

# **Alarms and Responses: A Comparative Study of Contemporary International Efforts to Anticipate and Prevent Violent Conflicts. The Case of El Salvador**

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The recent experience of El Salvador -- that is, the causes of its civil war and the war's subsequent resolution through a United Nations-sponsored peace agreement -- is instructive for policymakers seeking to prevent similar conflicts for several reasons. First, El Salvador's authoritarian regime represents a case of state failure and subsequent armed opposition that could have been predicted. Second, both prior to the outbreak of war and during the conflict itself, there are several identifiable conjunctures in which timely and appropriate international intervention could have either prevented conflict or lessened its intensity and duration. Finally, the negotiations themselves, meaning their process, content and implementation, represent a watershed in peace-making and peace-building, lending valuable lessons for the resolution of conflict elsewhere. Thus knowledge of the Salvadoran case is essential for those seeking to anticipate, prevent or end civil wars.

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## **Exclusionary Development, Environmental Destruction and State Failure: The Root Causes of War**

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Simply stated, the root causes of El Salvador's civil war (1979-1992) lie in the combination of its past agrarian export development model and its reactionary despotic political regime. As has been well documented elsewhere (Williams 1986, Barry 1987, Brockett 1988, Bulmer-Thomas 1987), the expansion of agricultural exports of coffee and later cotton and beef was accompanied by state intervention to concentrate the best agricultural land into the hands of a few producers (the “Fourteen Families”). In a process which began over a century ago and which was repeatedly characterized by the repression of peasants and Indians disputing the seizure of their lands, El Salvador's agrarian system became distinguished by a dual dynamic. On the one hand, a small group of landowners increasingly controlled food-producing resources; a small group of landowners. On the other hand, and a growing number of farms were too small to support a single

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family, the rural landless population soared to approximately 60 percent of the population prior to the outbreak of the war, and malnutrition, infant mortality and widespread rural poverty worsened.

As early as the aftermath of the "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969, knowledgeable observers were already warning that this exclusionary economic model was closing the opportunities for peaceful agrarian transformation and laying the basis for a major popular uprising (Duram 1979,167). By 1979, as per capita basic food croplands shrunk to a mere 8 percent of an hectare (compared to 42 percent in neighboring Honduras), repression and rural conflict began to spiral out of control (Barry 1987, 7). Even though the amount of arable land had actually increased, there was simply not enough land available to grow food for the majority of the population. This vicious cycle of an open agricultural export economy, land concentration, and immiseration was exacerbated by deforestation, the extensive use of chemical pesticides, and other modern farming techniques that ultimately displaced peasants from the land (Painter and Durham 1995).

Taken alone, this exclusionary development model might only have produced rural out migration and a low-level conflict of conflict. But skewed development was combined with an extreme form of repressive authoritarian rule that made civil war very likely. Following a major massacre of peasants in 1931, a military regime, acting in partnership with landlords, suppressed virtually all forms of opposition, defended a coercive and repressive system of labor, and established a sophisticated military protection racket. When the military blocked efforts at democratization through state violence, their actions radicalized popular movements and made armed resistance virtually inevitable (Baloyra Herp 1983, Karl 1985). In 1979, the country's main guerrilla groups and opposition political parties forged a common front, the FDR-FMLN, and by 1980, as repression reached record levels, they mounted a full-scale revolution. When the United States intervened heavily on the side of the Salvadoran government, the civil war in El Salvador became one of the central conflicts of the Cold War.

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## **Failed Opportunities for Conflict Resolution**

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Successful negotiations to end the civil war in El Salvador did not begin until 1990, after more than a decade of war. But there were a number of "lost opportunities" which could have either averted or shortened the conflict prior to that time. For those seeking to develop an early alarm system, these moments are important to identify.

The first occurred during El Salvador's presidential election in 1972. This pitted the progressive alliance of a Christian Democrat (Jose Napoleon Duarte) and a member of the socialist leaning Revolutionary National Movement (Guillermo Ungo) against the candidate of the military (Colonel Arturo Molina), and it resulted in the victory by obvious fraud of the latter. The chilling message this sent to civilian reformers was strongly reinforced by the failure of international actors, especially the United States, to denounce the military and to insist upon the respect for free and fair elections. For moderates who had sought change at the ballot box, the only alternative seemed to be armed struggle.

A second missed opportunity to avert war occurred in 1979 when a civil-military junta removed the hardline military president (Carlos Humberto Romero) and created some space for a

more peaceful process of change. Despite clear evidence of rising brutality from the right, including the murders of leftist political leaders, thousands of peasants and four U.S. nuns, the Carter administration -- then torn between supporting reform that included communists and socialists or the authoritarianism of the status quo -- resumed military aid to the Salvadoran government. Without external pressure supporting a process of democratization and with all signals pointing to the willingness of the United States to finance one side, this fragile civil-military coalition, for reform was quickly replaced by hardliners who plunged the- country into war.

Just as opportunities to avert war were lost, the possibilities for shortening or circumscribing the conflict were also squandered. Instead, the intransigence of domestic actors combined with the actions of some international actors, primarily the United States, both widened and deepened the violence. When a number of Latin American countries led by Mexico and Venezuela and later the Contadora countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama) sought to broker negotiations between the government and the opposition as early as 1982, the Reagan administration blocked any prospects of a settlement and instead insisted on holding elections in the midst of war while quadrupling military aid to the government (Karl 1986a).

Later, the U.S. either undercut or gave lukewarm verbal support to peace initiatives by Salvadoran President Duarte in 1984 and 1986, and it only reluctantly lent support to Costa Rican President Arias, peace initiative in 1987 at Esquipulas when there was no other alternative (Karl 1985, 1986b). The combination of domestic intransigence, the lack of U.S. support for negotiations, and its willingness to provide substantial financing for the government prolonged the war. This led to continual escalations and counter-escalations, resulting in over 75,000 dead, at least one million (out of a population of only five million) displaced people, and the destruction of the economy.

## **Conditions for Reaching a Settlement**

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Nonetheless, peace finally came in 1992. The peace agreement signed on the first day of that year represented a genuine compromise: In exchange for the left's renunciation of its aspiration to seize power by force and impose radical reforms, the right relinquished its historical control of the state, including all the institutions of violence, as well as its violent opposition to change. This compromise was made possible by a combination of several factors: 1) a military/political stalemate; 2) increased flexibility on both sides brought about by momentous events in El Salvador and the world;- 3) a decisive shift in U.S. foreign policy away from the military-based strategy of the Reagan years toward unequivocal support for a negotiated settlement and a decision by the Soviet Union to halt arms shipments to neighboring Nicaragua's Sandinista government; and 4) the presence of a respected neutral arbiter in the United Nations.

The single most important condition for an agreement was the existence of a very costly stalemate, which consisted of a set of mutually reinforcing vetoes (Karl 1985, 1992). In El Salvador the FNLN demonstrated that it was too strong to be defeated by the Salvadoran military alone or excluded from the consolidation of a new order. In the United States the Reagan administration sought the military defeat of the armed opposition but could not convince Congress either to condone an open alliance with the violent ultraright or intervention by U.S. troops. This produced a gridlock that prevented the first preferences of the combatants on each side for either an authoritarian or a revolutionary outcome. This stalemate took its toll, not only in the dead and

displaced mentioned above but also in the economy. By 1989, most productive activities had come to a halt, per capita gross domestic product had plunged to its 1975 level, and real minimum wages had fallen to one third of their 1980 level. Not surprisingly given this level of devastation, by 1987 an overwhelmingly 83 percent of the population supported an end to the war through a negotiated settlement.

In the context of this stalemate, key events pushed both sides in El Salvador to moderate previously inflexible ideological positions. For different reasons, the fall of the Berlin wall, a November 1989 military offensive by the FMLN in San Salvador, the worldwide reaction to the murder of six Jesuit priests by the Salvadoran military, the U.S. invasion of Panama, and the victory of Violetta Chamorro in neighboring Nicaragua encouraged actors on all sides to rethink long-held positions. Taken together, these events forced the right in both countries to realize that the defense of the status quo was no longer possible and the left to understand that a prolonged struggle was less desirable than a political solution.

But the peace process certainly would not have advanced as far as it did without the involvement of third parties, especially the United Nations and the "Friends of the Secretary General" (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Spain), in the negotiation and subsequent implementation of the accords. External actors were instrumental in convincing both sides to negotiate, and they helped to mediate the bargaining process itself, shaped elements of the agreements, imposed deadlines, offered side payments, and provided critical resources at key turning points which helped to de-escalate the conflict. For example, when fundamental disagreement over constitutional reform threatened to deadlock talks, the combined influence of the United Nations, the European Community, the Group of Friends, the five Central American presidents, the U.S. Congress, and the Bush administration eventually guaranteed passage of key amendments to the 1983 Constitution and put the talks back on track. This breakthrough proved to be the first and, ultimately, the most significant of the negotiating process.

The role of the United Nations through the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) was fundamental. The United Nations was chosen to be the mediator because it could "neutralize" both the United States and the Soviet Union, building on their joint interest in defusing regional conflicts (Stanford Workshop). Many of the specific proposals about the FMLN's reintegration into Salvadoran society, the "cleansing" of the armed forces, and the establishment of a Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ) to monitor and verify compliance came directly from the UN mediator. Once a settlement was reached, United Nations intervention proved essential for keeping the process on track when implementation was threatened by recalcitrant behavior or outright violations (Karl 1992). For example, the UN helped to ensure that major problems around the entry of former members of the armed forces into the new national Civilian Police and the implementation of the land reform provisions did not become serious enough to derail the peace process. Other aspects of ONUSAL activity included the verification of the ceasefire, the demobilization of forces by both sides, the improvement and subsequent observation of voter registration, the deployment of international observers during the electoral campaign, and the monitoring of human rights.

The growing role of the United Nations meant that ONUSAL's mandate was constantly expanded and redefined, establishing a model for other peace processes. In El Salvador for the first time, the United Nations went beyond traditional peacekeeping, setting the stage for a new role in peacemaking and peace building around the world. No longer simply "blue helmets", the United Nations became deeply involved with political, judicial, economic and social reform inside the country. While this led some to question whether this deep insertion into the internal affairs of

another country was ultimately healthy or whether it might foster dependency relationships, and it often provoked other criticisms,<sup>1</sup> without ONUSAL's deep involvement in El Salvador's domestic affairs the peace agreements might never have been signed, and they surely would have become unstuck in the implementation process.

The role of regional powers was also important, first through Contadora (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama) and later through Esquipulas II (all Central American countries). Esquipulas II set the stage for an internal liberalization from 1987-1989 and established the broad framework for negotiating the end to all three major conflicts in Central America -- Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. In essence, all Central American countries agreed to democratize their polities, promote a national dialogue to bring about ceasefires, and respect human rights in return for the end of insurrectional movements.<sup>2</sup>

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## The Peace Accords

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Formal peace talks began on April 4, 1990 in Geneva under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Both sides quickly established a two-phased process: negotiations first on broad-ranging political issues (including human rights, the armed forces, the electoral system, constitutional reform, socioeconomic reforms and the UN's role in verification), then on a ceasefire. This represented an important change in the government's negotiating stance since it had previously insisted upon a ceasefire prior to negotiating reforms, and it permitted the negotiations to move forward. Meetings in Geneva and Caracas also established the "Group of Friends" mentioned earlier and an *Interpartidaria*, which incorporated the country's nine political parties and could be called on to review electoral and judicial reforms.

These first meetings were deceptively easy, masking the great initial distance between the two sides. The government wanted a ceasefire that would lead to the demobilization of the FMLN, refused to consider any type of interim government prior to the presidential elections in 1994, and insisted on the maintenance of the 1983 Constitution which made adopting economic or political reforms very difficult. The FMLN, to the contrary, sought far-ranging changes in El Salvador's political and military institutions as well as broad social and economic reforms. Above all, the FMLN wanted reform of the armed forces, including the removal of officers involved in human rights abuses, the separation of the three security forces the National Guard, Treasury Police and National Police from the military command structure, an abolished or reduced army, and integration of some rebel troops in whatever force remained. It also demanded formation of a new police force, judicial reforms that would end impunity and provide guarantees of human rights and civil liberties, important changes in the electoral system, including the registration of nearly three million eligible voters, and international verification teams to oversee the agreement (Karl 1992).

From June 1990 to April 1991 talks deadlocked over the issue that had thwarted past efforts at negotiations: reform of the armed forces. During this period the army eventually agreed to reduce its size, transfer supervision of the police to the Ministry of the Interior, and dismantle its widely feared civil defense patrols. But it flatly refused to permit a purge of the officer corps of egregious human rights violators, discuss the issue of military impunity, or integrate its forces with those of the FMLN.

Talks were sustained in the meantime by a series of smaller agreements. A partial accord on human rights was reached in July 1990 in San Jose, Costa Rica, which established a UN human rights verification mission in El Salvador to investigate abuses and defend civil liberties. In September, an electoral agreement was signed between all political parties, including the three parties of the left that had previously been unable to participate in elections. In December, the Secretary General established ONUSAL, the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador. In March 1991, a preliminary mission consisting of human rights experts and technical advisers was sent to El Salvador, and in May, in a decision unprecedented in the history of UN peacekeeping, a human rights observer mission was established before a ceasefire went into effect. This had a major effect on instilling confidence in the process and mitigating violence.

The first major breakthrough in the negotiating process (and perhaps the most significant) did not come until April 1991, when the ARENA dominated National Assembly voted to modify 47 articles of the 1983 constitution dealing with the subordination of the armed forces to civilian authority, the creation of a new police force, and the electoral and judicial system. The result of significant international pressure, including the halving of U.S. aid, this was the first time a Salvadoran constitution had ever been amended. The amendments limited the scope and power of the armed forces, restricted their mission to the defense of El Salvador's borders rather than the maintenance of public order, narrowed the jurisdiction of military courts and created a national police force under civilian rather than military control. The accord also changed the manner of selecting Supreme Court justices, established an electoral tribunal, gave political parties a greater voice in electoral organization and registration, and established a "Truth Commission" to investigate the most serious human rights abuses of the war.<sup>3</sup>

Critical issues like the ceasefire and the purging of the officer corps remained on the table, however, and talks deadlocked once again after the April accords. Government representatives -- assailed by the military's sense that they were "surrendering everything" without in return securing the disarming of the FMLN -- refused to accept further changes in the armed forces prior to a ceasefire and rejected any plan based on integrating rebel forces into the military. The FMLN would not agree to a ceasefire without a prior final agreement on military reform or sufficient guarantees for its own safety. In New York in September 1991, U.N proposals to overcome this impasse (once again backed by concerted international pressure) established an Ad Hoc Commission to purge the armed forces of rights violators, integrated the FMLN into the new national police, and accelerated the implementation of land reform. These New York accords thus became the second major breakthrough of the talks, and agreement on other subsequent issues moved rapidly throughout the fall, culminating in the signing of a preliminary accord at midnight on December 31, 1991 -- a dramatic farewell gift to outgoing UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar.

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## **Implementing Peace**

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The peace agreement, known as the Chapultepec Accords, represented a genuine compromise between the right and the left. For the first time in Salvadoran history, comprehensive reforms to establish a full-fledged democracy were negotiated across the entire political spectrum.

But their implementation was no easy task. Perhaps the highpoint of implementation was the ceasefire, which some have called the most successful part of the entire peace process. ONUSAL's military contingent oversaw the separation of forces and their concentration into demobilization sites, the inventories of weapons and personnel, and the disbanding of the Treasury Police and the National Guard – all of which took place with very few hitches.

But in the areas of electoral reform, human rights, law and order, and land reform, difficulties were far more apparent. In particular, the Truth Commission report, which attributed 97 percent of human rights violations to the government and the remaining 3 percent to the FMLN, was a major source of controversy. Progress in implementing its recommendations, especially the dismissal of key officers of the armed forces and the reform of the Supreme Court, was especially slow and, in some cases, never occurred. The slow progress of the land transfer program was also central sources of tension.<sup>4</sup> While important improvements in the electoral process took place, there were key problems in the scheduling and timing of various reforms, the registration process, the increase of human rights abuses prior to elections, and the disappointing turnout (Vickers and Spence 1994).

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## **Conclusion**

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The Salvadoran peace process can only be deemed a success, notwithstanding certain problems along the way. Not only did the Chapultepec Accords end the war and significantly lower the level of human rights abuses in that country, they also brought about far-reaching reform in civil-military relations and democratization. While the accords could have been strengthened by addressing the military's control of key state institutions, the issue of military training, and the systematic breakup of paramilitary groups, the reform of the military is certainly its key achievement. The most serious weaknesses are evident in the lack of specificity about the reform of the judicial system and the land for arms exchange to ex-combatants. But it is important to note that the accords are the beginning, and not the end, of a new political process. While the Salvadoran peace agreement has put this country on a path to democratization and peace, there is little question that the failure in the future to establish the rule of law or to develop a more equitable and less exclusionary economic development model could once again plunge Central America's smallest country into a new round of violence.

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## Chronology

- 1821 Independence from Spain
- 1823 United Provinces of Central America declare independence from Mexico.
- 1847 El Salvador declared a republic.
- 1879 Commercial lands that had been used by peasants to grow food for their own consumption are expropriated by government decree and consolidated into large farms to grow coffee. "Fourteen families," the core of the emerging oligarchy, control export, crops.
- 1930 Formation of Salvadoran Communist Party.
- 1931 After 80,000 workers march on San Salvador, the military deposes the elected government, and the oligarchy gives the mandate to rule to the military.
- 1932 The military refuses to let elected members of the Communist Party take the positions they have won in municipal and legislative elections. Communist leader Farabundo Marti called for uprisings throughout the country. The army begins La Matanza, killing 30,000 peasants and eventually over 4 percent of the population. The PCS is liquidated and the indigenous population is forced to abandon its language, dress and culture.
- 1931-44 General Martinez rules and prohibits industrialization.
- 1944 The military continues to rule after deposing Martinez but permits economic modernization. Military leaders are repeatedly elected through fraud.
- 1961 The Central American Common Market is formed.
- 1962-79 The military forms the Party of National Conciliation (PCN) which rules during this period. Opposition parties form, especially the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), headed by Jose Napoleon Duarte, and the National Revolutionary Movement (MM), led by Guillermo Ungo.
- 1969 War breaks out between Honduras and El Salvador, leading to the expulsion of Salvadorans from Honduras. This put increasing pressures on the land.
- 1972 The military commits fraud to deny the electoral victory of Duarte, sending the message that reform through elections will not work.
- 1972-75 Popular armed movements, especially the Popular Liberation Force (FPL), the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the National Resistance (RN).

- 1975-80 Popular mass movements form using civil disobedience and protests.
- 1977-79 Major escalation of government terror under Colonel Molina.
- 1979 October: Coup by progressive military officers forms first revolutionary junta. civilians join the junta, but right wing officers move against it.
- 1980 January: A second junta is constituted, again with both military and civilian members. The popular organizations unite into the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses (CRM).
- February: Archbishop Romero demands that the U.S. stop military aid to El Salvador.  
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- March: Civilian members of the junta resign to denounce military repression. A third junta announces a land reform program under the direction of the U.S. State Department. Archbishop Romero denounces these reforms as "bathed in blood" and calls on military personnel to disobey their commanders. Archbishop Romero is assassinated.
- April: The Carter Administration approves \$5.7 in military aid to El Salvador. The Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) is formed -- a broad coalition of the CRM, the Christian Democrat dissidents, the social democratic party, the trade unions, church people and professionals, students etc. This is the largest movement in El Salvador's history.
- May: 600 peasants fleeing rural repression massacred at the Sumpul River by Salvadoran troops.
- June: Three day general strike is successful. Army occupies National University, killing 50.
- August: Government bombs sections of San Salvador, killing 200.  
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- September: U.S. sends \$20 million in economic aid, to make a total of \$90 million for 1980.  
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- October: Army begins military offensive in Morazan region, creating 24,000 refugees and killing 3,000.
- November: The Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation is formed as the military arm of the FDR. It unites five major guerrilla groups. Six civilian leaders of the FDR are assassinated by security forces.

December: Four churchwomen assassinated by the National Guard. The U.S. suspends military and economic aid. The third junta dissolves. Fourth junta formed with Duarte at head. U.S. reinstates aid. First FMLN attack on four towns.

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1981 January: FMLN general offensive begins. US sends an emergency package of military assistance to El Salvador.

February: The FDR calls for a dialogue to end the violence. The Reagan administration drops its insistence on an investigation of the churchwomen's death as a condition for aid. State Department releases a White Paper on Communism in El Salvador, which frames the Cold War justification for intervention and is later discredited by the Wall Street Journal.

April: Congress demands certification prior to aid to El Salvador.

June: Efforts to mediate an end to the war by the Socialist International fail when the PDC/military junta refuses to negotiate.

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August: A joint French/Mexican declaration gives official recognition to the Salvadoran opposition as a representative political force.

1982 April: Although Roberto D'Aubuisson (leader of right wing ARENA party and founder of death squads) is chosen provisional president by the newly elected Constituent Assembly, the U.S. intervenes to keep him from taking office.

May: The constituent Assembly suspends key provisions of the land reform.

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November: Newsweek reveals the “secret war” against neighboring Nicaragua by the “contras.”

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1983 April: Reagan takes his Central America policy to a joint session of Congress (one of the few times in history that this has occurred).

June: 100 U.S. military advisers begin training Salvadoran military.

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November: Reagan certifies progress in human rights.

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December: Largest and most successful attack of guerrilla army at the military base at 91 Paraiso.

1984 March: Duarte wins presidential elections. Left cannot and does not participate in elections.

October: Duarte offers dialogue with FDR/FMLN at La Palma.

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November: Second meeting at Ayagualo. Negotiations fail.

1985 March: Christian Democrats win upset victory in elections for the Constituent Assembly.

April-May: A guerrilla faction burns municipal offices and kidnaps and kills mayors.

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June: guerrilla offensive. Slaying of U.S. Marines in cafe.

September: Duarte's daughter kidnapped by guerrillas.

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October: Huge strikes by civil servants. Duarte's daughter released.

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November: Guerrillas offer peace plan.

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1986 January: Archbishop Rivera y Damas condemns Salvadoran military for repression.

April: Low level exploratory talks in Peru to renew negotiations.

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July: Rebel peace proposal offered.

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September: Talks planned for Sesori fail due to government troops surrounding the town.

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October: Major earthquake in San Salvador. State of emergency declared. Rebels declare unilateral truce which is rejected by the army.

- 1987 Esquipulas agreement negotiated which leads to some liberalization in El Salvador throughout the year.
- 1988 Economy in shambles from the war, and pressure for negotiations grows. Rebel trip to the soviet bloc and Latin America encounters strong pressures for negotiations. At the end of the year, ARENA wins the presidency with only 25% of eligible voters participating in elections
- 1989 January: Rebels drop insistence on power-sharing, which was a key obstacle to negotiations. ARENA president Cristiani responds to rebel initiative in his inaugural address by calling for immediate and unconditional dialogue. Throughout the year the army makes clear that it will not consider military reforms. Political assassinations occur on both the left and the right.
- October: Army bombs the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers Union (FENASTRAS), torpedoing talks in Mexico and Costa Rica.  
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- November: FMLN launches an offensive in San Salvador, including its wealthiest areas. Army murders six Jesuit priests
- December: U.S invades Panama. Rebels request a greater UN role in the peace process and give assurances that they will abide by a settlement. Cristiani meets with Costa Rican former president Oscar Arias and US officials from the new Bush administration, who urge him to negotiate. Central American presidents formally invite the UN to mediate in the region.
- 1990 February: Victory of Violetta Barrios de Chamorro in Nicaragua. The new Bush administration changes military-based policy towards one that favors negotiations.
- April: Negotiating meeting in Geneva.  
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- May: Negotiations in Caracas. Formation of Group of Friends to lend assistance to both sides.  
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- June: Talks in Mexico deadlock over the reform of the armed forces.
- July: Partial accords reached on human rights, establishing a UN verification mission in El Salvador to investigate abuses and defend civil liberties.  
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- August: Rebels call for disbanding the armed forces with the simultaneous dissolution of the FMLN army.

September: Electoral agreement is signed. Failure to meet a ceasefire deadline of September 15. Talks flounder.

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October: In seventh session in Mexico City, both sides request a greater role for the UN, changing it from facilitator to a mediator. U.S. cuts military aid by 50\* and threatens to cut the rest if the murderers of the Jesuit priests are not brought to justice.

December: The Secretary General establishes ONUSAL, the United Nations Observer Mission.

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1991

U.S. restores some aid after the FMLN down a helicopter, killing three U.S. military. This gives impression that it is not backing negotiations and the talks derail.

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April-May: UN establishes observer mission prior to a ceasefire, the first time in its history. Talks in Mexico city back on track and both sides agree to 47 specific constitutional amendments for specific reforms, including reform of the armed forces. The Constitution is amended by an ARENA dominated National Assembly.

July: ONUSAL launched.

August: U.S. Congress demonstrates that it has support to cut off all aid to El Salvador. U.S.-Soviet Summit gives strong support to negotiations.

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September: The New York Accords create an Ad Hoc Commission to evaluate members of the armed forces on the basis of their human rights records. Agreement to integrate FMX into a new national police force. Rebels drop demand to integrate the armed forces. Creation of a broadly representative national Commission for the consolidation of Peace (COPAZ).

November: FMA announces unilateral cessation of offensive operations.

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December: Truth Commission established. FMLN introduces new demands on land. FMLN agrees to ceasefire talks Preliminary accords signed at midnight on December 31, the last day of Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in office.

1992

El Salvador Peace Agreement was signed at Chapultepec Palace in Mexico City. Ceasefire and implementation agreements start.

April: Registration of all Civil Defense Units.

May: Ad Hoc Commission reviews the records of military officers to recommend transfer or dismissal. Civil Defense units disarmed.

June: Concentration of all FMIX arms and military equipment in designated areas under UN supervision. Abolition of the National Guard and Treasury Police. Civil Defense Units Disbanded.

July: First 20% of FMIX forces demobilized. The Government begins programs to facilitate the reintegration of former FMLN combatants.

August: Demobilization of some of the Rapid Deployment Infantry Brigades of the armed forces September: Training for a new police force begins. Second 20% of FMLN demobilized.

October: Third 20% of FMLN demobilized.

November: President reports on administrative action taken to implement Ad-Hoc Commission recommendations.

December: Government grants licenses to FMLN mass media. FMLN legalized as a political party. Final demobilization of the FMLN. Legal reforms of the electoral system.

1993 Beginning of reform of the judiciary. Land tenure in conflictive zones begin to be legalized, Final demobilization of the FMLN. Final demobilization of the Rapid Deployment Infantry Brigades. Truth Commission submits report. Beginning of registration of voters and electoral campaign.

1994 First presidential elections in El Salvador that represent a broad left-right spectrum result in an ARENA victory, with the FNLN establishing itself as a second force. Elections preceded by new killings of senior FNLN members.

1997 Municipal and legislative elections represent FMLK victory, especially in the city of San Salvador.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations was also criticized for its performance on human rights, especially for failing to distinguish between state violations of rights and common crime violations (Holiday and Stanley 1993, 430), and for its failure to use its moral authority to overcome serious violations in the registration and electoral process (Spence and Vickers 1994).

<sup>2</sup> The Esquipulas II agreements were signed by the presidents of the five Central American nations on August 7, 1987. To monitor progress on their objectives, an International Verification and Follow-up Commission was set up, composed of the foreign ministers of the Contadora and Support Groups and the Central American countries and the Secretaries-General of the UN and the OAS.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission of Truth was established through the Mexican Agreements of April 27, 1991, and it was charged with investigating serious acts of violence that had occurred since 1980. The Commission received 22,000 complaints of human rights violence, and over 7,000 were investigated by three international jurists. Their report, From Madness-to-Hope, is considered a model of reporting of this sort.

<sup>4</sup> The discovery of secret arms caches by one faction of the FMLN also added to tensions, although these were relatively short-lived.