para adaptarse a las nuevas realidades. La incongruencia entre ambos ha crecido y su signo más visible es la crisis de los partidos políticos.

For example, ARENA candidates are chosen by the party’s board of directors not in primaries or conventions and the PDC engages in what one study termed ?protracted internecine warfare that has ranged from the vicious to the comic? (Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 10) in order to choose party leaders. The FMLN, has recently adopted measures that may promote internal democracy; whether such measures as term limits for party positions will do so effectively while other less democratic features such as the merely indirect election of the party’s national executive board are retained remains to be seen (Zamora 1998: 232-42).

Three difficult challenges ? low and declining rates of voting, rising crime and high criminal violence, and continuing poverty and social exclusion ? confront postwar El Salvador. The first raises questions not only about the ?quality? of democracy in El Salvador but also about perceptions of the peace process: if the principal legacy of the war and the peace agreement -- electoral democracy -- is
not valued and exercised by ordinary people, then the stability of the new regime may be based on inadequate foundations. As perceptions of quality of life are closely tied to perceptions of (elected) government’s performance in addressing these crime and poverty, these two issues also have implications for the consolidation of democracy. (There are of course other reasons to care about these issues, but here I focus on their implications for democracy.)

Voting rates as measured either as the ratio of voters to registered voters or the more fundamental ratio of voters to the voting age population (VAP) has declined uniformly from rates of about 50 percent in the first round of the 1994 presidential election to about 34% in the 2000 municipal elections (see Table 2).

Table 2. Voting Rates, 1991 - 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voters as a Percent of</th>
<th>registered voters</th>
<th>VAP 1</th>
<th>VAP 2</th>
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42
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>VAP 1</th>
<th>VAP 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 L</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 P1</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 P2</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 P</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Cuadro 1). Figures for the 2000 elections are from William Barnes, personal communication.

Of course voting rates are similarly low in a few other countries, for example, the U.S. where the ratio of voters to the VAP in presidential fell to 55.1 percent in 1992 to 49.0 percent in 1996 and rates in nonpresidential contests fell to 36.6 percent in 1994 and to 32.9% in 1998 (Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000: Table 479).

However, low voting rates are arguably more troubling in El Salvador’s immediate postwar context. The peace agreement revolves around the premiss that elections are the first and only form of legitimation of rule in postwar El Salvador (Dada Hirezi 1998: 215). In the aftermath of a civil war among whose causes was the ?transcendent? one of creating political space for political opposition, support for democratic institutions and political tolerance are fundamental prerequisites for democratic stability (Seligson and Córdova Macías 1995: 4-5).
Two schools of thought have emerged to explain this low and declining rate (Cruz 1998a, Seligson, Cruz, and Córdova Macías 2000). One school stresses the obstacles to voting that exist in El Salvador. Registering to vote is tedious and time-consuming, requiring several trips to the municipal center, along with the birth certificate that not all Salvadorans have. One study estimated that about 150,000 voters applied to register but did not receive their electoral carnet in time to vote in the 1994 elections (FLACSO 1995: 171-2). Nor did the process improve before the 1997 elections; ongoing procedural problems kept hundreds of thousands from being properly registered in time to vote (Peñate and Díaz 1998 73-4). Voting itself poses significant logistical problems, particularly in large cities: for example, in the 1997 elections, there were only 8 voting sites in San Salvador, each with hundreds of voting tables. Each voter was assigned to a particular table on an alphabetical basis, with the result that many voters traveled across the city to then engage in a frustrating search to find the correct table (Barnes 1998: 73). A presidential commission to analyze electoral issues made recommended, among other reforms, the decentralization of polling places, proportional representation in municipalities, the issuance of a single card to serve both as an ID card and as the electoral carnet, and merit as the basis of promotions within the TSE staff (Call 1999a). However, ARENA has consistently opposed these reforms (Dada Hirezi 1998: 245).
Public opinion polls provide some support for this school of thought. When asked in public opinion polls why they or others might not vote, Salvadorans of voting age give various answers, among them the lack of a carnet. For example in a survey carried out before the 1997 elections, of those who stated they did not intend to vote (17.2 percent), about a quarter of them (26.7 percent) gave as their reason that they did not have a carnet (IUDOP 1997: Cuadro 10); the same survey found that 82 percent did have their carnet (ibid: Cuadro 14). Neither figure of course explains the voter turnout rate in the 1997 election of 35-40 percent.

However, the same survey provides support for the other school of thought as well: of those who did not intend to vote, 22.5 percent said that no party appealed to them, 15.8 percent said that nothing would change, and 13.8 percent stated that it did not interest them (ibid). According to this second school, the high abstention rate reflects a fundamental disenchantment with the postwar political process. Confirming evidence comes from the indirect (and probably more telling) responses to a question where respondents were asked why they think others would not vote: in 1999, 86.4 percent answered that it was because of a lack of confidence or interest (Seligson, Cruz, Córdova Macías 1999: 117-8).
Analysts vary in the reasons why such a disenchantment has taken place. José Miguel Cruz (1998b: 149-151) argues that because little changed in the difficult life conditions of most people as a result of the 1994 elections of the century, many people were disillusioned not just with the Calderón Sol government but with the peace process and therefore the political system itself: the absence of change confirmed those who did not vote in their mistrust of the electoral system and led to feelings of betrayal on the part of those who did. Carlos Acevedo (1998: 200) agrees: procedural democracy without effective democratization of the social and economic order leads to a withdrawal of participation that expresses the growing lack of credibility of political parties. Rubén Zamora (1998: 319-22) suggests that this lack of credibility reflects the isolation of political parties from the population, in part because political parties have not superceded wartime patterns of discourse and polarization (see also Cruz 1998a). The nature of the transition -- negotiated between the two principal parties to the war with UN mediation with little participation by civil society organizations -- is another factor contributing to this isolation of political parties from the citizenry (Dada Hirezi: 1998: 219-221).
The ongoing upheaval within the political party system probably also contributes to this disenchantment. Since the end of the civil war, two processes fundamentally reorganized the configuration of political parties (Ramos 1998). A series of new parties have been founded (more than a dozen parties competed in the 1997 elections), while bitter struggles for leadership racked traditional parties, such as the ongoing conflict within COENA between fundadores and financial interests, and the interminable struggles within the PDC that often appear more driven by opportunism than ideological differences, culminating in schisms, scandal, and declining support.

Some analysts see as central to the crisis of the political party system the absence of a strong center party. Acevedo (1998: 214-6) suggests the reason is not only the historical absence of such a party (he counts the PDC as a part of the counterinsurgent right), but the difficulty that new centrist parties have in differentiating themselves from existing parties. A distinct argument concerning the political center is made by William Barnes. In reviewing the record of democracy-building in Europe, he found that effective mass participation occurred historically because of the mass mobilization by center-left parties (by which he means social democratic, left-liberal, left-Christian democratic, and similar political forces, characterized by serious commitment to reforming and regulating
capitalism to make it more human, more inclusive, more egalitarian, more politically democratic? 1998: 94). If such parties do not emerge to carry out this function in postwar El Salvador, he argues, the country will remain an incomplete democracy? or a hybrid regime? (Barnes 1998: 65, Karl 1995) in which elections occur with regularity but without authentic mass citizenship and the effective institutionalization of norms of equal citizenship informing the rule of law (ibid: 65).

Two additional factors appear to contribute significantly to disenchantment with political parties and the postwar political process in El Salvador. One factor (shared with many other Latin America countries) is the inability or unwillingness of post-democratic transition governments to address longstanding patterns of poverty and social exclusion. A second contributing factor -- high postwar crime rates -- is particularly strong in El Salvador as a result of the country?s insurgent path. I address the latter first.

Crime rates in postwar El Salvador are extraordinarily high, particularly the homicide rate which was 138 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1994 and 1995 (among the world?s very highest rates, sixteen times the US rate, Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 17) compared to pre-war rates of 33 and exceeding the rate at the
height of the war violence of 55.3 in 1982 (Cruz and González 1998, see also Call 1999c). In a 1998 survey, 25.7 percent reported that their families had been the victims of assault in the previous four months (IUDOP 1998: Cuadro 2). The economic costs are also high: one analyst estimated that the various costs associated with crime were about 13 percent of GDP in 1995, twice the rate of growth. While crime rates appear to have declined since then (to 111 in 1997, Seligson, Cruz and Córdova Macías 1999: 144), they remain very high. In public opinion surveys, since 1994 more Salvadorans judged crime the principal problem facing the country than any other issue, including the economy.

High violent crime rates are of course troubling in themselves; they also may undermine support for democracy. In a 1999 survey, many more Salvadorans (55%) stated that crime would justify a coup compared to any other issue (the nearest competing response was unemployment at 28 percent, Seligson, Cruz, and Córdova Macías 1999: 156). Moreover, Salvadorans who had been the victims of crime felt significantly less confident in the functioning of the system (ibid: 153-4), were more likely to support a coup for reasons of high crime rates (ibid: 164-5), and ranked higher in support for an authoritarian regime (ibid: 179). More specifically, in regressions the level of insecurity felt by respondents was a strong and significant predictor of support for an authoritarian regime (ibid: 180); those
who had been victimized were more likely to feel a high level of insecurity. The overhaul of the penal code, approved by the legislature in April 1998, strengthened the civil rights of detainees, a step long advocated by human rights organizations, but which unleashed a storm of criticism as it was interpreted as strengthening the rights of criminals (Kincaid 2000).

Various factors appear to contribute to these extraordinarily high crime rates (Cruz 1997, Call 1999c). Noting that El Salvador and South Africa have similarly high crime rates in the aftermath of war transitions, Charles Call argues that various aspects of such transitions explain the puzzle that peace can be more violent than war? (Call 1999c: 1). While some of the following aspects of war transitions are present in many post-war or newly democratic countries, the presence of all five in war transition countries is particularly dire for the control of crime, he argues. El Salvador, like other post-civil war countries, suffers from the consequences of the rapid demobilization of two armies, a social habituation to violence, the ready availability of arms, and a process of restructuring of police forces. Democratic transitions are of course periods of uncertainty, often profoundly so, as political actors struggle to ascertain the implications of institutions and opportunities. Call argues that in war transitions, the performance of the legal system (often after reform processes) is particularly uncertain. Moreover, such war
transitions are negotiated settlements between armed parties to a civil war, with the result that not only are arms abundant, but the negotiating parties are likely to be preoccupied with their own security in bargaining over the extent of disarmament and the power of postwar security institutions rather than the general security of individuals and society.\textsuperscript{27} International criminal organizations also appear to be playing a growing role in the aftermath of war (see also Kincaid 2000, CIDAI 2000: 2). Finally the social conditions including political and social exclusion do not disappear during the war but are exacerbated by wartime processes of physical and social dislocation as families and left home for towns and other countries.\textsuperscript{28}

Other analysts concur that a weak but improving judicial system, a still inadequate police force, and the abundance of arms all contribute to the high violent crime rate (Cruz 1997, Stanley 1999, Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001). Despite the high crime rate, however, the postwar security institutions do not provide an entirely bleak picture: William Stanley (1999) argues that the PNC is a mixed picture of success and failure as the new force is better educated and trained, is more respectful of human rights, is more transparent in its procedures, and has exhibited a degree of independence in investigating actors who would have enjoyed impunity. While political violence by the new police force is nothing like that of the former security forces, nonetheless a troubling pattern of human rights
violations (including occasional incidents of torture and beating of suspects) and corruption among members of the police force is apparent (Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 17-22, Call 1999b, Stanley 1995). A presidential commission was named in 2000 to recommend measures to address police abuses; the ensuing process appears to have led to the dismissal of dozens and perhaps hundreds of corrupt or abusive officers (judicial appeals are still pending).

In contrast to this emphasis on institutional reform, José Miguel Cruz emphasizes the culture of violence: the civil war deepened and made universal an existing culture of violence as it militarized society, devalued human life, legitimized violence as the means towards personal ends, and left a generation of combatants with no history of or preparation toward a nonviolent way of life, given the widely acknowledged inadequacies of the reinsertion programs. An additional factor often advanced as contributing particularly to urban crime is the emergence of street gangs as a result of the export of young Salvadorans with experience of gang culture from the US (e.g. Kincaid 2000).

As a result of these various factors, policing in El Salvador -- despite the promise of the peace accords of a new democratic and civilian police force -- has converged toward the new Latin American model of public security (Kincaid ....
2000). There are three characteristics of this new model: militarization whereby the military supplements and sometimes replaces police forces in some domestic spheres, informalization whereby neighborhood watch committees and sometimes gangs provide neighborhood security and mobs lynch alleged criminals, and privatization whereby wealthier individuals and organizations hire private security firms to protect their personnel and assets. In 1998 survey, 51.9 percent of the Salvadorans surveyed stated that they supported reclaiming the right to take justice into their own hands, 48.9 percent supported the formation of armed neighborhood groups, and 36.9 percent supported illegal armed groups (IUDP 1998: Cuadro 4).

A further reason for democratic disenchantment among Salvadoran citizens appears be the persistence of poverty. It is important, however, to first note that poverty rates have declined since the end of the war. Official poverty rates show a decline in total poverty (combining relative and extreme poverty rates) from 58.7 percent in 1992 to 44.6 in 1998, in relative poverty (household income less than twice the cost a basic food basket) from 31.0 to 25.6 percent, and in extreme poverty (household income less than the cost of a single basket) from 27.7 to 18.9 percent (Conning, Olinto and Trigueros 2000: Table 2). The urban rates declined particularly dramatically, from 52.9 to 36.0 percent for the total rate, from 31.0 to
23.1 for relative poverty, and from 21.9 to 12.9 percent for extreme poverty. However, the official rates underestimate the poverty rate as they are based on a count of households rather than individuals (poorer households have more people); correcting for this discrepancy gives an urban rate of total poverty in 1998 of 40.6 percent (and of 64.0 in rural areas ibid: 8). One reason for rapidly declining urban poverty is the relatively low unemployment rate of 6.5 percent in 2000 (for men the rate was 8.1, for women 4.0; Trigueros, Vega, Lazo Marín 2001: Gráfica 2).

This decline in poverty reflects both the ongoing influx of remittances from the U.S. and reasonably high growth rates since the end of the war. Remittances have increased annually since the end of the civil war, comprising in 1998 49 percent of exports (fourth highest in the world after Albania, Eritrea, and Yemen) and 11 percent of GNP (fifth highest in the world after Yemen, Jordan, Eritrea, and Albania) (Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 14-15, drawing on World Bank figures). Despite the Dutch disease consequences of remittances (an over-valued exchange rate, terms of trade unfavorable to the agricultural sector, and high interest rates), the economy grew in the postwar period: from 1992 to 1995, the growth rate averaged 6.8%; then declined to an average of 3.2 percent from 1996-1999). One reason was the growth in exports: non-traditional exports grew by 71
percent between 1994 and 1999, while net maquila exports grew by 250 percent over the same period (calculated from Banco Central de Reserva figures reprinted in Trigueros, Vega, and Lazo Marín 2001: Cuadro 16).

However, poverty rates remain extremely high, particularly in the countryside. Rural rates fell much less, from 65.0 to 58.6 percent for total poverty, from 31.1 to 29.9 for relative poverty, and from 34.0 to 25.6 for extreme poverty. Significant disparities exist between urban and rural life expectancy and adult literacy rates, which in 1996 varied between 70.4 years and 90.1 percent in San Salvador to 64.8 years and 55.4 percent in Morazán. According to Conning, Olinto and Trigueros (2000: 8), the human development index rankings for San Salvador are comparable to Cuba, Perú, and Jordan, while those of the three poorest departments are similar to Kenya and Pakistan (a difference in the HDI of 50 points). Declining rural wages -- the real minimum wage for coffee and sugar harvests fell 12.1 percent and 11.0 percent respectively between 1993 and 1998 -- and worsening terms of trade for agricultural goods contributed to enduring rural poverty (ibid: 7). Rural landlessness remained very high after the war, despite the distribution of about 30 percent of farmland through the 1980 agrarian reform and the land transfer program after the peace agreement (Seligson 1995.)
Recent panel data studies illuminate these patterns. One key finding is that rural household incomes are extremely volatile: for example, one study found that while the average income per capita fell only by 1.3 percent between 1995 and 1997 (largely as a result of adverse weather), among the top quintile of households it increased by 9 percent while among the lowest quintile it decreased by 33 percent (Conning, Olinto, and Trigueros 2000: 3-4). Access to land -- even when too little to carry a family over the poverty line -- and education appeared to buffer family income to a significant extent (ibid: 4). Land appears to allow families to protect the marginal return to labor as unemployed family members cultivate land more intensively and keep children in school (ibid: 33-4).

Another study (Beneke de Sanfeliú 2000) also documented volatility in rural incomes, and identified three types of rural households: the structurally poor (53.8 percent of the panel households) depended more on wages, were less educated, and lived in greater geographical isolation; the transitorily poor were more educated, produced more in agriculture, and had highly volatile incomes (despite receiving more remittances); and the non-poor who did not depend on agricultural wages, were significantly more educated and better integrated into markets. She also found (Cuadro 24) that about 9 percent of the structurally poor
households received remittances, as did about 20 percent of the transitorily poor and about 18 percent of the non-poor households. Conning and his co-authors also found that the poorest households were less likely to receive remittances (either because they are too poor to send family members abroad or because remittances would be enough to move them into a higher income category, Conning, Olinto, and Trigueros 2000: 5). Of those households receiving remittances, they accounted for about a third of family income overall (see Beneke de Sanfeliú: Cuadro 25 for details by income category and year). Even among the structurally poor the proportion of households with radios, televisions, and other appliances increased between 1995 and 1997 (ibid: Cuadro 22). One reason for enduring rural poverty is the lack of schooling among rural workers: years of schooling appear to functions as credentials in the country’s highly segmented labor markets, making it difficult for those working in agricultural wage markets (among whom the poverty rate is 79.7 percent) to move from those markets into the better remunerated informal or formal wage labor markets, or into public employment (Briones and Andrade-Eekhoff 2000).\(^{35}\)

Of course the recent earthquakes will significantly increase poverty figures due to the damage to infrastructure and displacement of families from their work.
and homes. In February, the government estimated accumulated damages at about 3 billion dollars, or about 22 percent of GDP (CIDAI 2001b: 6). A later and more conservative estimate puts the accumulated damage at 12% of GDP (Spence, Lanchin, Thale 2001: 1). The first quake alone left about 681 people dead, and more than 20,000 homes destroyed (CIDAI 2001a: 16). Nor did the recent earthquake lead to a consensual response to that major disaster; rather, the president named only members and supporters of ARENA, all owners of banks and large capitalists, to the government commission to receive, distribute, and regulate official aid in its aftermath (CIDAI 2001d: 2-3).

Conclusion

Viver es tan difícil en El Salvador que sus habitantes lo abandonan... La población ha perdido la confianza... no cree que El Salvador sea un país nuevo como para permanecer en él.

-¿La Tragedia Social De El Salvador?
Despite significant advances in ideological pluralism and political tolerance, declining rates of poverty, increasing political competition, and the gradual strengthening of the new institutions founded by the peace agreement to ensure democratic rule, democracy in El Salvador is not consolidated but combines patterns of political competition with political disaffection and social exclusion that vary unevenly across sectors and areas. Electoral rules are skewed toward the interests of the well-off, social exclusion undermines rights, and crime terrorizes all. The postwar political process has not yet healed the legacy of inequality, political exclusion, terror, and poverty.

Of course disenchantment with political parties and processes and enduring structural inequalities are also characteristic of many other Latin America countries.\textsuperscript{37} El Salvador has joined modern Latin America in the aftermath of its civil war. So it appears that not only are there various routes to democratic governance (as Charles Tilly once wrote, democracy is a lake?) including the insurgent path stressed earlier in the paper, there are various routes to incomplete, delegative?, or low quality democracy.
Nonetheless, there are reason for hope for the consolidation of democracy in El Salvador. The present freedom of expression and organization are absolutely without precedent, particularly in the countryside. Democratization at the municipal level is another favorable development, even given the difficult institutional constraints on municipal elections. After the 1997 elections, Héctor Dada Hirezi (1998: 264-5) reflected that it was now una situación en la que la mitad de la población tiene gobiernos locales que están obligados a actuar con mayores espacios de adenoma y buscando permanentemente el respaldo ciudadano?. Progress in ending social exclusion is being made in a few spheres, particularly the extension of education to the rural poor (Spence, Lanchin, Thale 2001). While difficult to quantify, tens of thousands of poor rural Salvadorans came to an unprecedented sense of citizenship and entitlement.


Cruz, José Miguel. 1997. "Los factores posibilitadores y las expresiones de la violencia en los noventa." *Estudios Centroamericanos* 588 (October).

Cruz, José Miguel. 1998a. "Por qué no votan los salvadoreños?" *Estudios Centroamericanos* 595-596 (May-June).


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Notes

1. I would like to thank Katherine Andrade, William Barnes, Charles Call David Holiday, Hector Lindo Fuentes, Vince McElhinny, Barry Shelley, and Jack Spence for facilitating access to data and documents, and William Barnes, Fran Hagopian, Scott Mainwaring, Jack Spence, and Rubén Zamora for comments on an earlier version of this paper.


3. Unless otherwise noted, all data are calculated from the national accounts data published by the Central Reserve Bank in its quarterly Revista Trimestral.

4. Export agriculture is defined here as the sum of the value added contributed to GDP by the production of coffee, cotton, and sugar, including initial processing of coffee and sugar, but not coffee roasting, beverage production or other food processing.

5. Calculated from Tables VI, V, and VI of Wise (1986) and from the 1971 agricultural census.

6. The agricultural price index increased by a factor of 6 from the early 70s to the end of the war, that of commerce increased by a factor of 34 and that of manufacturing by 15.

7. The figures are the changes in the average between 1990 to 1992 compared to the average between 1979 to 1981. Calculated from Food and Agricultural Organization (1992 and 1995).

8. The war in Guatemala did affect the area planted in coffee, which decreased by 3.9 percent compared to a decrease of 3.1 percent in El Salvador. The smaller area nonetheless supported the increases in yields and productivity.

9. Data on individual portfolios are not available: in El Salvador such information is extremely closely guarded, even within families.
10. The Truth Commission (1993) founded by the peace agreement to investigate civil war violence documented the close ties between the leaders and funders of ARENA and the death squads.

11. ARENA won only a plurality, but with the support of allied parties commanded a majority.

12. Revelations that a ring of kidnappers that had preyed on the elite included military officers associated with D'Aubuisson also contributed to the transition in leadership (Stanley, 1996, pp. 238-40).

13. Harberger 1993, Table 6


15. See Wood (2000) for a fuller development of this argument via comparison with the case of South Africa.


17. However, Rubén Zamora (1998: 312-5) argues for a more complex interpretation: while acknowledging the emergence of a degree of liberal consensus among the political elite, he documents an enduring strong difference of political opinion between ARENA on the one hand, and the FMLN, PDC, and PCN on the other.

18. In other work, McElhinny (2000b) explores similar contrasts in political culture between Ciudad Segundo Montes, an FMLN-affiliated community resettled by refugees who returned from Honduras in 1989 after nearly a decade in camps, with national political culture.

19. For details of the implementation of the peace agreement, see the various documents of produced by ONUSAL and the series of reports published by Hemisphere Initiatives; an excellent recent overview is Call 1999b.

20. By one measure of electoral competitiveness (Wood 2002: Appendix 2), the
proportion of voters sufficient to change the electoral outcome were they to change their votes from those they case in the last election (and where the switch is assumed to be proportion to the vote shares in the last election), median electoral competition increased by nearly a third in Usulután between 1994 and 2000.


22. Of course this does not imply that the same voters who stopped voting for ARENA were those that subsequently voted for the FMLN. There is however evidence that some voters have switched between the FMLN and ARENA (Cruz 1998b: 142-4).

23. One exception was the mobilization by ex-soldiers and civil defense patrol members who occupied the legislature in 1995.

24. As non-voting is tremendously under-reported in surveys (William Barnes, personal communication), evidence on voting patterns reported in surveys should be interpreted cautiously.

25. In the aftermath of the schism, tension between ortodoxos and renovadores continued (Zamora 1998: 257-263). One result was that it took three conventions to choose a candidate in the 1999 presidential election. The two tendencies were abolished as formal entities within the party in December 2000 (Spence, Lanchin, and Thale 2001: 9).


27. An analysis of the causes of premature death as a result of intentional violence based on hospital data, Cruz and González (1998, Cuadro 5) found that firearms accounted for more than half of such deaths (52.2 percent); the nearest competitor, armas blancas, accounted for merely 17.0 percent.

28. As noted above, Call's last claim is not true of all areas of the country: in
some areas, a new more inclusive political culture has emerged (see above).

29. See the annual reports of human rights organizations such as the Procuraduría [get references], Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International for details.

30. The real effective exchange rate appreciated more than 50 percent from 1990 to 1999 (Conning, Olinto and Trigueros 2000: Table 5)


32. From DIGESTYC statistics reprinted as Table 3 of Conning, Trigueros, and Lazo Marín 2001).

33. The overall HDI ranking for El Salvador is quite low; among Latin American countries, only Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Haiti are lower (ibid: 6).

34. The cited studies are all analyses of two household surveys that compiled data about household income in 1995 and 1997 by FUSADES and Ohio State University through USAID’s BASIS program. Depending on the study, data for about 500 - 600 households are analyzed. Papers are available on at www.wisc.edu/ltc/baspubca.html.

35. Larde de Palomo and Arguello de Morera (2000) found that those households that were little integrated into markets (neither producing goods for sale on market nor working more than 10 percent of their labor time on labor markets) had significantly less education and income. However, their findings are difficult to evaluate as they apparently did not include as income agricultural goods produced and consumed by the household.

36. See CIDAI 2001c: Cuadro 1 for a detailed estimate of the costs of the first earthquake.

37. One exception to low voter rates is Nicaragua, see Barnes 1998.