

Salvadoran Strategic Culture

by Cristina Eguizábal
September 2010



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FINDINGS REPORT

FIU

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The FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership

Strategic Cultures Assessments

Florida International University's Applied Research Center (FIU ARC), in collaboration with the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC), has recently formed the FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership. The partnership entails FIU providing the highest quality research-based knowledge to further explicative understanding of the political, strategic, and cultural dimensions of state behavior and foreign policy. This goal will be accomplished by employing a Strategic Culture approach. The initial phase of Strategic Culture assessments consists of a year-long research program that focuses on developing a standard analytical framework to identify and assess the Strategic Culture of ten Latin American countries. FIU will facilitate professional presentations of the following ten countries over the course of one year: Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. In addition, a findings report on the impact of Islam and Muslims within Latin America will be produced.

The overarching purpose of the project is two-fold: to generate a rich and dynamic base of knowledge pertaining to the political, social, and strategic factors that influence state behavior; and to contribute to SOUTHCOM's Socio-Cultural Dynamics (SCD) Program. Utilizing the notion of Strategic Culture, SOUTHCOM has commissioned FIU ARC to conduct country studies in order to explain how states comprehend, interpret, and implement national security policy *vis-à-vis* the international system.

SOUTHCOM defines Strategic Culture as follows: "the combination of internal and external influences and experiences—geographic, historical, cultural, economic, political and military—that shape and influence the way a country understands its relationship to the rest of the world, and how a state will behave in the international community." FIU will identify and expound upon the strategic and cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select states in the present political and security climate by analyzing demography, history, regional customs, traditions, belief systems, and other cultural and historical influences that have contributed to the development of a particular country's current security rationale and interpretation of national security. To meet the stated goals, FIU ARC will host a series of professional workshops in Miami. These workshops bring subject matter experts from all over the US and Latin America together to explore and discuss a country's specific history, geography, culture, economic, political, and military climates *vis-à-vis* Strategic Culture. At the conclusion of each workshop, FIU publishes a findings report, which is presented at SOUTHCOM.

The following Salvadoran Strategic Culture Findings Report, authored by Dr. Cristina Eguizábal is the product of a working group held in Miami on July 22, 2010, which included the presentations and intellectual contributions of 6 prominent academic and private sector experts in Salvadoran history, culture, economics, politics, and military affairs.

The views expressed in this findings report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, US Department of Defense, US Southern Command, FIU-ARC, or Florida International University.

On behalf of FIU-ARC, we wish to acknowledge and thank all of the participants for their contributions, which made the Salvadoran Strategic Culture workshop a tremendous success.

Preliminary Report

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Executive Summary

- El Salvador is the smallest country in the continental Western Hemisphere; it is half the size of Costa Rica and a fifth the size of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In its previous incarnation as a province of the Guatemalan General Captaincy, it was even smaller. Historically, Salvadorans have been aware of the high population density of their country. Small size and large population have been two of the most important geographical determinants of the country's strategic culture.
- The other important geographical determinant is that of the intersection of volcanic and tectonic processes across the national territory. The country is situated along a fault line where the Southern Caribbean Plate is overriding the East Pacific. Since colonial times, volcanic eruptions and massive earthquakes have periodically destroyed urban settlements. However, while lava is destructive and wipes out everything that it encounters, volcanic stones and ashes are among the best fertilizers known to man. Soils in El Salvador are thus extremely fertile. Furthermore, El Salvador is the only Central American country lacking an Atlantic coast; however, this fact has not spared it from destruction caused by hurricanes and tropical storms.
- There is no doubt that the failure of the Central American Federation (largely favored by the Salvadoran elites), the establishment of the republic, continued ethnic strife, and the fight against Walker all constitute the background of the country's strategic culture. Yet, the first real historical marker is the hasty process of land privatization that took place during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The laws abolishing communal lands (municipal and collectively owned by indigenous communities) were enacted between in 1879-1882. By 1890 all forms of collective land tenure had been eradicated. As collective property disappeared, so did subsistence holdings associated with the colonial system.
- Another important strategic marker to note is the early professionalization of the Salvadoran army, which began in 1876. By 1893, national army contingents were present in the fourteen departments. The armed forces consumed one fourth of the budget; 3,200 regular troops and an undetermined number of militiamen were responsible for the security and defense of the national territory. Today, the Salvadoran army is now fully under civilian control. Its newly founded doctrine, professionalism, and its complete withdrawal from political and economic affairs, has transformed it into one of the most respected institutions in El Salvador.

- The Salvadoran ideological spectrum has traditionally been extremely polarized. Currently, the two main political parties (ARENA and FMLN) represent opposing poles of the political spectrum. Funes' victory put an end to twenty years of presidential rule by the right-wing ARENA party. As expected, Funes is facing serious difficulties ruling this deeply polarized society.
- The expansion of wealth following the rapid growth of coffee exports during the first quarter of the 20th century benefited mainly big landowners and coffee merchants; however, there was a modest trickle-down dynamic in the urban centers, particularly in San Salvador. Economic prosperity produced a growing middle class formed of teachers, sales clerks, civil servants, and other professionals as well as artisans—all increasingly well organized in all sorts of associations. While civil society thrived in the cities, despite repression, the rural masses continued to be immersed in poverty and ignorance.
- On January 22, a massive peasant revolt erupted in the coffee producing regions of the Western highlands, where most of the indigenous peoples lived. The uprising and subsequent repression constituted a pivotal occurrence in Salvadoran history known as the Massacre of 1932, becoming the most important marker of the country's strategic culture until 1979. Salvadoran civilian elites traumatized by the events and by the "memory" of the events, developed a visceral mistrust of the lower classes: poverty became suspect.
- Relations between El Salvador and Honduras had always been difficult. Historically, the border between the two countries has been a source of tension and has since been resolved with the exception of Conejo Island.
- The two countries had benefitted very differently from the regional integration policies launched in the 1960's. El Salvador's overpopulation spilled over to Honduras where the agricultural frontier was still wide open. In 1969 tensions between the two countries were high. The most visible "threat" posed by Salvadorans was the increasing number of undocumented migrants that had settled in the Honduran countryside. These existing tensions coincided with inflamed rioting during the second North American qualifying round of the 1970 World Cup and disturbances broke out. Fearing for their safety, Salvadoran migrants were returning home in droves. The influx of displaced Salvadorans was placing a burden on services and threatening to provoke widespread social unrest. The specter of 1932 loomed large. It was clear that war with Honduras would lead to the breakdown of the regional integration process that had benefitted El Salvador so much, however, the Salvadoran

elites, military and civilian, were willing to pay that price and went to war. Eleven years later, under extreme pressure from the Reagan administration, the two nations signed a Peace Treaty on October 30, 1980.

- El Salvador lost the economic "safety valve" formerly provided by illegal emigration to Honduras; land-based pressures again began to build. Although the vast majority of Salvadorans, including all of the legal political parties, had united in support of the war, unity did not last long. In 1970, the PCN (*Partido de Conciliación Nacional*), supported by the PDC (*Partido Democrata Cristiano*) and certain sectors of the Catholic Church, launched a national discussion on the need for land reform, "the Agrarian Reform Congress." The landowning groups opposed it furiously, and their alliance with the military began to fray. The Cuban and Chinese-inspired radical left was rapidly organizing and such insurgencies based on these ideologies proliferated. During the presidency of General Romero, Molina's successor, violence further escalated. The leftist guerrilla groups stepped up their operations—assassinations, kidnappings and bombings—as a form of self-defense and as retaliation against government forces, while their political allies (trade unions, peasant organizations, church groups) promoted the revolutionary momentum through public demonstrations, strikes, seizures of buildings, and propaganda campaigns.
- During the 1980s, the Reagan Administration, eager to "draw the line against communism" in El Salvador, promoted a counterinsurgency strategy designed to defeat the popular uprising taking place in the country at the time, known as The Twelve-Year War.
- After twelve years of bloody civil conflict that took the lives of an estimated 75,000 people, and two long years of negotiations, the U.S.-backed Salvadoran government and the FMLN signed UN-brokered Peace Accords in Mexico City, on January 16, 1992. It had been agreed that demobilization by the rebel forces was to be handled by UN Peace keeping personnel. The Salvadoran Armed Forces had agreed to a seventy percent reduction of personnel and the dissolution of units tied to the most serious human rights abuses.
- Migration has helped reduce rural unemployment and has infused countless households with extra income in the form of the remittances. It has also meant social disruptions and a dangerous dependency in many communities. From a macroeconomic point of view the country's economy dependency on remittances is worrisome. Remittances constitute 18% of the GDP.

Introduction

El Salvador is the smallest country in the continental Western Hemisphere. In its previous incarnation as a province of the Guatemalan General Captaincy, it was even smaller. Indeed, for more than two hundred years of Spanish rule, what is today Sonsonate was under the jurisdiction of Santiago de los Caballeros, Guatemala.

Present-day El Salvador is half the size of Costa Rica and a fifth the size of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. It is no wonder that Salvadorans have historically had a keen sense of the small size of the national territory.

Historians have found ample evidence of the existence of human settlements predating the Clovis culture¹ in the department of Morazán near the border with Honduras. The population density of the Central American Northern Triangle was very high in pre-Colombian times.

Aztec Pipiles were the largest group at the time of the Spanish conquest, but indigenous populations in El Salvador have historically varied. Prior to the Pipiles, the primary people of El Salvador were the Chortí Maya and the Lenca. The Chortí lived throughout western and central El Salvador north into western Honduras, including Copán, and in the area of Escuintla and Quirigua in the Motagua Valley, Guatemala. The Lenca were settled in the east-central portion of El Salvador, east from the Lempa River, and in central and western Honduras. East of the Lenca were the Mangles along the Gulf of Fonseca and the Uluas in present-day northern La Unión. In addition, the Cacaoperas, most likely a Lenca-related people, lived in what is today Morazán. In present day Ahuachapán the Pokomam Mayans were settled, centered in Atiquizaya. The Pokomams were related to the Quiché in western Guatemala.

The Pipiles arrived from central Mexico about 600 A.D. Given the similarity of place names, it is believed that they originated in the current state of Puebla. The Pipiles were Nahuat-speaking people and settled in coastal Guatemala and Nicaragua, as well as in El Salvador and Honduras. The Pipiles, the dominant political force in El Salvador for at least four centuries, took over the old Mayan ceremonial centers, adding a few monuments of their own. This lasted until about 1050 A.D., when a Quiché–Putún (Chol)–Aztec–Chortí coalition defeated the Pipiles and re-established Mayan control over the ceremonial centers. The Pipiles then concentrated in Sonsonate around Izalco and in Nonualco, south-east from the Ilopango Lake, each one of which was a powerful Pipil kingdom when the Spanish arrived.

¹ The Clovis culture is a prehistoric Paleo Indian culture that first appeared at the end of the last glacial period roughly 13,500 to 13,000 calendar years ago, characterized by the manufacture of distinctive bone and ivory tools. After the discovery of several Clovis sites in western North America in the 1930s, the Clovis people came to be regarded as the first human inhabitants of the Western hemisphere; however, this majority view has been contested over the last thirty years by several archaeological discoveries, including one in the Salvadoran department of Morazán.

According to El Salvador's mandatory history books, the territory that constitutes present-day El Salvador supported a population of approximately one million inhabitants. Most of the territory was already colonized when the Spaniards arrived. The Spaniards settled following the preexisting pattern. It took the conquistadores 25 years of conquest to subjugate the numerous indigenous chieftainships.² It has been estimated that in 1821, at the moment of independence, there were only 250,000 indigenous individuals in the territory. Presently, indigenous people constitute only 1% of the total population, whereas 90% are considered mestizos.³

El Salvador's total population today is estimated at 7 million people, which means a population density of 342 inhabitants per square kilometer. In terms of total population, El Salvador is not the most populous Central American country; Guatemala, the most populous country and second most populated country per square kilometer in the region, has 138 inhabitants per square kilometer. Salvadorans are aware of the high population density of their country.

Small size and large population have been two of the most important geographical determinants of the country's strategic culture. During the Cold War, a corollary of these determinants was the certainty (proved wrong in the 1980s) that since there were no empty geographic spaces, such as Petén in Guatemala or the Mosquitia in Honduras and Nicaragua, rural insurgencies could not develop in the country.

The other important geographical determinant is that of the intersection of volcanic and tectonic processes across the national territory. The country is situated along a fault line where the Southern Caribbean Plate is overriding the East Pacific plate. The country is situated on a volcanic chain of 28 volcanoes, 14 of which have been active. The first settlers baptized the valley of San Salvador, on the skirts of the San Salvador volcano, as the Valley of the Hammocks due to the frequency of earthquakes. Since colonial times, volcanic eruptions and massive earthquakes have periodically destroyed urban settlements; we can count at least nine devastations after 1917. While lava is destructive and wipes out everything that it encounters, volcanic stones and ashes are among the best fertilizers known to man. Soils in El Salvador are thus extremely fertile.

El Salvador is the only Central American country lacking an Atlantic coast; however, this fact has not spared it from destruction caused by hurricanes and tropical storms. During hurricane Mitch (1998), rains flooded 40% of the country's territory. Since then, at least four tropical storms have devastated large

² David Browning, *El Salvador. La tierra y el hombre*, San Salvador: Dirección de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación, 1975, pp. 75-87.

³ According to Browning, the total Black population in the Province of San Salvador was less than 600 in 1781. *Op.Cit.* p. 93.

swaths of land. Most recently, tropical storm Agatha was particularly devastating in the poor suburbs of San Salvador, since many were built on the banks of the Acelhuate River. Deforestation, along with the inappropriate use of land and poor hydrographic management, has increased the population's vulnerability to natural disasters. In addition, high population density has encouraged people to settle in dangerous places such as river-banks and known seismic fault lines.

Historical Markers of Strategic Culture

Independence from Spain was declared in Mexico City, the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, on September 16, 1821, but it was not clear if the Guatemala General Captaincy, which included the provinces of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, would remain part of Mexico. The other alternatives to incorporation into Mexico were continuation as a unit or breaking up into smaller units in a number of combinations.

Central American ruling elites were divided between those who favored annexation to Mexico, particularly strong in Guatemala, and those who favored the creation of a Central American federation—this option was popular in El Salvador among modernizing planters of indigo, the main cash crop for the province at the time. The United Provinces of Central America was established on July 1, 1823.⁴ The new country was renamed the Federal Republic of Central America in 1823, with its capital in Guatemala City. The Federation was in name only since the federal authorities were never able to obtain the allegiance of the provincial authorities. After the conservative electoral victory in Guatemala in 1839 and the death of the last federal president, the liberal Francisco Morazán, by firing squad in Costa Rica in 1840, El Salvador was the only state still supporting the idea of a federation. In spite of itself it became a de facto independent republic. Despite the disintegration of the Federation, for a long time the cleavages between elites from liberal and conservative persuasions would override those following national boundaries, and the last wars of intervention in neighboring states that took place in 1906-07.⁵ The main differences between the two groups concerned trade and Church privileges: liberals favoring free trade and fewer privileges for the ecclesiastical establishment.

In El Salvador, small Indian insurrections were common and hostility between indigenous peoples and mestizos, commonly known as Ladinos, often degenerated in riots in villages and towns. The most significant of these threats was the Indian rebellion of Anastasio Aquino in 1833 in the region of Los Nonualcos, south-west of San Salvador—a region where antagonism between Indians and Ladinos was

⁴ The new country included five of the six provinces of the former kingdom of Guatemala. Chiapas, which had been part of it during colonial times, chose to adhere to Mexico.

⁵ See Alastair White, *El Salvador*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973, p. 65.

particularly strong. The Indians, protesting high taxes and forced conscription, marched against the towns of Zacatecoluca and San Vicente that the Ladinos governed (and which were successfully defended).

More important threats came from Anglo-American rivalry over control of a transoceanic passage that would shorten the trip to California from the cities of the East Coast, and from William Walker, the American adventurer financed by powerful Southern capitalists who, backed by a small army and the support of liberal Nicaraguans, declared himself President of Nicaragua. This time patriotism trumped political ideologies: all Central American countries sent troops to fight the buccaneer. Gerardo Barrios, a prominent liberal officer, led El Salvador's contingent; President Francisco Dueñas (a conservative) appointed him.

There is no doubt that the failure of the Central American Federation (largely favored by the Salvadoran elites), the establishment of the republic, continued ethnic strife, and the fight against Walker all constitute the background of the country's strategic culture. Yet, the first real historical marker is the hasty process of land privatization that took place during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Collective land property rights were a colonial legacy that had been respected after independence.⁶ The laws abolishing communal lands (municipal and collectively owned by indigenous communities) were enacted between in 1879-1882. By 1890 all forms of collective land tenure had been eradicated. Coffee was rapidly replacing indigo as the country's main cash crop. By 1929, 95% of El Salvador's exports were coffee exports. As collective property disappeared, so did subsistence holdings associated with the colonial system. New legislation was established controlling movements of people. Vagrancy laws obliged poor peasants to work for landowners.

Another important strategic marker to note is the early professionalization of the Salvadoran army, which began in 1876. By 1893, national army contingents were present in the fourteen departments. The armed forces consumed one fourth of the budget; 3,200 regular troops and an undetermined number of militiamen were responsible for the security and defense of the national territory. The National Police was created during the presidency of Rafael Zaldivar (1880-84), and a National Guard, modeled on the Spanish Civil Guard, under military command, was created in 1912 to combat crime in the countryside. Police officers and National Guards were trained at a school under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War.⁷

⁶ Browning, *Op.Cit.* p. 255.

⁷ Robert V. Elam, *The Army and Politics in El Salvador, 1840-1927*, in Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr., *The Politics of Antipolitics: the Military in Latin America*, p. 55.

The Coffee Republic and the Massacre of 1932 (La Matanza)

The expansion of wealth following the rapid growth of coffee exports benefited mainly big landowners and coffee merchants; however, there was a modest trickle-down dynamic in the urban centers, particularly in San Salvador. Economic prosperity produced a growing middle class formed of teachers, sales clerks, civil servants, and other professionals as well as artisans—all increasingly well organized in all sorts of associations. News from events taking place in nearby Mexico and from far away Russia fueled political discussions and nourished the local political culture. While civil society thrived in the cities, despite repression, the rural masses continued to be immersed in poverty and ignorance.

From 1911 to 1932 El Salvador went through a series of failed transitions to democracy. The election of Manuel Enrique Araujo to the presidency initiated a series of civilian governments. Although he was only in power for two years, he introduced a series of liberal reforms promoting freedom of speech and association. The victim of an assassination, he was succeeded from 1913 to 1927 by three civilian presidents linked to one of the leading coffee exporting families: the Meléndez Quiñónez. The Meléndez Quiñónez policies are difficult to qualify. On one hand, they tolerated educational activities and civic participation of civil society organizations, including the most progressive ones. The first trade unions appeared in 1923 and 1924. Meléndez Quiñónez also tolerated wide margins of criticism from the press, as attested by editorials criticizing human right abuses by the National Guard. On the other hand, in the countryside the family promoted the creation of Red Brigades, which, despite their Bolshevik-sounding name were controlled by the government and often worked in tandem with the National Guard.⁸ Finally, they allowed Pío Romero Bosque, a family protégé, committed to the promotion of authentic democracy, to be elected in 1927 and to govern for a full constitutional mandate until 1931.

Don Pío's government was plagued by contradictions. On the one hand, it prosecuted the National Guard's human rights abuses, but on the other, it was harsh towards what were already considered subversives, and jailed the likes of Farabundo Martí. By establishing the military academy and rewriting promotion and retirement laws, he undermined the power of older officers and assured the advancement of junior officers (juventud military), establishing a pattern of political change that would remain dominant until 1980 based on the circulation of military cohorts.

His most important legacy was the organization of free elections, probably the first free election in El Salvador's history. Interestingly, the military served as observers and coordinators of the balloting, and

⁸ Jeffrey L. Gould and Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness. Revolution, Repression and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2008, pp. 33-37.

military personnel staffed an election center at the presidential palace in charge of registering the voting results that arrived from all over the country.⁹

On March 1, 1931, Arturo Araujo, elected on an enterprising reformist platform, was sworn as the new president as the Great Depression devastated the Salvadoran economy. Coffee prices plummeted in the international market. Prosperity based on coffee exports vanished even quicker than it had arrived. Hunger, chronically present in the rural areas, became widespread famine. Peasant revolts multiplied. Unemployment and economic hardship hit the urban middle classes and social unrest spread; protests and mobilizations proliferated and strikes multiplied.

Demands upon the military, responsible for maintaining public order, grew exponentially. Its relations with the new administration were not good. The officers were unhappy: for example, eleven of them had been kept from attending the university as students in the medical, engineering, and law schools of the National University, but the worst grievance was of not having been paid. From September through November 1931, officers in every department had gone without their salaries. In December, officers revolted on the grounds of public discontent with the Araujo presidency, but also on the grounds of institutional preservation.¹⁰

Following stipulations contained in the treaties of Washington (1907) and in the Peace and Friendship Treaty/Agreement among Central American Countries, the U.S. government at that time was not recognizing de facto governments in the region. The Salvadoran military had to find a way of institutionalizing Araujo's ouster. They did so by inviting General Hernández Martínez, Vice President of the Republic and Araujo's Defense Minister, to assume the office. On December 12, he assumed the reins of power, disbanding the military directorate that had invited him to assume power. On January 22, a massive peasant revolt erupted in the coffee producing regions of the Western highlands, where most of the indigenous peoples lived. The uprising and subsequent repression constituted a pivotal occurrence in Salvadoran history, becoming the most important marker of the country's strategic culture until 1979.

There is widespread agreement on the causes of the rebellion, viz., coffee prices fluctuating on the international market, unresolved issues of land ownership, difficult labor relations, violent local politics, racism, and ethnic tensions. The strains caused by the economic depression made all these issues converge, and the tensions eventually exploded in open revolt.

⁹ Robert V. Elam, *The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-1945*, in Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr., *Op.Cit.*, p.104.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

Most observers agree that the rebels were poor peasants, the majority of them indigenous, and that they targeted symbols of local power: towns where the local elites lived and conducted business. The main areas of rebel activity were Ahuachapán and Sonsonate, two departmental capitals, the populous towns of Izalco, Nahuizalco, Juayúa and Colón, plus other minor urban settlements. The rebellion began on January 23 with attacks on Izalco and Juayúa. The insurrection was crushed between the afternoons of January 24 and 25. During the following two weeks, the military subjected the region to a brutal reprisal.

Two very important questions continue to be subject to debate: first, how many casualties resulted? Estimates of the numbers of victims of the insurgents vary from a couple of hundreds up to 10,000. On the side of the military's repression, the numbers go from a low estimate of 10,000 to a high of 30,000.¹¹

The other unanswered question is: Who were the rebels? Was this a communist revolt? Was it a peasant revolt? Was it an indigenous uprising? Historians are still debating this question.¹²

Whatever the nature of the revolt, it is the case that after 1932 El Salvador was dramatically transformed. The country's ethnic make-up changed. Indigenous ways of life that had survived 400 years of Spanish domination all but disappeared: most Salvadoran Indians abandoned their traditional organizations and stopped speaking their languages¹³. Salvadoran civilian elites traumatized by the events and by the "memory" of the events, developed a visceral mistrust of the lower classes: poverty became suspect. The military became the state. It did not relinquish political power until after the 1992 Peace Accords.

Hernández Martínez stayed in power for thirteen years. He was deposed by a military coup in 1944. After a series of coups and counter-coups, the winning military faction, the "juventud military," launched a second attempt at democratization.

A new constitution was voted on in 1950 and the military, organized into a political party, that is, the Revolutionary Party of National Unity (PRUD), had one of its own run for the presidency. The political model that the military had in mind was that of a controlled democracy under its tutelage capable of promoting economic development. The military party would articulate relations between the military and the economic elites. Unrest following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution prompted a series of coups and countercoups in 1960-61, but the model was reproduced with a slight change of characters, including

¹¹ El Salvador's public records are silent on the matter.

¹² See Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, Erik Ching and Rafael Lara-Martínez. *Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador. The Insurrection of 1932, Roque Dalton, and the Politics of Historical Memory*, University of New Mexico Press, 2007.

¹³ Henrik Ronsbo, "This Is not culture!" *The Effects of Ethnodiscourse and Ethnopolitics in El Salvador*, in Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford, *Landscapes of Struggle. Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004, pp. 211-225

a new name for the “military party.” The new one was to be called National Conciliation (PCN). A third military officer was elected in 1962.¹⁴

From 1962-1969, the political system gradually liberalized, political spaces grew, and the introduction of a new electoral system based on proportional representation increased the opposition’s representation in the legislature and at the local level. The big winner from these reforms would be the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), founded in 1960. In the elections of 1964, when the new electoral system was inaugurated, the Christian Democrats got 14 seats. They also won 37 mayoralties, including the most coveted one of them all: the mayoralty of San Salvador.

High economic growth rates brought about by the new import substitution industrialization development strategy and the Central American regional integration process contributed to the rise of an important middle class. The new party system dominated by the PCN on one hand and the PDC, on the other was an expression of its rising clout.

In 1969, however, the war with Honduras derailed the process of what in hindsight we can call a gradually unfolding democratization process.

The Soccer War

El Salvador had been one of the main beneficiaries of the Central American Common Market (CACM). Always conscious of the small size of their territory, the Salvadoran elites had historically been in favor of all kinds of Central American cooperation and embraced the integration project proposed by the United Nations with great enthusiasm. On the contrary, trade dynamics had been unkind to Honduras, the least developed of the five countries, despite trade preferences that the integration treaties gave the Honduran economy. The balance of trade between El Salvador and Honduras clearly benefited the former. Salvadoran investment in Honduras was growing, but the most visible “threat” posed by Salvadorans was the increasing number of undocumented migrants settling in the Honduran countryside. Salvadorans had begun migrating to Honduras since the first decades of the twentieth century, initially attracted by the job opportunities offered by the fruit companies on banana plantations. But they soon found out that land was plentiful in Honduras, and that they could easily either settle on unclaimed national land, buy land to cultivate for their own consumption, or become sharecroppers.¹⁵ A third group of Salvadoran migrants settled in the towns and cities, and were involved in retail businesses.

¹⁴ Knut Walter and Philip J. Williams, *Antipolitics in El Salvador 1945-1994*, in Brian Loveman and Thomas M. Davies Jr., *Op. Cit.*, pp. 327-350.

¹⁵ In 1952, 88.6% of Honduran territory was still national land. See A. White, *Op. Cit.* p. 185.

The Guatemalan-Salvadoran border was established very early after the dissolution of the Federation, and the Guatemalan government never contested Sonsonate and Ahuachapán belonging to El Salvador. The border with Honduras was, on the contrary, ill-defined and border clashes were common. Ill-defined borders, uncontrolled migration, and trade imbalances, all contributed to tense relations between the two neighbors.

In July 1968, the Honduran military government issued an Agrarian Reform decree distributing national land. Only native-born citizens were to benefit from the new measure. Increasingly, the Honduran government and the powerful rural lobby blamed the approximately 300,000 undocumented Salvadoran immigrants for the nation's economic problems. The media denounced the negative impact of Salvadoran labor on unemployment and wages on the Caribbean coast. In January 1969, Honduras refused to renew the Bilateral Agreement on Immigration established between the two countries in 1967 to regulate the flow of people across their common border. These existing tensions coincided with inflamed rioting during the second North American qualifying round of the 1970 World Cup. Disturbances broke out during the first game in Tegucigalpa, but the situation got considerably worse during the second match in San Salvador. Honduran fans were roughed up, and in response Salvadorans were killed and brutalized in Honduras. A massive Salvadoran exodus began. On June 27, 1969, Honduras broke diplomatic relations with El Salvador.

Early on the morning of July 14, 1969, concerted military action began in what came to be known internationally as the Soccer War—or the 100 Hour War in Central America. The Salvadoran Air Force attacked targets inside Honduras and the Salvadoran army launched major offensives along the Pan American highway and against Honduran islands in the Gulf of Fonseca. At first, the Salvadorans made fairly rapid progress. By the evening of July 15, the Salvadoran army, considerably larger and better equipped than its Honduran counterpart, captured the towns of El Amatillo and Nacaome, and the departmental capital of Nueva Ocotepeque. Despite early Salvadoran air strikes, the Hondurans eventually dominated that area, destroying most of the Salvadoran Air Force. The Salvadoran Army, however, clearly dominated on the ground. It had pushed rapidly into Honduran territory before fuel and ammunition shortages and diplomatic efforts by representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS) eventually convinced El Salvador that it had to halt the offensive. Approximately 2,000 people—mainly Honduran civilians—were killed during the hostilities that ensued between the two countries.

Beyond national pride and jingoism, the Salvadorans had important motivations for launching a military strike against Honduras. The influx of displaced Salvadorans was placing a burden on services and threatening to provoke widespread social unrest. The specter of 1932 loomed large. Although war with

Honduras almost certainly would lead to the breakdown of the CACM, the Salvadoran elites, military and civilian, were willing to pay that price. In their estimation, the CACM was already close to a breakdown anyway over the issue of comparative advantage; open hostilities with Honduras would only hasten the inevitable outcome.

The war produced losses for all in the region. Between 60,000 and 130,000 Salvadorans had been forcibly expelled or had fled from Honduras, producing serious economic disruption in specific areas of both warring countries. Central American trade, let alone bilateral trade, had been disrupted as a consequence of the border closings, damaging the economies of the five nations and threatening the future of the CACM.

Eleven years later, under extreme pressure from the Reagan administration, the two nations signed a Peace Treaty on October 30, 1980, and agreed to put the border dispute over the Gulf of Fonseca and five sections of land boundaries before the International Court of Justice. In 1992, the Court awarded most of the disputed territory to Honduras, and in 1998 the two countries signed a border demarcation treaty to implement the terms of the ruling. The total land area given to Honduras from El Salvador after the court's ruling was around 374 square kilometers. With the exception of the island of Conejo, on the Gulf of Fonseca, the demarcation of the border has been completed.

The Radical Seventies

El Salvador lost the economic "safety valve" formerly provided by illegal emigration to Honduras; land-based pressures again began to build. Although the vast majority of Salvadorans, including all the legal political parties, had united in support of the war, unity did not last long.

In 1970, the PCN, supported by the PDC and certain sectors of the Catholic Church, launched a national discussion on the need for land reform, "the Agrarian Reform Congress." The landowning groups opposed it furiously, and their alliance with the military began to fray. Additionally, the 1971 kidnapping and murder by a leftist organization of Ernesto Regalado Dueñas, the heir to a wealthy coffee exporting family, had provoked doubts among the members of the economic elite on the capacity of the military to bring the situation under control. A protracted teachers' strike in 1971 only added to the unsettled climate prevailing in the country.

The Cuban and Chinese-inspired radical left was rapidly organizing. In 1969, a Maoist faction of the Communist Party had split under the leadership of Cayetano Carpio and formed the Popular Liberation Forces Farabundo Martí (Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí—FPL). That same year, a

group of young Christian radicals founded the Popular Revolutionary Army (Ejército Popular de Liberación—ERP).¹⁶

For the 1972 presidential elections, the PDC opted to participate as the leading party of a coalition of center left and leftist opposition parties, the Opposition Union (Unión Nacional Opositora—UNO). The other members of the coalition were the National Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario—MNR), originally a social democratic party, and the National Democratic Union (Unión Democrática Nacionalista—UDN) that functioned as a front for the Communist Party. Despite the leftist leanings of the MNR and UDN and the lingering effect of the Agrarian Reform Congress, the UNO platform was moderate, promising measured reform, respect for private property, and protection of private investment. Napoleón Duarte, the charismatic Christian Democratic leader, three times elected as San Salvador's mayor, was UNO's candidate. MNR's Guillermo Manuel Ungo was his running mate. His peers had chosen Colonel Arturo Armando Molina as the PCN candidate.

The actual vote count in the presidential balloting of February 20, 1972, probably will never be known. As expected, Duarte won in San Salvador and in many important urban centers. When it was clear that he was offsetting the traditional PCN advantage in the countryside the government suspended tabulations and a recount was initiated. The official results of the second count placed Molina ahead of Duarte by 10,000 votes. In the absence of a majority (50%+1) of votes, the 1962 Constitution mandated that the selection of the president be relegated to the legislature. Nobody was surprised when the PCN's majority confirmed Molina's election.

The government of President Molina attempted to exert traditional authoritarian control over the countryside. Using a peasant organization known as the Nationalist Democratic Organization (Organización Democrática Nacionalista—Orden). Following the precedent of Meléndez Quiñónez's Red Brigades, Orden had been established in the early 1960s by then-President Rivera and General José Alberto Medrano as a civilian militia to complement the National Guard. Orden functioned as an important part of the rural intelligence network for the security forces, and when necessary as a paramilitary adjunct. By the late 1970s, its membership reportedly totaled 100,000.

¹⁶ The other organizations that formed the FMLN were the Armed Forces of National Resistance (Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional—FARN), a splinter group from the ERP established in 1975. The Trotsky inspired Revolutionary Party of the Central American Workers (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericano—PRTC) created in 1976 and the Liberation Armed Forces, the armed structure of the Salvadoran Communist Party established in 1980. The FMLN launched its first general offensive in January 1981.

Bankrolled by sectors of the oligarchy and drawing on active-duty and former military personnel for their members, a new development was on the rise: the death squads, whose function was to get rid of subversives.

During the presidency of General Romero, Molina's successor, violence further escalated. The leftist guerrilla groups stepped up their operations—assassinations, kidnappings and bombings—as a form of self-defense and as retaliation against government forces, while their political allies (trade unions, peasant organizations, church groups) promoted the revolutionary momentum through public demonstrations, strikes, seizures of buildings, and propaganda campaigns. The Sandinista victory in neighboring Nicaragua had boosted not only the spirits, but also the capabilities, of the insurgents. By October 1979, the Romero government had completely lost control.

The Twelve-Year Civil War

During the 1980s, the Reagan Administration, eager to “draw the line against communism” in El Salvador, promoted a counterinsurgency strategy designed to defeat the popular uprising taking place in the country at the time. That strategy included a military campaign against the insurgency, a non-military effort designed to “win the hearts and minds” of the civilian population, and an effort at nation building by promoting free and regularly-held elections.

By the fall of the Berlin Wall, most military assessments had concluded that while the FMLN could not win, neither could it be defeated.¹⁷ Furthermore, the November 1989 offensive by the FMLN was seen by many as a turning point on the road to the peace negotiations. The rebels had been able to occupy, albeit briefly, residential areas in the upscale San Salvador Escalón district where the Presidential Residency is located, and had been at walking distance from the Joint Chiefs of Staff Headquarters (Estado Mayor). The FMLN was not able to win the war, but it was clear that it would not be easily defeated either. The Salvadoran elites and Washington realized that a military victory by the army was not going to happen soon. Last but not least, the middle classes, shocked by the cold blooded murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter by the armed forces, threw their support in favor of negotiations to end the war.¹⁸

¹⁷ See, Martin Needler, *El Salvador: The Military and Politics, Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Summer 1991, pp. 586; A. J. Bacevich, James Hallums, Richard White, Thomas Young, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988.

¹⁸ Terry Lynn Karl, El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution, *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1992, pp. 152.

The Peace Accords

After twelve years of bloody civil conflict that took the lives of an estimated 75,000 people, and two long years of negotiations, the U.S.-backed Salvadoran government and the FMLN signed UN-brokered Peace Accords in Mexico City, on January 16, 1992. Soon after the end of the armed conflict, the UN-mandated truth commission established that 85% of human rights abuses during the civil war were committed by the Salvadoran armed forces or by rightwing death squads.¹⁹

It had been agreed that demobilization by the rebel forces was to be handled by UN Peace keeping personnel. The Salvadoran Armed Forces had agreed to a seventy percent reduction of personnel and the dissolution of units tied to the most serious human rights abuses—namely, the so-called rapid deployment forces, the National Guard, the National Police, and the Treasury Police. It had also agreed to put state intelligence agencies under direct presidential control.

By 1993—nine months ahead of schedule—the military had cut personnel from a war-time high of 63,000 to 32,000 as required by the peace accords. By 2003, the Salvadoran army's personnel stood at less than 29,000, a smaller number than the level required by the Chapultepec Peace Accords.²⁰

The Salvadoran army is now fully under civilian control. Its newly founded doctrine, professionalism, and its complete withdrawal from political and economic affairs, have transformed it into one of the most respected institutions in El Salvador.²¹ Since the end of the war, the Salvadoran army has performed humanitarian functions, including a critical role in recent natural disasters conducting search and rescue operations and reconstruction tasks. Members of the Salvadoran military have also participated—albeit on a small scale—in several UN peacekeeping operations abroad.

From 2003 until 2009, the Salvadoran Armed Forces participated in the Multi-National Force in Iraq. El Salvador was the last and the longest serving Latin American nation in the Coalition of the Willing. Several acts of heroism were attributed to Salvadoran soldiers in Iraq, prompting Secretary of State Colin Powell to recognize in 2004 that Salvadoran soldiers had "gained a fantastic reputation among the

¹⁹ See, Comisión de la Verdad para El Salvador, *De la locura a la esperanza: La guerra de 12 años en El Salvador*, San Salvador: Naciones Unidas, 1992-1993.

²⁰ Adalberto Grullón, "Aumentan los soldados pero les disminuyen las tareas," *Tiempos del Mundo*, December 2003, pp. 17.

²¹ Salvadorans' trust in the armed forces has remained high in the post-war period. Surveys by Vanderbilt University's Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) put that trust at 68.6% in 2004, 60.4% in 2006 and 56.5% in 2008, among the highest among the country's institutions; see, Ricardo Córdova Macías, José Miguel Cruz and Mitchell A. Seligson, *Cultura política de la democracia en El Salvador*, 2008. San Salvador: AID/LAPOP, 2008, p. 163-165.

coalition."²² Five Salvadoran soldiers died and 20 were wounded during their five and a half year involvement in Iraq.²³

Since the mid 1990s, the Salvadoran army has been authorized to support the National Civilian Police in patrol missions in rural areas. That responsibility was expanded in late 2009, when the new Administration of President Mauricio Funes mandated that the Armed Forces support the police in other public security tasks, including the fight against street gangs and managing the country's prison system.²⁴

Economic Variables

During the 1950s, the agro exporting model based on coffee cultivated in the Western highlands was expanded by exports of sugar and cotton to the international market and meat to the regional one. With the formation of the Central American Common Market, the agro exporting model would be complemented by import substitution industries exported regionally. El Salvador competed with Guatemala for hegemony in the regional market, and the Salvadoran elites, conditioned by the small size of the country, became the champions of economic integration.

Following the war with Honduras, the collapse of the common market, and the closing of the migration escape valve, the Salvadoran political (military) and economic elites frantically looked for another development model. It was clear that the reforms recommended by most development economists—at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, the development banks and the Alliance for Progress—were urgently needed. The government of Arturo Molina attempted to launch an “agrarian transformation” project, but to no avail. Economic elites preferred to follow their conservative instincts and stick to their traditional country management style.²⁵

Even before the end of the war, like all other Latin American countries in the 1980s, El Salvador had gone through a thorough process of economic liberalization and structural adjustment.²⁶ The Caribbean Basin Initiative had established trade preferences for nontraditional exports such as flowers, fruits, and, most important for El Salvador, assembly plants (maquiladoras). A new development strategy was in the making.

²² See, Denis D. Gray, “Salvadoran Soldiers Cited for Heroism in Iraq,” *Yahoo! News*, 3 May 2004, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1128904/posts>.

²³ For a summary of troop presence in Iraq, see, Erik Lemus, “El Salvador dejó atrás Irak,” *BBC Mundo*, 8 February 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_7877000/7877216.stm.

²⁴ See, Roberto Valencia, “El Ejército regresará a las calles de El Salvador para combatir la violencia,” *El Mundo*, 13 November 2009, <http://www.elmundo.es/america/2009/11/04/noticias/1257294579.html>.

²⁵ See Roberto Rubio Fabián, “El Salvador: una cultura política polar”, Paper prepared for the Workshop El Salvador's Strategic Culture, Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables, July 22, 2010.

²⁶ See Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo, “Obstacles to Peace,” *Foreign Policy* Spring 1994, pp. 69-83.

El Salvador achieved notable economic stability and growth in the 1990s following the government's embrace of the "neo-liberal" economic model, also known as the Washington Consensus. The economy grew on average around 6%, from 1990 to 1995. The authorities' focus on cutting government spending, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and, subsequently, adopting the U.S. dollar as its national currency, have made El Salvador one of the most open economies in the world. But after record strong economic growth rates in the 1990s, the country's economic growth has slowed down considerably to 2% from 2000-2004, and 3.6% from 2005-2008.²⁷

One of the biggest challenges for Salvadoran policy-makers continues to be how to generate new growth sectors that will support a more diversified economy. During the last two decades thirteen tax free zones for exports were created fostering the multiplication of maquiladoras exporting goods to the U.S. Other nontraditional exports include shrimp and other aquaculture products and Salvadoran typical foods and drinks for Salvadoran living abroad. In December 2004, El Salvador became the first country to ratify the Dominican Republic—Central America-Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), and to begin its implementation in March 2006.

Finally, the Saca government embarked on a massive ports development project—Puerto Cutuco re-baptized Puerto La Unión Centroamericana—and other infrastructure projects in the eastern department of La Unión in order to use the area as a "dry canal" for transporting goods from the Gulf of Fonseca in the Pacific to Honduras' Caribbean coast. In 2006, the U.S. pledged a five-year, \$461 million bilateral development fund through the Millennium Challenge Corporation in order to develop this area, where more than 53% of the population lives in poverty. The grant was to complement CAFTA-DR and regional integration efforts.²⁸

While El Salvador's economy has fared better than the economies of other Central American nations, the country's growth rates have not been high enough to produce real improvements in the standards of living of its population. Furthermore, the dollarization of the country's economy in 2001 has raised the cost of living, while its primary benefits—lower interest rates and easier access to capital markets—have not resulted in an overall decline in poverty levels. On the contrary, between 1989 and 2004 poverty levels rose from 47% to 51%. More than one million people do not earn enough to take care of their families' basic needs.²⁹

²⁷See, UNDP, *Country Fact sheet: El Salvador, Human Development Report 2009: El Salvador*, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_SLV.html/.

²⁸ See Carlos Rosales, *Political Determinants of Salvadoran Strategic Culture*, Paper prepared for the Workshop, El Salvador's Strategic Culture, Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables, July 22, 2010.

²⁹ USAID, "El Salvador," 14 June 2005, www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/lac/sv.html.

With nearly half the population living in poverty, many Salvadorans have left their homeland to pursue opportunities elsewhere. The country's immigration rate is -3.27 per 1,000. The major continent of destination for Salvadorans is North America with 86.8% of immigrants living there.³⁰ The pattern of migration to the U.S. began in the late 1960s, after the Honduran destination was closed by the war, and peaked during the 12-year civil war of the 1980s and early 1990s and in the wake of several natural disasters.

In the face of a deepening public security crisis, lack of opportunities, and dim chances for a better life, one could argue that the "Salvadoran Dream" is to immigrate to the United States.³¹ There are already an estimated 2.5 million Salvadorans living in the U.S.³²

Migration has helped reduce rural unemployment and has infused countless households with extra income in the form of the remittances. It has also meant social disruptions and a dangerous dependency in many communities.

From a macroeconomic point of view the country's economy dependency on remittances is worrisome. Remittances constitute 18% of the GDP.

Polarized Political Environment

The Salvadoran ideological spectrum has traditionally been extremely polarized. Currently, the two main political parties represent opposing poles of the political spectrum.

At one end stands ARENA, a staunchly anti-communist and pro-business party. It was founded in 1981, soon after the onset of the civil war. It was created by a group of businessmen in response to the insurgency and the need to provide economic elites with legitimate political expression.

At the other end of the spectrum is the FMLN, the former Marxist-inspired guerrilla front turned political party dominated by survivors of the hard-line FPL and the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS). It is profoundly anti-American, a close ally of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, and an unabashed supporter of Castro's Cuba, the Colombian FARC, and the Spanish separatist group ETA.³³

³⁰ See, UNDP, *Country Fact sheet: El Salvador, Human Development Report 2009: El Salvador, Op.Cit.*

³¹ See, Rosales, "El sueño salvadoreño," *La Prensa Grafica*, 23 October 2009, pp. 34.

³² Salvadoran Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

http://www.rree.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=250&Itemid=338.

³³ A raid by the Colombian army on a FARC camp near the Colombia-Ecuador in late 2008 produced not only the death of the FARC's second-in-command, Raúl Reyes, but also a wealth of sensitive intelligence that included computer data and documents that evidenced the Colombian guerrilla's close ties to, and support from, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, El Salvador's FMLN,

After narrowly winning a contested presidential election in March 2009, Mauricio Funes, the candidate of the FMLN, was sworn in on June 1, 2009 as the first leftist elected leader and the fourth civilian president since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992.

Funes' victory put an end to twenty years of presidential rule by the right-wing ARENA party. As expected, Funes is facing serious difficulties ruling this deeply polarized society. But the biggest challenge to his authority does not come from ARENA, but from his own political party, given its leaders' sympathies towards Castro's Cuba and Hugo Chávez's "socialist and revolutionary" ideology.

Some of the most critical disagreements have included the country's stance on the July 2009 coup in neighboring Honduras. While the FMLN has echoed Hugo Chávez's fiery rhetoric and radicalism, Funes opted for a more judicious and pragmatic view. In fact, Funes is currently one of the Isthmus' leading voices in seeking international recognition of Porfirio Lobo as Honduras' legitimate president.³⁴

Another source of tension between Funes and the FMLN relates to foreign policy as well. While Funes has shown moderation and prudence courting Brazil's Lula da Silva and U.S. President Obama, the FMLN has publicly demanded the government join the *Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas* (ALBA) bloc—the Chávez-led regional alliance.³⁵ Funes has publicly rejected such an alliance, and in response FMLN party militants have organized street protests and public expressions of dissatisfaction against the president. Some have even threatened to declare the FMLN an opposition party.³⁶

It is fairly obvious that *La Alternancia*³⁷ is posing serious challenges to the democratic process. The Honduras coup of July 2009 seems to have inspired some hard-line sectors of the right and ARENA to hint at the viability of implementing the "Honduran Model"³⁸ in El Salvador. A recent visit to San Salvador by former de facto Honduran president Roberto Micheletti—at the invitation of sectors closely tied to ARENA—prompted President Funes to publicly chastise those "economic, political and military

Spain's ETA, and Castro's Cuba. See *El mundo de las FARC*, *Semana* 4 January 2009, <http://www.semana.com/noticias-nacion/mundo-farc/119209.aspx> (Quoted by Carlos Rosales).

³⁴ See, Rosales, *Primer año de Gobierno: Bien, pero...*, *Diario El Mundo*, 31 May 2010, pp. 17; Rosales, *Para mí, Funes pasa*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 16 May 2010, pp. 31; and, Rosales, *Sosteniendo el dique*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 8 September 2009, pp. 28.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ See, Sergio Arauz, *El Frente medita convertirse en partido de oposición*, *El Faro*, 2 May 2010, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201005/noticias/1616/>.

³⁷ As Salvadorans refer to the alternation in power.

³⁸ See, Carlos Martínez, *La derecha salvadoreña agasaja a Micheletti*, *El Faro*, 22 June 2010, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201006/noticias/1985/>, *El Faro*, Editorial: *Tensiones políticas y el verdadero problema*, 20 July 2010, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201007/opinion/2134/>.

sectors that justify coups and that publicly support leaders and practices that are outside a democratic system.”³⁹

Although most Salvadorans—68%—support democracy,⁴⁰ the country’s biggest political challenges include consolidating its democratic institutions, first and foremost political parties. Salvadoran political parties lack credibility; only 35.6% of Salvadorans have any confidence in them.⁴¹ They are deeply corrupt, and corrupt politicians are easy prey for drug money.⁴²

El Salvador’s insufficient economic growth further complicates a range of social problems, such as poverty, unemployment, and growing inequality. In 2008, El Salvador had a murder rate of 53 per 100,000 inhabitants, one of the highest in the world.⁴³ Violent crime, street gangs—or *maras*—drug trafficking, and the inability of the country’s justice system to curtail impunity are currently the most pressing challenges facing the Salvadoran government.⁴⁴ The constant deportation from the U.S. of Salvadorans convicted of crimes—including violent gang members—makes matters worse for an already overburdened public security force.⁴⁵

In addition to committing troops to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Salvadoran government also cooperates closely with the U.S. in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. Since 2005, El Salvador has hosted the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), which provides training to police, prosecutors, and other officials from Latin America.

El Salvador’s Air Force installation near the Comalapa Airport houses a monitoring facility for the surveillance of drug trafficking routes in the Pacific Ocean. The FBI and El Salvador’s National Civilian Police (PNC) jointly operate the Transnational Anti-Gang Unit, which addresses the growing problem of street gangs in both countries. The U.S. and Salvadoran governments are working jointly with Mexico and other Central American countries under the Merida Initiative to fight crime and drug trafficking.

³⁹ See, Sergio Arauz, *O se está con la democracia o con los golpistas*, *El Faro*, 20 July 2010, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201007/noticias/2130/>.

⁴⁰ See, Ricardo Córdova Macías, José Miguel Cruz and Mitchell A. Seligson, *Op.Cit.* p. 163.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴² Former Vice-President and current ARENA leader Ana Vilma de Escobar recently told *El Faro* in an interview that ARENA governments have engaged in buying off votes from deputies of other political parties in the Legislative Assembly. That assertion would set off a major political scandal in other countries, but seemingly, not in El Salvador. See, *ARENA compró decisiones en la Asamblea Legislativa*, <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201007/noticias/2075/>.

⁴³ See, The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: El Salvador*, May 2009.

⁴⁴ See, Edwin Segura, *Población reclama empleo*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 31 May 2010, <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/lpg-datos/121396-poblacion-reclama-empleo.html>.

⁴⁵ Last year alone, the U.S. deported 21,049 Salvadorans, 6,306 of whom had criminal convictions. So far this year, 4,400 of 10,476 deportees have had criminal convictions. See, Tara Bahrapour, *US and El Salvador agree to share criminal records of deportees*, *Washington Post*, 25 June 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/24/AR2010062406217.html>.

President Funes has already met with President Barack Obama on several occasions, and was successful lobbying for an extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for close to 220,000 Salvadorans living in the U.S. The situation could change however, if president Funes caves in to the strong pressure exerted by the FMLN, Venezuela, Cuba, and other members of the ALBA bloc to start looking to the south instead of northward. Moreover, if upcoming elections in El Salvador⁴⁶ tip the balance toward the hard-line version of the FMLN, given the current crisis being played out in ARENA, things could change indeed.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Since colonial times three elements have over determined the way El Salvador's elites understand their country's relationship with its neighbors and to the world: 1) the small size of the territory; 2) its extreme vulnerability to natural disasters; and 3) the high density of the population. Salvadoran armed forces fought their neighbors in numerous armed conflicts immediately after independence from Spain and following the breakdown of the Central American Federation. The last intra Central American war was the so-called "Soccer War" in 1969. Nevertheless, for Salvadoran elites the main threats to their security have not been external, in their eyes, the main threats have come from within: natural disasters that threatened all and more directly aimed at them as ruling class, the menace posed by the "peasant masses." Until 1932 the masses were basically rural, constituted by Indian peasants, after the uprising the ethnic component of the threat was buried.

Historically two dates are cited by Salvadoran historians as the key points of discontinuity in the country's independent history: 1932, the year of the peasant insurrection in the Western highlands and following massacre and 1992, the signing of the Peace Accords putting an end to the bloody 12 year civil war. What about the war with Honduras? As we have tried to show, the 100 hours was a war against Honduras insofar as the Honduran elites were menacing the status quo in El Salvador by massively deporting Salvadoran peasants. The Salvadoran military clearly demonstrated that they were ready to use force and the war propaganda contributed to the creation of a "Honduran enemy" that all Salvadoran society, regardless of social classes, could abhor.

After the 1932 insurrection, with the blessing of the economic ruling elites, the armed forces established a political regime that put them at the epicenter of political power. With variants, the politico-military

⁴⁶ Municipal and congressional elections will be held in 2012, and presidential elections in 2014.

⁴⁷ For some analyses on the current crisis in ARENA, see, Rosales, *La importancia de 2012*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 8 August 2010, pp. 25; Rosales, *Las crisis en ARENA*. *Diario El Mundo*, 20 July 2010, pp. 14; Rosales, *ARENA debe reinventarse, ¡ya!* *La Prensa Gráfica*, 9 May 2010, pp. 53; Rosales, *Con la mesa limpia*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 9 January 2010, pp. 31; Rosales, *La derecha postrada*, *La Prensa Gráfica*, 4 December 2009, pp. 41; Rosales, *¿Crisis final?* *Diario El Mundo*, 22 October 2009, pp. 13.

regime lasted until 1992. However, it is important to remember that El Salvador had been the first Central American country to professionalize its armed forces, and until 1992, these had as their mission the defense of the territory and domestic public order. Additionally, a tradition of complementing soldiers with militiamen was present throughout the years.

Despite their clear understanding of the challenges posed by the high density of the country's population the Salvadoran economic elites chose development strategies that did not really address the problem. Economic growth based on agricultural exports aggravated the problem of land property concentration that had resulted from the land privatization laws needed for coffee cultivation at the end of the 19th century. The first Agrarian Reform would take place only a hundred years later. The import substitution and regional integration strategy put in place in the 1960's fell short of providing the economic dynamism needed to absorb the population growth. Migration became a useful safety valve. The traditional socio economic inequality was deepened by the failure to organize an economy capable of providing for all which in turn produced political exclusion and a violent polity. Anticommunism exacerbated the contradictions and heightened the tensions. Inequality, exclusion and ideological polarization burst into widespread violence and ultimately civil war in the last quarter of the last century.

The Peace Accords that finally put an end to armed conflict covered a wide range of subjects typically addressed in conflict resolution: disarmament and demobilization of former combatants, acknowledgement of war responsibilities, and new rules of the game for political competition. In the case of El Salvador, one of the most important new rules was the redefinition of the country's armed forces' mission and size and the creation of a civilian police.

Eighteen years have passed since the signing of the peace accords and most observers point out to a change of culture among Salvadoran military as one of the big achievements of Salvadoran society in recent times. The increasing presence of soldiers on the streets to combat crime might tempt the military to abandon the barracks and jeopardize what is considered one of the main accomplishments of the accords.

Will the armed forces redefine their mission including increased responsibilities concerning public order? Will they be tempted to exert a more visible political role? Will the military succumb to the allures of easy money that accompanies drug trafficking?

Time will tell.

About the Author

Cristina Eguizábal is the director of the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University. Before moving to Miami and joining FIU, she served as a program officer at the Ford Foundation, Mexico City office, working on Peace and Social Justice Issues. Her portfolio includes grants on peace, security and regional cooperation in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Western Hemisphere in general. From 1995- 2003 she was a member of the Human Rights and International Cooperation unit at the Ford Foundation in New York. She has held research and teaching positions at the University of Costa Rica, University of Bordeaux, University of Miami, and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, and has served as advisor for regional projects at the Confederacy of Central American Universities, the Central American Institute for Public Administration, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations University (UNU). In Costa Rica, she was a senior fellow at the Center for Peace and Reconciliation at the Arias Foundation working on issues of negotiations, elections, civil military relations, international cooperation and human rights. Dr. Eguizábal is a member of the editorial board of *Foreign Affairs en Español*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and the Mexican Council on International Affairs (COMEXI). She holds a Ph.D. in Latin American Studies from the University of Paris-Sorbonne-Nouvelle.

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ARC Associate Director

STRATEGIC CULTURE STUDY FACILITATORS

Brian Fonseca (Fonsecab@fiu.edu)
Moisés Caballero (Moises.caballero@fiu.edu)

GRADUATE & UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Michael Fernandez	Jessica Pino	Carlos Sarmiento
Juan Muskus	Yuliet Llanes	Pamela Pamela

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