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EL SALVADOR'S NEGOTIATED REVOLUTION

The war in El Salvador is over. On January 16, 1992, in Mexico City's ornate Chapultepec Castle the government of President Alfredo Cristiani and the rebel Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) formally signed a comprehensive peace treaty, putting an end to 12 years of conflict.

As 1992 began, the scene of America's most prolonged military involvement since Vietnam presented images unimaginable just a few months before. In Mexico City, after unexpectedly signing the peace agreement in person, President Cristiani strode across the podium to shake hands with all five FMLN commanders as participants on both sides cried openly. In El Salvador a sea of FMLN flags filled San Salvador's Civic Plaza in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral, where the army once massacred political dissidents; the cathedral itself was draped with an enormous banner of the assassinated Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. A ceremony held to observe the commencement of the formal ceasefire was especially poignant: army officers and rebel commanders stood together at attention to sing the Salvadoran anthem on a dais decorated with the flags of El Salvador, the ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and the FMLN. The rival commandants then accompanied President Cristiani to light an eternal flame in commemoration of the more than 75,000 Salvadorans who died in the tiny country's war.

Such high emotion has been accompanied by progress on implementing the accords that, among other reforms, would drastically reduce the army, demobilize the guerrillas, dismantle the repressive security apparatus, create a new police force and, for the first time, allow all Salvadorans to participate openly in the political life of their nation. Already, in advance of an expected "purge" of human rights violators, the Salvadoran armed forces have reassigned two dozen ranking officers, including several linked to the November 1989 murders of

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six Jesuit priests. The National Assembly has passed an amnesty paving the way for the return of thousands of FMLN combatants, but leaving the door open to try human rights violators on both sides. Rival troops have been confined to areas under U.N. supervision, the army is being trimmed and the Cristiani government has announced a large-scale plan for reconstruction.

But ending the war does not necessarily mean winning the peace. Reactionaries and revanchists remain, key issues have been postponed rather than resolved, and fear and uncertainty can be expected to persist, at least until El Salvador's March 1994 presidential elections. What matters now is that each side gradually moderate the demands of its followers, marginalize extremists and continue the process of compromise that has brought them this far.

Despite the difficulties lying ahead, the Salvadoran accord is a watershed. It represents a genuine compromise: the left renouncing its aspiration to seize the state by force and impose radical economic reforms; the right relinquishing its historical control and violent opposition to change. Such compromise was made possible by a combination of several factors: a military stalemate; increased flexibility on both sides brought about by momentous events in El Salvador and the world; and the presence of a respected neutral arbiter in the United Nations.

These factors also influenced the Bush administration and Congress. The war's end was in part made possible by a gradual yet decisive shift in U.S foreign policy—away from the military-based strategy of the Reagan years toward unequivocal support for a negotiated solution.

II

"We are involved in a war and somebody has to win," wrote ultrarightist Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa in 1987. "I never heard of a war that was a draw." But as early as 1984, despite confident predictions from commanders on both sides of impending victory, the war in El Salvador was precisely that—a draw.

This stalemate consisted of a set of mutually reinforcing vetoes.[1] The Reagan administration was committed to the defeat of a communist revolution on its watch, which ruled out a military victory for the FMLN. Congress, however, refused to condone either an open alliance with the violent ultraright or intervention by U.S. troops, which ruled out both the full restoration of the old Salvadoran regime and the FMLN's total defeat. Finally the FMLN demonstrated that it was too strong to be defeated by the Salvadoran military alone or excluded from the consolidation of a new order. In sum El Salvador faced gridlock in a set of international and domestic circumstances that prevented either an authoritarian or a revolutionary outcome.

These interlocking vetoes took time to construct. When rightist officers attempted to block land and other reforms by

taking control of a progressive military coup in October 1979, they were confident they could determine the shape of El Salvador's future polity, as they had in the past. In attempting to exclude popular movements on the left from political participation, they unleashed one of the most ferocious repressions in Latin American history.

But the right failed to count on the ability of the opposition to form a viable army of its own and win widespread international support. In October 1980 a coalition of five armed communist revolutionary groups formed the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. Three months later it was strong enough to launch a "final offensive" that, though unsuccessful, was the first real demonstration of its military strength. In partnership with civilian allies, it also succeeded in establishing itself as "a representative political force" in the eyes of Mexico and France, which called for negotiations between the two sides as early as 1981. By 1983 the rebels were actually winning the war.

The Reagan administration weighed in heavily. It increased military aid already granted by President Carter and sought to shift U.S. support from the centrist Christian Democratic Party to an open alliance with the ultraright. Amid public and congressional opposition, the administration then blocked the growing international groundswell for negotiations by supporting a combination of "low intensity" warfare with the high-profile promotion of elections—goals not as easily opposed.

Initially this approach appeared successful. Backed by a new consensus in Congress supporting elections instead of negotiations, Reagan policymakers promoted the drafting of a new constitution in 1983, poured $1.8 million into El Salvador's 1984 presidential elections to guarantee the victory of Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte and then used the moderate image of Duarte's presidency to provide up to $1.2 million a day to continue the war against the FMLN.

But that success was illusory. U.S aid turned the Salvadoran army into a more potent force and artificially bolstered a deteriorating economy. Yet assistance could neither improve the government's ability to redress the genuine grievances that had led to the outbreak of war nor neutralize support for the rebel program. The 1983 constitution, for example, blocked land reform after less than 17 percent of the population had become beneficiaries. Instead aid fueled corruption without providing leverage over the army's behavior. Despite repeated high-level warnings of U.S. aid cuts throughout the 1980s, by 1990 Salvadoran armed forces still had a human rights record that, in the words of a Pentagon-commissioned study, "no truly democratic and just society could tolerate."[2]

The Reagan administration's strategy backed the FMLN into a diplomatic corner over elections, but it also removed incentives to negotiations and prolonged the war. Without the

United States on board, dialogue failed repeatedly in 1984, 1986 and 1987. In each case San Salvador insisted that the FMLN disarm, accept amnesty and enter the existing constitutional order, whose legitimacy it defended. The FMLN, on the other hand, refused to recognize a system that would not guarantee its safe participation. It called for "power sharing" in a provisional government that would arrange new elections, reorganize the military, abolish the 1983 constitution and establish new political rules of the game. The rebels contended that elections held in the context of widespread human rights violations were undemocratic, so they alternated between boycotting and sabotaging them. As the war dragged on, talks foundered on precisely those issues.

Stalemate took its toll. Not only were tens of thousands killed and one-quarter of the population displaced by 1989, but the economy lay in shambles. Coffee production fell by more than a third over the decade; per capita gross domestic product plunged to its 1975 level. The impact was especially great on the poor: real minimum wages in 1989 were 35.6 percent of their 1980 level. Not surprisingly, by September 1987, national opinion polls showed that an overwhelming 83.3 percent of the population supported an end to the war through a negotiated settlement.

III

The FMLN's November 11, 1989 military offensive, El Salvador's "Tet," was the turning point on the road to negotiations. The replacement of the ideological Reagan team with a more pragmatic Bush administration, the electoral victory of ARENA's Alfredo Cristiani and the fall of the Berlin Wall were also important. More than anything else, however, that offensive and the army's subsequent murder of six Jesuit priests drove home the point that a prolonged and inconclusive struggle was less desirable than a political settlement.

Most on the left had already learned this lesson. Well before the collapse of the Soviet bloc, in 1987 FMLN leader Joaquím Villalobos recognized "a strategic equilibrium" in the military conflict. With no revolutionary triumph in sight and popular opinion favoring peace, independent groups in the opposition argued for a negotiated solution, declaring that "a military solution demanding another six years of national bloodletting is not acceptable."[3]

Latin American governments strongly counseled negotia-

tions during a rebel tour of the continent in 1988. Then the Soviet Union decided to halt arms shipments to Nicaragua's Sandinista government in early 1989. Those events, in FMLN leader Salvador Samayoa's words, "knocked the revolutionary perspective off balance." Rebel leaders began to distance themselves from their faith in socialist revolution and called instead for pluralist democracy. "The FMLN does not fear elections," wrote Villalobos in 1989. "Under fair conditions the majority of Salvadorans would opt for revolutionary change."[4] This self-reassessment led to a peace initiative in January 1989 in which the FMLN dropped its insistence on power-sharing before its participation in future elections. This striking departure from its past stance broke the political impasse with the government.

But progress on the right had not proceeded at the same pace or with the same unity. On one side, President Cristiani and his supporters were aware that El Salvador had become ungovernable, that peace was necessary to rebuild the economy and that ARENA would eventually suffer the same fate as the flagging Christian Democrats unless it moderated its platform and struck some type of bargain with the rebels. Moreover business leaders believed that Cristiani, as a respected member of their own class, would defend their interests. They thus backed his 1989 inaugural address that responded to the rebel initiative by calling for immediate and unconditional dialogue.

But some elements of ARENA and most military officers sought to block any move toward negotiations, and initially there was insufficient pressure from the United States to persuade them otherwise. The high command of the armed forces declared that its "organic structure" was not subject to negotiations and refused to consider military reform. Intransigence was met with intransigence. After a series of political assassinations by both the left and right, and the army's October 31, 1989, bombing of the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers Union (FENASTRAS) headquarters, in which ten people were killed, negotiations held in Mexico City and Costa Rica collapsed.

The November 1989 FMLN offensive changed the balance between hard-liners and soft-liners on both sides, but especially on the right. The offensive demonstrated to the left that it did not have enough support for a widespread popular uprising. But on the right, the rebel occupation of homes in the wealthy Escalón district galvanized recalcitrant Salvadoran businessmen to support negotiations. El Salvador's economic elites—fearful that the army could no longer protect their homes, that officers had become involved in criminal activities and that their government was becoming an international pariah—began to desert the armed forces they once sustained.[5]

In the United States images of Jesuit priests slain by members of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Brigade, of the army's

bombing of poor neighborhoods and of the FMLN's careful evacuation of U.S. military personnel from San Salvador's Sheraton Hotel undermined the alliance with the Salvadoran military. What died with the Jesuit priests was a foreign policy consensus based on the twin premises that the army had successfully contained the FMLN and that democracy was being constructed. Believing that the armed forces had become an open liability on both counts, Congress changed the terms of the debate.

In early 1990 House Democrats established a task force on El Salvador chaired by Representative Joseph Moakley (D-Mass.). Moakley vigorously pursued an investigation of the Jesuit murders and ultimately charged that members of the army's high command were directly involved. Congress debated whether to cut military aid entirely or simply withhold it in a manner designed to bring both sides to the bargaining table. Regardless of which position would triumph, it was suddenly clear that the gravy train of aid to El Salvador's armed forces was slowing and would soon stop.

The Bush administration was thus caught in a dilemma. Without aid it could not continue to pursue the war, yet it had become politically impossible to ask for renewed aid under the same terms. Moreover, when the December 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama and the February 1990 victory of Violetta Barrios de Chamorro in Nicaragua removed even the appearance of a regional threat, the administration lost what rationale remained for its El Salvador policy. Anxious to maintain congressional relations and to diminish the salience of Central America on the foreign policy agenda—given the momentous changes in Europe—the administration worked with President Cristiani and his allies to isolate military hard-liners and strengthen support for negotiations.

"We believe this is the year to end the war through a negotiated settlement which guarantees safe political space for all Salvadorans," Secretary of State James A. Baker testified before Congress on February 1, 1990. By finally dropping the notion of the FMLN's military defeat, Baker's words marked a decisive reversal of U.S. policy. The stage was set for a political settlement.

IV

"Negotiations are built brick by brick," U.N. mediator Alvaro de Soto was fond of saying during the two-year peace process.[6] The cornerstone of negotiations was formally laid in Geneva on April 4, 1990, when U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar announced that he would oversee a political settlement. But the FMLN had initiated contact with the United Nations even before then, during its November 1989 offensive.

In early December the FMLN's Salvador Samayoa and Ana Guadalupe Martinez met with de Soto in Montreal to request a greater U.N. role in the peace process and to give assurances

that the FMLN would abide by a settlement. A flurry of diplomatic activity followed: former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias joined with U.S. policymakers to urge President Cristiani to accept the FMLN overture; meanwhile Central American presidents formally invited the United Nations to mediate in the region.

The initial distance between the two sides was great. Above all the FMLN wanted reform of the armed forces. Its demands included 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, a reduced army and integration of some rebel troops in the remaining force. The FMLN also demanded formation of a new police force, judicial reforms that would end impunity and provide guarantees of human rights and civil liberties, and a role for international verification teams.

Finally the FMLN insisted on important changes in the electoral system, including the registration of nearly three million eligible voters. This demand had special political implications. ARENA's 1989 presidential victory had come from merely 25 percent of eligible voters. A massive registration drive thus promised to alter voter patterns substantially by the 1994 elections. Confident that its recent offensive had strengthened its hand at the negotiating table, the FMLN also announced it would indefinitely suspend sabotage against public transportation and businesses as a gesture of goodwill.

The government was confident as well. Persuaded that the Sandinista defeat in Nicaragua's February 1990 elections meant the loss of the FMLN's closest ally and a substantial weakening of the rebel military position, and secure that its own control over the Legislative Assembly and Supreme Court was sufficient to reject unwanted initiatives, it agreed for the first time to outside mediation. But government participation was predicated on maintaining the 1983 constitution, which made adopting economic or political reforms extremely difficult. This stipulation reassured the right. The right, however, did not initially realize the importance of a negotiating forum that placed the FMLN in a position of parity with the government—an error it could never rectify.

In April 1990 in Geneva and May in Caracas both sides quickly established a two-phased process: negotiations first on broad-ranging political issues, 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. The parties also agreed to form a "Group of Friends," including Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Spain, who would provide assistance to either side. Finally negotiators acquiesced to the formation of an *Interpartidaria*, which incorporated the country's nine political parties and could be called on to review electoral and judicial reforms.

These initial talks were deceptively easy, and the deep divisions that had led to war soon surfaced. From June 1990 to

April 1991 talks deadlocked over the issue that had thwarted the 1989 negotiations and that de Soto called "the most difficult item on the agenda": 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, to discuss the issue of military impunity or to integrate its forces with those of the FMLN.

As talks dragged on, both sides only toughened their stances. The FMLN eventually called for the complete abolition of the armed forces, as Costa Rica had done in 1948. "There are only three choices," Villalobos contended in summer 1990. "The two armies disappear; the two exist and become institutionalized; or one army disarms the other. . . . The last is only possible by military means."[7] For its part the army declared that its existence was not negotiable and began to backtrack on its previously conceded size reduction.

The 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 José, Costa Rica, that "was literally pulled out of a hat" by de Soto in order to maintain some sense of momentum. Initially opposed by the FMLN, which had insisted on military reforms before striking other agreements, the accord established a U.N. human rights verification mission in El Salvador to investigate abuses and defend civil liberties.

That much-hailed agreement, however, was ultimately less significant to the overall peace progress than a little-noticed consensus reached in October 1990 in the seventh session in Mexico City. In the context of their stalemated talks, both sides agreed to "place greater emphasis on the active role of the [U.N.] secretary general's representative and his role as intermediary." This changed de Soto from merely a facilitator of dialogue to a mediator and permitted the U.N. team to put forward proposals to either side. As a result a partial blueprint for compromise on the armed forces issue began to emerge by the end of 1990.

But progress on military reform depended more on external forces than the quality of U.N. proposals. Only steady pressure from outside could overcome the intense resistance of the military, which repeatedly toughened its stance every time pressure appeared to let up. The U.S. Congress reduced military aid in October 1990 by 50 percent and threatened to cut the rest unless the Jesuits' murderers were brought to justice. For the first time Salvadoran officers understood they could no longer rely on the United States, and they thus began to negotiate more seriously. But when President Bush restored aid in early 1991 after the FMLN downed a helicopter, killing three U.S. servicemen on board, the military once again believed it could escape reform. One Salvadoran army spokes-

man boasted: "The vote of confidence the Congress had taken away from the armed forces has been restored."[8] As a result negotiations bogged down once again. Anonymous State Department criticism of de Soto in *The New York Times* on February 1 further derailed talks, despite Secretary Baker's assurances that the remarks were "unofficial and not authorized." The impression that the United States might be distancing itself from the U.N. negotiations was not overcome until Baker formally joined the Soviet foreign minister in expressing strong support for the U.N. efforts.

Fundamental disagreement over constitutional reform exacerbated the deadlock. If permanent agreements were to be reached on limiting the military or reforming the electoral or judicial systems, the 1983 constitution would have to be amended. ARENA, however, flatly refused to change article 248, which stipulated that any amendment had to be ratified by two consecutive National Assemblies. Altering this restrictive provision for constitutional change, the party believed, would leave open the door to agrarian reform.

Both sides finally settled on a formula of specific constitutional amendments for specific reforms, including those affecting the armed forces. Despite extremist threats from the right against those who "trampled on the constitution," the combined influence of the European Community, the Group of Friends, the five Central American presidents, the U.S. Congress, the Bush administration and last-minute phone calls by the U.S. ambassador eventually guaranteed passage of the amendments. On April 29, 1991, the ARENA-dominated National Assembly voted to modify 35 of 274 articles of the 1983 constitution—the first time a Salvadoran constitution had ever been amended. This breakthrough proved to be the first and, ultimately, most significant of the negotiating process. "We would not have continued had this fallen through," said one FMLN negotiator. "It would have been over."

V

The April accords were the first substantive agreements in years of sporadic peace talks between the government and the guerrillas. The reforms 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. In amendments agreed upon by the *Interpartidaria*, the accord also changed the manner of selecting Supreme Court justices, established an electoral tribunal and gave political parties a greater voice in electoral organization and registration of voters. Finally the reforms created a "Truth Commission" comprised of three prominent jurists, all foreigners, to be chosen by U.N. Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar and whose task was to investigate the most serious human rights abuses of the war.[9]

The accords represented the first time ARENA had con-

sciously "underutilized" its power to support unwanted reforms that it had the legislative strength to block. Not surprisingly, reaction was sharp inside the armed forces. Death squad threats abounded and rumors swept the country that a military coup would be spearheaded by air force officers and instigated by retired General Juan Rafael Bustillo. As army negotiators frantically held meetings with lower level officers opposed to "the violation to our sovereignty," Cristiani reassured troops that "dissolution of the armed forces is not on the table with the FMLN," and the United States announced a multimillion-dollar assistance plan to help Salvadoran soldiers return to civilian life.

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, on the other hand, would not agree to a ceasefire without a prior final agreement on military reform or sufficient guarantees for its own safety.

At meetings in New York in September 1991 U.N. negotiators designed a new formula to overcome the impasse. U.N. proposals added several critical features to meet the objections of the FMLN. They created an ad hoc commission of three independent Salvadoran citizens to evaluate members of the armed forces on the basis of the soldiers' human rights records and professional competence and to rid the army of individuals found deficient. They permitted FMLN combatants to participate in a new national police force in exchange for withdrawing the FMLN's demand for integration into the armed forces. They obligated the government to enforce and accelerate implementation of existing agrarian reform legislation while establishing procedures to legalize tenancy in conflictive zones. Finally, the proposals also established a broadly representative National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), whose main task was to draft legislation on negotiated agreements and monitor its implementation once a ceasefire had begun.

Once again, however, international pressure was needed for the proposals' eventual acceptance. In August 1991 Democrats in Congress demonstrated that they had majority support for aid cuts and tough conditions on assistance to El Salvador with or without the support of the Bush administration. Realizing that aid was finally blocked, the administration began to take a significantly more active role in supporting the negotiations. At the U.S.-Soviet summit, Presidents Bush and Gorbachev issued a joint statement backing the peace process, and both countries subsequently called for Pérez de Cuéllar to become directly involved in the U.N. talks. The Bush administration also urged President Cristiani to attend personally the New

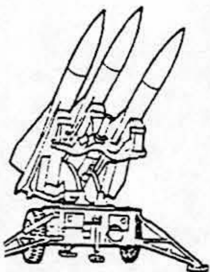
York meetings. As last-minute decisions were being made to reduce the army by 50 percent and to work out the details of a ceasefire, the Group of Friends, the European Community and the United States all pressed for compromise.

Inside El Salvador an unlikely tacit alliance emerged between ARENA and the FMLN to overcome widespread skepticism about the prospects for peace and the opposition of hard-liners. Even Roberto D'Aubuisson Arrieta, a former army major accused in the 1980 assassination of Archbishop Romero, spent his last months of life, before succumbing to cancer, striving to restrain the violent right wing he had once armed and organized. Rebel commanders also sought to moderate their own hard-liners so as to appeal to a broader postwar electoral constituency. Given each side's stake in the peace agreements and the mounting intensity of international pressure, the army—hardest hit by the final accords—in the end could only acquiesce. "The military must subordinate itself to the executive branch," argued Sigfrido Ochoa, a former colonel known for leading military revolts against civilian authority in the past. "A coup would be insane."

The New York accords thus became the second breakthrough of the El Salvador dialogue, representing significant compromise on both sides. The government agreed to purge the officer corps, incorporate some former rebels into the police and implement a more reformist agrarian policy. The FMLN agreed to drop its demands for broader socioeconomic reforms and participation in the army, and instead accepted COPAZ and the United Nations as guarantors of its security. Agreements 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 U.N. Secretary General Pérez de Cuéllar.

VI

In what might be considered the hallmark of a successful negotiation, both sides believe they have won. Continuous negotiations over the past two years have given each side a strong stake in the final agreement. The negotiations themselves have established a pattern of mutual "underutilization" of power and created a powerful momentum that should keep the process moving forward after the formalities have been concluded. The tight timetable for reforming the armed forces and disarming the FMLN has already created logistical difficulties in meeting deadlines, but it is advantageous in that it rapidly incapacitates precisely those forces most capable of unraveling the peace.



Each side can plausibly claim a victory because the compromise is a genuine one. For the first time in Salvadoran history comprehensive reforms to establish a full-fledged democracy were negotiated across the entire political spectrum. Moreover this process of consultation is becoming institutionalized. The formation of COPAZ, a mechanism for reaching policy consen-

sus through what Salvadorans call "concertation," has placed real, if informal, limitations on the exercise of executive power. In the epitome of political engineering, its ten members are divided equally between conservatives and center-leftists, and its decisions are made by majority rule.

COPAZ, in turn, has created numerous other mechanisms for consensus-building during these fragile moments of transition. There are, for example, new task forces to deal with the two most sensitive issues of the day: the formation of a new National Civilian Police and the supervision of land tenure disputes in the country's war zones. These include one representative from the government, the FMLN and each of the six leading political parties. As these bodies make policy and resolve conflicts, they expand the political community committed to the accords and encourage the habit of compromise begun in the peace negotiations. In effect they embody a qualitatively new method of democratic governance for El Salvador.

Still there are clear signs of trouble ahead. In the short run, settlements between contending parties tend to be more fragile than those based on a decisive victory by one side, although their long-run prospects may be far more promising. This fragility is most apparent in the socioeconomic arena, where the accords on land tenancy are weakest and least developed. Task forces may be able to facilitate the resolution of disputes between peasant squatters and property owners, or between workers and factory owners, but the representatives in these commissions must be able to restrain their followers and convince them to abide by the settlements.

The potential for provoking a new cycle of polarization still exists. For example, the FENASTRAS-led February 10 walkout by 5,000 employees at the ADOC shoe company demanding union recognition and higher wages was followed by the factory's shutdown and threats of other closings by the National Association of Private Enterprise. Several trade union leaders have been murdered since the signing of the accord, and human rights violations continue unabated. Business leaders have threatened to boycott economic task forces unless takeovers by land-hungry peasants are stopped. These incidents exemplify the difficulties of exerting control over respective constituencies, especially where popular demands have long been suppressed.

External assistance can make the difference between an environment defined by polarization or concertation. El Salvador will require an estimated $1 billion to recover from the war and implement the peace agreements. The government and the FMLN have met regularly to develop a blueprint for reconstruction. The plan thus far targets immediate relief to former zones of conflict, assistance to the thousands of ex-combatants from both sides who will be thrust into civilian life (including offers of university scholarships for officers on both sides), the extension of health and educational services to rural municipalities, the creation of a "Land Bank" to accelerate the

formal transfer of land to squatters in rebel-controlled zones and the restoration of infrastructure. Lack of funds in the Land Bank have already proven to be a serious set-back to meeting the treaty's goal that all ownership disputes in war zones be cleared up by August.

Alongside promises of $55 million from the European Community and $120 million from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Bush administration has already pledged $250 million for the reconstruction of El Salvador. It is considering extension of Temporary Protected Status for Salvadorans living in the United States, whose remittances are the largest source of foreign exchange in their homeland. In a departure from past practices, members of Congress have urged that further U.S. aid be channeled through the United Nations and other multilateral agencies "so that it [does not] grant our imprimatur to any political party or grouping." In another sign of the changing times the U.S. Agency for International Development has promised to coordinate with the government of El Salvador to ensure that its allocations are "consistent with decisions resulting from consultations with the FMLN on the National Recovery Plan."

El Salvador's success demonstrates how the end of the Cold War has created new opportunities for the United States to craft a qualitatively different approach to policy in Latin America. By delinking strategic concerns from local political consequences, the United States altered its traditional opposition to radical movements and distanced itself from past efforts to seek a military victory over the FMLN. This shift created more space for Salvadorans to negotiate what may be the foundations of a long-term social peace.

Future policy for dealing with regional conflicts can benefit from the experience of El Salvador. First, American policy assumed that low-intensity warfare plus reform would overcome armed resistance. This flawed assumption led the United States into an alliance with reactionaries who were opposed to the very reforms necessary to neutralize the insurgency. Policymakers believed that U.S. aid created leverage to force through these reforms, but leverage, as Salvadoran military officers well understood, only works when the United States is willing to use it. Only after the end of the Cold War and the murder of the Jesuits was Congress ready to cut aid. El Salvador illustrates an important contradiction in low-intensity warfare doctrine: the use of American leverage is only feasible where policy goals are relatively unimportant, but that is precisely where it is not in the interests of the United States to wage war in the first place.

Second, regular elections alone will not guarantee democracy. Especially in the early years of the war, policymakers showed an appalling disregard for the violation of human rights and the exclusion of democratic left parties from the political arena. They failed to understand that regularly scheduled elections cannot channel conflicts in a democratic manner unless they are coupled with effective civilian control over the

military and enforcement of the rule of law. A more even-handed policy in the future would insist upon holding elections and respecting civil and human rights for all citizens regardless of their political persuasion.

Finally, multilateralism, especially under the auspices of an international organization, is more conducive to settlements than unilateralism. In the 1980s overtures from Mexican and French authorities, the Contadora Group and Costa Rica's President Arias were distinctly unwelcome to the United States. The Bush administration's decision to support U.N.-sponsored talks and the involvement of third countries was essential for bringing a conclusion to the civil war. A multilateral approach helped to mobilize outside pressure on both sides. The United Nations ensured a strict impartiality during the negotiations and in the subsequent verification process, something that both the Cristiani government and the FMLN deemed critical in reaching the accord.

In short, El Salvador suggests that the United States should learn what Salvadorans are already learning: in regional conflicts the deliberate underutilization of power can be most conducive to a successful outcome.

In the case of El Salvador, great power intervention was disproportionately expensive in human suffering and treasure when compared to the potential security gain. In 1981 U.S. military estimates put the price of defeating the Salvadoran rebels at $300 million over five years, a forecast the Reagan administration rejected as overly optimistic. The peace that finally resulted a decade later cost an estimated $6 billion, the displacement of one-quarter of the Salvadoran population and the lives of 75,000 Salvadorans and 12 Americans. As the United States seeks to define new policy directions, Central America demonstrates that support for multilateral negotiations can be more effective and less costly than the unilateral use of force. El Salvador, thus, may move from its unfortunate status as a testing ground for low-intensity warfare to become an important model for conflict resolution in a post-Cold War world.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Footnotes for this article are available upon request from CNARS, Room 4C881.