

WORLD-SYSTEM THEORY
AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EL SALVADOR

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By

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In memory of my parents, George Massie Gividen
and Betty June Hudson Gividen,
Professor Dan E. Farlow,
and the nearly 100,000 people
dead from of El Salvador's
Civil War

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis began as a historical study of the social and political forces that produced the civil war in El Salvador between 1979-1992. Throughout the 1980s, El Salvador went through violent turmoil which, with Nicaragua, made it one of the most written about countries of the time. This country, the smallest of Central America, received over \$6 billion in aid from the United States during the period between 1978 and 1992.

Yet, the more I analyzed El Salvador the more the study of the country and its role in the world economy became problematic. What is the best way to analyze the history of this country, which unlike Mexico to the North or even Costa Rica to the South has been trapped in poverty throughout its history? Does dependency theory's analysis of the relational characteristics between states adequately explain the Salvadoran situation? Or does world-system analysis focusing on the dynamics of the world economy offer a better level of analysis?

Chapter II examines both dependency theory and world-system analysis. Modernization theories linked development problems of Third World countries to internal problems – lack of investment, overpopulation, etc. In response to the failure of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) programs of the 1950-60s

frustrated neo-Marxists, such as Andre Gunder Frank, explained Third World countries situation as a result of an external factor – colonialism Frank argued that many Third World societies regressed as a result of Western contact. He called this regression “the development of underdevelopment”¹

In a response to determinism, and other problems inherent in classical dependency theory, a new dependency theory arose. Fernando Henrique Cardoso argued that not all development was bad. According to Cardoso a mix of international capital, national bourgeoisie and the state had accomplished “associated-dependent development” in Brazil.²

The 1970s brought to the front a host of contradictions that dependency theory appeared unable to resolve—the “Asian Tigers,” the strength of OPEC, and the rise of Brazil. Immanuel Wallerstein’s capitalist-world system analysis with its trimodal level of analysis studied trends of the world-economy and its components parts. The flexibility of the theory allows for a detailed examination of internal and external factors over a long period of time which neither modernization nor variants of dependency theory allow. World-system analysis offers a useful theoretical framework in which to analyze secular and social trends in states.

Chapter III consists of an historical overview of El Salvador. Why study El Salvador? El Salvador in many ways is a prototypical peripheral country. The socio-

¹ See Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

² Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “Associated-Dependent Development: Theoretical and Practical Implications,” in Alfred Stephen ed., *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 143.

economic forces that divide its society can easily be traced from before its existence as an independent nation to the present. It has remained primarily an agricultural society throughout its history, despite various attempts to modernize its economic structure. Unlike Brazil it is a small country, with few resources which until the 1970s was known by most people as a place which grew coffee. Similar to Nicaragua and Guatemala, its history has been full of United States intervention and U.S.-supported repressive regimes. Unlike Nicaragua, it did not have a revolution. These are all compelling arguments to study El Salvador, and I do so through the perspective of world-system theory.

Chapter IV draws final conclusions from the Chapters 2 and 3. Does the application of world-system analysis adequately explain El Salvador's past, or present? Does the application of world-system lend itself to the study of other peripheral states? Or does the application fall short?

CHAPTER II

COMPARATIVE THEORY

Dependency

The modernization school rose after World War II in an attempt to explain and remedy the development problems of the Third World. After the failure of modernization programs to transform Latin America in the 1960s, the neo-Marxist dependency school rose as its antithesis. Both schools coexisted, unable to completely refute the other.

All dependency theories are united by their assertion that a dependent economic relationship exists between the less developed nations and the most developed nations. The origins of the dependency school can be viewed as a response to the failure of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) programs of the 1950-60s. Many Latin American scholars believed the ECLA policy would bring economic growth, development and democracy to the region. Various governments tried the ECLA's development strategy of protectionism and import substitution in the 1950s, only to have initial modest growth replaced by economic stagnation.¹ In the 1960s growth turned into a plethora of economic problems including currency devaluation, rampant inflation and

¹ Alvin Y. So, *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theory* (Sage Library of Social Research 178 London: Sage Publications, 1990), 91.

unemployment. Popular governments were overthrown and replaced by military *juntas*. Latin American scholars became disenchanted with ECLA.

Dependency theory also grew out of theoretical problems facing traditional Marxism. Traditional Marxism called for societies to undergo an industrial revolution before a workers revolution would lead to the transformation of society. Yet, the revolutions in China (1949) and Cuba (1959) called into question the necessity of a bourgeois revolution before a proletarian one.

In 1950 Raúl Prebisch, head of the ECLA, questioned the economic division of labor between Latin America and rich industrial centers like the United States and Europe.² Latin America produced raw materials and food for these industrialized states and then imported the manufactured products produced elsewhere. Prebisch argued that this division of labor created balance of trade problems and was central to Latin American underdevelopment troubles.

His answer was for Latin America to industrialize using an import-substitution model. Import-substitution restricts the importation of certain manufactured goods that are then made domestically. The amount of capital available for domestic industrialization would then increase and in turn cause a diversification in a country's economy. As Latin America industrialized, underdevelopment would cease and initial protectionism given to local industries would be lifted.

Applied to Latin America the theory was disastrous. For the most part, domestic markets were too small to support local industry adequately. The manufactured goods were too expensive for domestic consumption and could not compete internationally.

² Raul Prebisch's *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems* (New York: United Nations, 1950), became known as the "ECLA Manifesto."

Finally, a dearth of different domestic resources hampered the creation of thriving local industries. Instead industrialization only benefited the elites. Local markets failed to expand and the dependency on consumption goods turned to a dependency on capital goods. During this process of industrialization Latin American countries neglected their traditional exports causing massive balance-of-payment problems all across the region.³

Neo-Marxism was another large influence on the development of dependency theory. The Chinese and Cuban revolutions expanded this new more radical strain of Marxism. According to Foster-Carter there are three main differences between Marxism and neo-Marxism. First, classical Marxism focused on imperialism as the “monopoly stage of capitalism,”⁴ while neo-Marxism viewed the world from the periphery focusing on the effects of imperialism on third world development. This change of focus turned the orthodox Marxist view on its head. Second, Marxists viewed a two-stage revolution, with society being led through a necessary industrial stage by progressive bourgeoisie before being able to advance to a socialist revolution. Neo-Marxists argued for immediate revolution in the Third World. Disagreeing with the Marxists, they argued the conditions were present to carry out revolutions, and in fact the bourgeoisie were tools of imperialism and thus counter to revolutionary aims. Last, orthodox Marxists argued that during the industrial stage radical proletariat from the cities would act as a vanguard and

³ Magnus Blomstrom and Bjorn Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition: The Dependency Debate and Beyond-Third World Responses* (London: Zed, 1984), 41-45.

⁴ V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (International Publisher's, N.Y: 1939, 1989), 88.

lead the masses to Socialism. Neo-Marxists argued that the peasants in the countryside, like in China and Cuba, were the ones who will lead revolutions.⁵

Several theorists' ideas have been central to the advancement of the dependency theory. Andre Gunder Frank argued that the modernization school's explanation of Third World development was deficient because it argued that underdevelopment was due to flaws inherent to Third World countries. Lack of investment, cultural barriers, overpopulation, etc... have all been cited by the modernization school as possible causes. According to Frank the problem of underdevelopment is not an internal one but an external one—colonialism. Frank states many societies that were considered advanced prior to Western contact reversed their gains under colonialism. Frank coined the phrase “the development of underdevelopment” to highlight his theory that underdevelopment was not a natural state but a by-product of colonial domination.⁶

Frank also added to the dialogue his “metropolis-satellite” hypothesis. He stated that in the colonial era Western countries (metropolises) established new cities (satellites) to help remove indigenous capital (raw materials, minerals, profits) to the West. This hierarchy extended downward through the domestic structure with the colonial cities acting as extractors (metropolises) to the provincial cities (satellites). The provincial cities in turn extracted wealth from local cities causing a collection of relationships that lead to underdevelopment as the local economic wealth of a country funneled up this chain and out of the country. Frank goes farther arguing that without this relationship the

⁵ Aiden Foster-Carter, “Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development and Underdevelopment,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 3 (1973): 7-33 in So, *Social Change and Development*, 95.

⁶ So, *Social Change and Development*, 95-97.

West would not have developed. The capital extracted is what has led to the development of one and the underdevelopment of the other.⁷

In his 1971 article “The Structure of Dependence” Theotonio Dos Santos offered what has become regarded as the classical definition of dependency. The relationship involving two or more countries “assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-starting, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion.” Dos Santos also remarked that there are three historical forms of dependency: colonial, financial-industrial, and technological-industrial. In colonial dependence the dominant state controls the land, workers and exports different raw materials of the dependent state. By the late 1900s this had morphed into financial-industrial dependency, which focused on the export of raw materials and agricultural products to Western Europe. During this period dependent states were forced into a single-crop, region-specific export model. This phase of dependency allowed for limited development to help the export process run smoothly and a subsistence sector to provide labor during booms and absorb unemployment during periods of stagnation.⁸

Technological-industrial dependency came about after World War II encompassing many under-industrialized countries. Dos Santos argues there are extreme limits on development available for countries during this phase. First, development is dependent upon the foreign capital that only the export sector can provide. Second, development is directly affected by deficits brought on by balance-of-payments

⁷ Ibid, 97. See also Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

⁸ Quoted in Ibid., 98-99.

fluctuations. Dos Santos lists three factors that lead to deficits. First a controlling international market that keeps raw material prices low while keeping industrial products' prices high. Second, foreign enterprises retain control of industrial resources in Third World countries and thus remove large amounts of capital generated by this infrastructure. By controlling freight transport for example, a foreign company not only removes raw materials at a low price but also profits from this removal. Between 1946 and 1967 for every dollar that entered dependent countries an additional \$2.73 was removed. Third, dependent countries had to rely on foreign aid and loans to cover the deficit and to pay for additional development. In fact Dos Santos argues that the aid and loans are used to finance foreign imports that compete against domestic products and to pay for US companies' investments.⁹

Dos Santos argues the last severe limit on development is the monopoly control over technology that imperial centers exercise. Foreign companies do not sell the industrial equipment used in the Third World and then buy the products produced. Instead, companies either use the equipment or lease it at high rates. The companies then process the raw materials into goods and sell the goods back to the society. Third World countries, short on foreign currency and in desperate need of technology, offer extremely beneficial terms to foreign companies.¹⁰

In these situations, Dos Santos states that:

foreign capital enters with all the advantages: in many cases, it is given exemption from exchange controls for the importation of machinery; financing of sites for installation of industries is provided; government financing agencies are available to facilitate industrialization; loans from foreign and domestic banks, which prefer

⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰ Ibid., 101.

such clients, are available; in many cases, foreign aid for the strengthening of industrialization is available.¹¹

Dos Santos lists three results from this. First, the unequal development on the international level is replicated and magnified inside the country. Instead of local industry focusing capital on traditional agrarian exports, resources are divided with the new sector, draining needed money away from the agrarian sector. Second, the combination of cheap labor mixed with the new technology has led to a vast disparity in wages in dependent nations. Last, these conditions lead to restricted internal markets. The small amount of jobs in the capital-intensive sector and the low wages of the agrarian sector limits the amount of consumer goods purchased. The siphoning off of capital by foreign companies also lessens the amount of capital available to develop local markets.¹²

The dependency school has been criticized since the 1970s for three perceived weaknesses. First, its methodology. After being attacked by followers of dependency theory, modernization school theorist fought back, characterizing the dependency perspective as Marxist propaganda trying to spread revolution, instead of scholarly research. The theory was also attacked for being too vague. By laying down a broad theory of dependency for Third World countries, the theorists were criticized for treating all peripheral areas as the same. The problem with dependency studies is that differences between Third World nations are real, and the studies have no way of addressing these differences. Second, traditional Marxists attacked the concept of dependency itself. They argued that dependency theorist lost sight of class conflict being a central part of

¹¹ Theotonio Dos Santos, "The Structure of Dependence," in *Readings in U.S. Imperialism*, ed. K. T. Kan and Donald C. Hodges (Boston: Extending Horizons, 1971), 232.

¹² *Ibid.*, 233-4.

the decay of capitalism. They argued dependency theory needs to reincorporate class conflict, the state, and political struggles. Dependency's focus is on the power of external forces, displaying a chauvinistic determinism that Third World nations are submissive victims.

Last, dependency theory has been attacked on the policies it advocates. To end dependency some have argued for socialist revolution. Without a revolution Third World countries will never break from underdevelopment. Critics propose that dependency and development can and do exist together and nation's economies are more fluid than the dependency perspective allows. Detractors point to the East Asian countries that were once colonies, but now have strong economies. Or Canada, which is dependent on foreign companies, yet still exhibits a much higher level of affluence than most Third World nations.

Fernando Henrique Cardoso is considered the most important researcher in New Dependency studies. Though Cardoso, and other new dependency theorists, share several features with the old dependency school, it is the differences that are important.

In 1964 a military regime overthrew the populist government in Brazil. Cardoso was impressed with Brazil's rapid economic growth which relied heavily on foreign investment and loans. Cardoso disputed the traditional dependency interpretation¹³ that development was unable to coexist with foreign monopoly penetration into Third World economies. He argued that, in Brazil, the combination of international capital, national

¹³ Cardoso cites Celso Furtado as an example. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "Associated-Dependent Development," 143.

bourgeoisie and the state working together had brought forth” dependent capitalist development” or “associated-dependent development.”¹⁴

For Cardoso, dependency theory had two excessive currents: “economic determinism,” and “political volunteerism.” Economic determinism does not factor in politics, while political volunteerism ignores constraints of the economic system. Both strands are static. His associated-dependent development theory combined dependency and development for the first time. Up to this time modernization theories focused on development while dependency theories focused on the exploitation of the dependent nation by the core nation.

Cardoso saw a different pattern in Brazil’s case. He argued that foreign capital had an interest in developing the local economy for domestic consumption of manufactured goods. Their interests collide. Though he argued these points, he also was mindful of the cost of associate-development, including the focus on luxury items competing with basic staples.¹⁵

Cardoso replaced the general examination inherent in classical dependency theory with a “historical-structural” methodology. He focused on using dependency as a filter to independently analyze events in the Third World development. Instead of looking at a broad universal abstraction, Cardoso asked, why was one instance of dependency different from another? Why, in Brazil’s case, did dependency lead to a rapidly growing economy.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

By incorporating the state and class conflict, focusing on dependency as a sociopolitical activity instead of a strictly economic one, and by arguing that dependency and development could coexist, Cardoso, and others, illustrated how dependency theory could be dynamic and used as a tool to explain dependent situations in the future.

World-System Analysis

By the mid-1970s several dependency researchers, led by Immanuel Wallerstein, discovered that neither school could explain several activities of the world economy adequately. First, the East Asian countries of Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore were no longer in a dependent state and in fact had economies that rivaled the core states. Second, the socialist states of the world were in disarray. Economic stagnation, in fighting and the entrance of capital investment signaled the end of Marxism as a viable path for Third World countries to follow. Third, many factors hinted at the decline of American hegemony. The Vietnam War, Watergate, OPEC's strength, the increasing deficit, and the widening trade gap all signaled that capitalism was in crisis.

In response to this, Wallerstein and others, rejected the way social sciences had been divided as artificial and unable to accurately explain the current world. He argued that "economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, history, and indeed politics" are all from the same liberal ideology of the nineteenth century.¹⁶

A major influence on Wallerstein was Fernand Braudel of the French *Annales* school. Braudel argued against overspecialization in the social sciences. First, Braudel sought a global history not divided by the national lines. Second, Braudel argued for the

¹⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), vii.

merging of social sciences and history on *la longue duree*, the long term. That was the only way for history to move away from watching individual events and for social sciences to gain the perspective of history. Third, Braudel focused on what can be called problem-oriented historical discourse. Wallerstein argued that Braudel asked the big questions. Instead of just recounting the history of capitalism he asked what is capitalism? Instead of reciting the history of Europe he asked why didn't France dominate Europe?¹⁷

Wallerstein combined dependency with Braudel and created world-system analysis. He argued that world-system analysis explains the primary processes of the world. The main ideas behind his theory are in the structure and development of the social system of the world system.

The structure of the system has interlocking parts: an ever expanding economy, expanding multiple states, and the capital labor relations. First, there is one expanding economy – the capitalist world economy. Though forms of it appear to be national and local engaging in international trade they are all part of the same capitalist world economy. The expanding multiple states expand in number and in size. They expand their individual jurisdictions while the number of states in the system increase. The last structural feature of the world system is the capital-labor relation which is the “social-political framework” that organizes production interrelations and intra- and interstate politics in a rational manner for people, communities and states.¹⁸

¹⁷ So, *Social Change and Development*, 173.

¹⁸ Terence K. Hopkins, “The Study of the Capitalist World Economy: Introductory Considerations,” in Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 11-12.

Capitalism is a mode of production with the sole purpose being to maximize profits. It treats labor as a commodity in order to achieve its goal. Though there is one division of labor it can take different forms. It does not need wage labor but it does need the commodification of labor:

wage labor is only one of the modes in which labor is recruited and recompensed in the labor market. Slavery, coerced, cash-crop production (my name for the so-called 'second feudalism'), sharecropping, and tenancy are all alternative modes...¹⁹

Wallerstein argues there have been three forms of historical systems: mini-systems, world empires, and world-economies. In the preagricultural era there were many different mini-systems. These systems were culturally similar and economies were based on reciprocity. Between 8000 B.C. and 1500 B.C. world empires were the prevailing form in the historical system.

World empires were vast political entities exercising control over many different cultures. The empires would remove tribute which, similar to Frank's metropolis-satellite theory, funneled its way up to the center. At the same time these economies were only small parts of the total world economy.²⁰ Due to the nondeterminative nature of the long distance trade, it was considered administered trade, not market trade.

Wallerstein states that the 1500s saw the birth of capitalist world-economies. World economies are described by Wallerstein as "a single division of labor [with] multiple polities and cultures." The basic logic was that the unequal distribution of

¹⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 16-17

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

accumulated surplus to those able to create monopolies within their polities. As market trade (capitalism) grew so did the world economy. Wallerstein views them as “obverse sides of the same coin.” Capitalism by its nature must expand.²¹

By the 1600s there were three distinct structural positions in the world system: core, periphery and semiperiphery. Through chance, history, and geography various groups converged in much of northwestern Europe (England, France, Holland) to develop as the first core region. Eastern Europe and the Western hemispheres formed as the periphery while Portugal, Spain and parts of Germany and France were the first semiperiphery area.²² By the late 1900s the capitalist world-economy had consumed all of the mini-systems and world empires.

The Core

Politically, the states within this part of Europe developed strong central governments, extensive bureaucracies, and large mercenary armies. Economically this led to agricultural specialization, and the creation of other industries, such as textiles, shipbuilding, and metal wares. This permitted the local aristocracy to acquire control over international commerce and extract capital surpluses from this trade for their own benefit. As the rural population grew, landless wage earners provided the necessary labor for farms and manufacturing activities. As feudalism gave way tenancy and wage labor became the modes of labor control. These circumstances led to the rise of independent farmers and pastoralism. Sheep farming in England required more land, less manpower and returned greater profits. At the same time, pastoralism squeezed many peasants off

²¹ Ibid., 6.

²² Ibid., 18.

of the land. These peasants moved to the cities, providing cheap labor, becoming the proletariat essential for the growth in urban manufacturing. Agricultural productivity increased with the growth of market-oriented independent farmers. The need to meet demand led to improved farm technology.²³

The Periphery

Eastern Europe (especially Poland) and the Western Hemisphere became peripheries. These areas had weak governments. Kings in Eastern Europe lost their power to:

aristocrats turned capitalist farmers – the Junkers with their *Gutswirtschaft* in east Elbia, the nobles with their private armies and strong *Sejm* (parliament) in Poland, etc.²⁴

As Poland became a prime exporter of wheat to the rest of Europe the kings lost power to the capitalist farmers. This was desirable to the farmers. As the state machinery strengthened in core areas, it weakened in the peripheral areas. In the peripheral countries “the interest of the capitalist landowners lie an opposite direction from the local commercial bourgeoisie.” For the local capitalist landowners open markets were wanted to gain access to less expensive industrial products from core countries.²⁵

The lower cost products from the core also had the desirable effect of eliminating local merchants. This dialectic strengthened the local capitalist landowners by removing the potential of political threat from local bourgeoisie. To gain sufficient cheap and

²³ Ibid., 18; and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Three Paths of National Development in sixteenth-century Europe,” in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 45.

²⁴ Ibid., 39.

²⁵ Wallerstein, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System,” 21.

easily controlled labor, Polish landlords forced rural workers into a "second serfdom" on their commercial estates. Yet there were vast areas of unoccupied lands and the serfs just left to colonize this land, or go work in the cities.²⁶

The Western Hemisphere lacked any state authority at all. These areas exported raw materials to the core, and relied on coercive labor practices. Through unequal trade relations the core expropriated much of the capital surplus created by the periphery. In the Western hemisphere indigenous authority structures were destroyed and replaced with weak bureaucracies during the Spanish and Portuguese conquests. Local landlords of Spanish descent became the bourgeoisie capitalist farmers. Enslaving indigenous populations and importing African slaves, along with coercive labor practices, such as the *encomienda*²⁷ and forced labor in mines, made exports of cheap raw materials to Europe possible. The difference between labor systems in the periphery and those in medieval Europe was that, in Europe, labor produced goods for internal consumption, while in the periphery labor produced goods for a capitalist world economy. Furthermore, the Eastern European and Latin American aristocracy grew wealthy from their relationship with the world economy and relied on the core to maintain control.

The Semi-Periphery

Wallerstein created the term semiperiphery. To Wallerstein:

a semiperipheral state appears to be a state which has a roughly even balance of core-like and peripheral-like activity. This has, of course, important political consequences. The model of a semiperipheral state is the one that exports the

²⁶ Wallerstein, "Three Paths of National Development in sixteenth-century Europe," 40,41.

²⁷ *Encomienda* was basically "virtual serfdom" where the native population had to pay tribute to the colonists.

peripheral products to the core countries and the core products to the peripheral areas of the world system and does both in roughly equivalent degrees.²⁸

These are either core areas in decline or peripheries attempting to improve their relative position in the world economic system. They are needed to make the system run smoothly.²⁹ Without a semiperiphery Wallerstein argues that capitalism could not exist. There would be an immediate overthrow by the majority to stop the unequal exchange benefiting a few. Wallerstein argues that three things keep this from happening. First is the concentration of military force by the dominant states. Second, the belief by many in the system that survival of the system is in their best interests. Last, and most important to Wallerstein is “the division of the majority into a larger lower stratum and a smaller middle stratum.” He argues that if it ceases to exist, “the world-system disintegrates.”³⁰

By default, semi-peripheries are assigned a political role. Wallerstein asserts the economic system could work without the semiperiphery, but “it would be far less politically stable.” The semiperiphery means that the upper strata are not faced with unified opposition. In fact, even though the semi-peripheries were exploited by the core, they were also the exploiter to the peripheries. The goal is to move up the “hierarchical division of labor, which is a zero-sum game. The system is fluid allowing movement of the states between the three structural positions in the system. States can move up or down in the system. The United States, for example, went from being a periphery “state” in the eighteenth century to being a core state in the twentieth. Good examples of

²⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, “World Systems Analysis: Theoretical and Interpretive Issues,” in Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *World Systems Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 93.

²⁹ Wallerstein, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System,” 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22, 23.

declining semi-peripheries that became peripheries during the sixteenth century are the Mediterranean countries and Poland. Wallerstein's one caveat on movement within the system is that states cannot skip a position. They must go through the semiperiphery on their way up or down.³¹

Wallerstein lists three ways a periphery state can move up to the semiperiphery. First, is the "strategy of seizing chance." When there is a world-market contraction by "seizing the chance" a peripheral country can take advantage of "the weakened political position of core states and weakened economic position of domestic opponents of such policies." These states must be relatively strong peripheral states to begin with. Brazil, Mexico and South Africa are all examples of countries which have been successful at "seizing the chance," and developing their industries.³²

Second, Wallerstein argues that periphery states follow "the strategy of being promoted by invitation." This occurs during times of world-market expansion instead of market contraction, but "collaborated development" by core states is sacrificed readily if they experience any economic difficulty themselves. Wallerstein shows that in this instance states can be less developed than states following the "chance" strategy, but that the level of industrialization peaks at a lower level.³³

The final way a state can rise out of the periphery is through "the strategy of self reliance." In this century Wallerstein argues this method is least likely. Wallerstein sees

³¹ Christopher K. Chase-Dunn, "A World-System Perspective on Dependency and Development in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 17 (1982): 168; and Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 38.

³² Immanuel Wallerstein, "Dependence in an Interdependent World: The Limited Possibilities of Transformation Within the Capitalist world-economy," in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 76-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 81.

that at this stage in capitalism's development surplus labor in peripheral countries is a negative that cannot be converted internally into a positive. The demand for this surplus labor can only come from external forces. This takes away the ability of peripheral countries to advance and only allows for marginalization to be minimized.³⁴

Wallerstein sees two contradictions working in the capitalist world economy. The first fundamental contradiction is that, in the short run, "the maximization of profit requires maximizing the withdrawal of surplus from the immediate consumption of the majority." Yet in the long run there has to be a "mass demand" for the surplus which can only come from a redistribution of the surplus withdrawn. Since these two suppositions work against each other, in the long run, the system as a whole weakens and those with advantage are less willing to participate.³⁵

The second fundamental contradiction is the increasing cost of co-opting oppositional groups. To co-opt oppositional movements those with means must give some of the means to these groups. This eliminates opponents in the short run, but raises the bar required to quell dissent in future uprisings. Again, over the long run those with advantage are less willing to participate.³⁶

Wallerstein's capitalist world economy is a dynamic system which changes over time. It is not composed of one logic but several, that in the short run appear rational, but in the long run are irrational and work against each other. These contradictions,

³⁴ Ibid., 83.

³⁵ Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System," 35.

³⁶ Ibid.

Wallerstein asserts, will lead to the collapse of the capitalist world economy once the system exhausts the limits of its territorial expansion.

Dependency and World-System Analysis: A Comparison

A comparison of dependency theory and the world-system perspective is useful and shows the advantages of the latter (see Table 1). The level of analysis of world-system perspective is the world. By looking at the totality of circumstances it is easier to explain how phenomena affect the whole and its subparts. Dependency theory's focus on the nation-state narrows the analysis down to the relational characteristics of states.³⁷

Table 1. Comparison of Dependency Perspective and World-System Perspective

	Dependency Perspective	World-System Perspective
Level of Analysis	the nation-state	the world-system
Methodology	structural-historical: boom and bust of nation-states	historical dynamics of the world-system: cyclical rhythms and secular trends
Theoretical structure	bimodal: core-periphery	trimodal: core-semiperiphery- periphery
Direction of development	deterministic: dependency is generally harmful	possible upward and downward mobility in the world-economy
Research focus	on the periphery	on the periphery as well as on the core, the semiperiphery, and the world economy

Source Alvin Y. So, *Social Change and Development. Modernization, Dependency, and World-System Theory*, Sage Library of Social Research 178 (London: Sage Publications, 1990) 195

³⁷ So, *Social Change and Development*, 194-99. The following analysis relies on So.

The methodology of dependency school focuses on the boom and bust of the nation states while the world system school focuses on the dynamics of the world economy. World system analysis offers a much more far reaching and complete view of how and why trends take place.

The theoretical structure of the world-system school is also superior. World system analysis uses a trimodal structure compared to the simplistic bimodal one used by dependency theory. By adding the idea of a semiperiphery, Wallerstein enables an explanation of the shifting positions of states over time, either up (United States) or down (Poland).

Fourth, the direction of development is different according to dependency and Wallerstein. For dependency theory development of the periphery always leads to underdevelopment or dependent development due to exploitation by the core. Wallerstein rejects this determinism through the concept of the semiperiphery. World system analysis allows for autonomous independent development. World system analysis enables researchers to ask why the East Asian Tigers have succeeded while others have not? Dependency theory does not.

Last, world-system analysis permits a much broader research focus. Dependency theory allows for the study of the periphery. World-system theory entertains the study of not only the countries in the periphery, but also advanced core states and the semiperiphery. World-system analysis allows for the study of the rise and development of the world capitalist system.

CHAPTER III

THE EVOLUTION OF SALVADORAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

The Colonial Roots

The Spanish encountered resistance from many different indigenous communities, causing Central America to be conquered in stages.¹ The result was that different governments were required for each area secured. In 1524, Pedro de Àlvarez extended the Spanish conquest into what is now modern day El Salvador. The Salvadoran area was part of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala, and did not enjoy the status of being a province until the eighteenth century.² Historians estimate that after 50 years of conquest, the Spanish had reduced the indigenous (Pipal and Lenca) population in El Salvador from as many as 500,000 to about 75,000.³ At the same time the Catholic church, especially the Franciscans and the Dominicans, entered Central America, establishing over 750 churches by the end of the seventeenth century, securing its position of authority in the region.

After failing to find large quantities of precious metals in the area, the Spanish turned their attention to the export of agricultural products. Products such as balsam and

¹ Peter H. Smith, "The Origins of the Crisis," in *Confronting Revolution: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America*, eds. Morris J. Blachman, et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 4.

² Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., "General Introduction," in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), xv; and Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 38.

³ Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 198-99.

cacao were shipped to Spain. During the first half of the sixteenth century, Crown grants did not include the direct expropriation of land for production, instead relying on indian tribute and the exploitation of indigenous labor to gain raw materials.⁴ Under the system of *ecomienda* the native population was forced into “virtual serfdom” (*repartimiento*)⁵ to pay the tribute demanded by the colonist. This system replaced slavery as the principle source of labor after 1550.⁶

The encroachment onto the subsistence plots of the indigenous population in what became El Salvador began with commercial indigo production in the latter half of the century. Spanish colonists obtained land grants to create “*haciendas de añil* (indigo).”⁷ The estates created were of generous size and by 1807 the Spanish had appropriated almost one third of the colony’s land area into about 440 estates.⁸

The lands suitable for indigo production were already settled and cultivated by the Pipil population, who had little or no understanding of the concept of private property. Browning argues:

To the Indian private and individual ownership of land was as meaningless as private ownership of the sky, the weather, or the sea. It is probable that the *Pipal Indians of El Salvador used the capulli, the oldest form of Aztec territorial organization and the basic unit of settlement.*⁹

⁴ William H. Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War* (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1979), 39. In this section of his book, Durham relies entirely on David Browning’s analysis in *El Salvador: Landscape and Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

⁵ Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador’s Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 3.

⁶ Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 43.

⁷ Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 40.

⁸ Browning uses 2000 acres (809 hectares) as the average size of the haciendas and 440, a very conservative figure, as their number. Cited in *ibid*, 40.

⁹ Browning, *El Salvador*, 16; quoted in Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 39.

In this system a family used a plot for a limited amount of time out of land the village claimed. The claim was never perpetual and the migratory nature of the farming implicitly disallowed this. This use was as close as the village or family came to the concept of possession.¹⁰

In Central America, as in all of colonial Latin America, a white elite controlled the social structure, itself divided between Spanish-born *peninsulares* and locally born *criollos*.¹¹ In the middle was a group with mixed indigenous and white blood known as *ladinos*. These people worked as hired laborers on small farms in the countryside. Others were artisans, merchants, peddlers, and skilled laborers. At the bottom of the class structure were the indigenous people and African slaves.¹²

When a Liberal coup deposed an absolutist monarchy in Madrid, the Central American elites met at Guatemala City. The coup provided an opportunity to declared independence and on September 15, 1821 three centuries of Spanish colonial rule ended. Mexico, already independent, partially conquered the area; but internal political fighting in Mexico kept it from completing the task. On July 1, 1823, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala—“*Provincias Unidas del Centro de América*, ‘The United Provinces of the Centre of America’”—declared independence from Mexico.¹³

The short-lived union’s constitution—“a fusion of the Spanish charter of 1812 and the U.S. Constitution”¹⁴—gave each state autonomy in its internal affairs, thus handing absolute control to the local elites, who split into two competing factions:

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Smith, “The Origins of the Crisis,” 4

¹² Ibid, 5.

¹³ R.L. Woodward, Jr., “The Aftermath of Independence, 1821-c. 1870,” in *Central America Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-7.

¹⁴ James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 8.

Conservatives and Liberals.¹⁵ The Conservative elites of Spanish ancestry “looked down on other races and any federal interference in their affairs,”¹⁶ and argued for continued close association with the Catholic church and some “concern to protect Indian and *landino* communal lands [*comunidades*].”¹⁷ The Liberals wanted to secularize education and increase profits through free trade, integrating their markets with the world. In reality, continued confiscation of the communal lands of indigenous people further expanded the holdings and strength of both parties of the emerging oligarchy. After winning the civil war that followed, Liberal General Francisco Morazán tried to institute reforms, including trial by jury, religious toleration, and a planned isthmian canal through Nicaragua with Dutch financiers.

Viewing Morazán as a threat, the Conservatives and Catholic Church were determined to destroy him. In 1834 their opposition caused Morazán to move his capital from Guatemala City to San Salvador. By 1838 the Conservative-Catholic coalition, led by Rafael Carrera were able to dissolve the union. When Morazán tried to reestablish it by military force in 1842 he was captured and shot. Walter LaFeber argues:

Morazán remains perhaps the greatest of Central Americans, but his only legacies were a shattered union; a two-party political system of Conservatives and Liberals that characterized the politics of each Central American state (and quickly deteriorated into mere *personalismo*); and Morazán province in El Salvador, that during the 1980s became the stronghold for a growing revolutionary movement.¹⁸

The Republic of El Salvador, founded in 1839,¹⁹ accepted, then rejected, the idea of a union with the other Central American states vacillating between liberal and

¹⁵ Smith, “The Origins of the Crisis,” 5.

¹⁶ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2d edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1983, 1993), 26.

¹⁷ Woodward, Jr., “The Aftermath of Independence, 1821-c. 1870,” 32.

¹⁸ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 26-27.

¹⁹ Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 40.

conservative governments. A constant, however, was the use of military force by different leaders vying for control. Due to periodic border invasions by its neighbors, El Salvador's Constitution of 1841 gave the president the power to raise an army to protect and defend the nation. Military officers were forbidden to take office in Congress, but could become president. A serious omission in the constitution was made when the president was not given control of the military through the designation of commander in chief. Between 1841 and 1859 generals held the presidency for a combined period of less than three years—"evidence that military leaders normally contented themselves with retaining real power rather than titular power."²⁰ It was not until 1858, when General Gerardo Barrios became the leader of the government, that the nation made significant steps in building a formal military structure. In the constitution of 1864 the president's powers were expanded to include the duties of commander in chief.²¹

El Salvador chose to follow free market economics; but instead of liberal politics following, the government became a republican dictatorship, consolidating its power through fixed elections.²² The Salvadoran elite fused the philosophical and political thought of August Comte, who endorsed dictatorship to establish "order and progress" with the social Darwinism of English sociologist Herbert Spencer. Spencer's philosophy regarded the poor as unfit, and rejected social programs because they would upset the process of natural selection—"the competitive struggle that would elevate the most able or superior members of the species to positions of power and wealth." Because the vast majority of Salvadorans were poor mixed-bloods, Spencer's ideas contained "overtly

²⁰ Robert V. Elam, "The Army and Politics in El Salvador, 1840-27," in *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, 2d ed., Revised and Expanded, eds. Brian Loveman, et al. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1989), 83.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Smith, "The Origins of the Crisis," 6.

racist overtones.”²³ These ideas coupled with a changing world economy ushered in the Liberal era, during which the pace and severity of actions taken to gain control of Salvadoran land and labor increased dramatically.

The Liberal Era Through The 1920s

The drastic reduction of indigo exports in the 1850s led the government to promote the production of alternative cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, and agave.²⁴ By 1876, coffee had replaced indigo as El Salvador’s most important cash crop for the agro-export sector.²⁵ The midlands of El Salvador, due to their altitude and fertility, were especially suited for its growth. Commercial estates formally growing indigo switched to coffee, expropriating more land in the process. During this period of the land centralization the Salvadoran oligarchy known as “*Los Catorce*”—the so-called Fourteen Families came into existence.²⁶

During the 1870s-1890s all of the Central American governments went through Liberal revolutions. When Salvadoran Conservative President Dueñas was ousted in 1871, the country had already been loosening constraints on freer trade for seven years. The Liberal tide hastened this process but did not lead to vast, unchecked Liberal reforms.²⁷

What the Liberal revolution did accomplish was a fairly comprehensive expropriation of Salvadoran common land. The oligarchy viewed the traditional

²³ Liisa North, *Bitter Grounds: Roots of Revolt in El Salvador* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1981), 26.

²⁴ Ciro F. S. Cardoso, “The Liberal Era, c. 1870-1930,” in *Central America Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41.

²⁵ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 31.

²⁶ James Dunkerley, “El Salvador, 1930-89,” in *Political Suicide in Latin America and Other Essays*, James Dunkerley (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 50-51.

²⁷ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*; 31.

communal lands as a barrier to progress, which it equated with the production of export crops, especially coffee. Elites regarded the indigenous people and their traditional economic methods as backward and unable to respond to new agro-export opportunities.²⁸

During the Rafael Zaldivar presidency (1876-83) most of the common land was expropriated. In 1878 a decree insuring property rights in general was issued, followed by a March 1879 statute giving ownership of the land to those who were farming the commons on the basis of usufruct.²⁹ This Roman law concept argues that a person using something, in this case land, can enjoy all the advantages derived from the land as long as they do not destroy it. The preamble to the “Law for the Extinction of Communal Lands, Feb. 26, 1881,” in part, reads:

The existence of lands under the ownership of *comunidades* impedes agricultural development, obstructs the circulation of wealth, and weakens family bonds and the independence of the individual. Their existence is contrary to the economic and social principles that the Republic has accepted.³⁰

This decree law abolished one form of traditional ownership, the *tierras comunales*. The second, the *ejidos*, the form of communal land ownership established by the colonial authorities, were abolished as “an obstacle to our agricultural development [and] contrary to our economic principles” in the “Law for the Extinction of Public Lands, March 2, 1882,”³¹ Though the 1882 decree allowed six months for the indigenous people to attain private property title to communal lands, instructions were printed in the national press and very few, if any, of the illiterate villagers understood how to protect

²⁸ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 17.

²⁹ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 32.

³⁰ Cited Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 42; see also Browning, *El Salvador*, 205.

³¹ Cited in *ibid.*

and save their land.³² This land alienation legalized and furthered the dispossession of the vast majority of the rural population. Additional laws were added to ensnare the dispossessed as a steady supply of cheap labor for the coffee estates.³³

As evidenced in the uprisings in 1872, 1875, 1880, 1885 and 1898, the peasants (*campesinos*) did not complacently obey such laws. The *campesinos* destroyed coffee groves, assaulted rural judges, and attacked haciendas. To counter these protests, acts of sabotage and to remove squatters, the Salvadoran elite created rural police forces in 1889, a national agrarian police in 1907 and the National Guard in 1912.³⁴

The democratic political system of the country was a facade for competing groups of the oligarchy, which differed only on the degree of their opposition toward U.S. military and economic penetration into the isthmus. The nationalistic faction emerging at this time has been called an “exclusionary civilian dictatorship,”³⁵ excluding the military from the presidency, which the Meléndez Quiñonez family dominated from 1913 to 1927. From 1913 to 1927 the heads of state in El Salvador were: Carlos Meléndez, Feb. 1913 to July 1914; Alfonso Quiñonez (Carlos’ brother-in-law), July 1914 to Feb. 1915; Carlos Meléndez, March 1915 to Dec. 1918; Alfonso Quiñonez (same as above), Dec. 1918 to Feb. 1919; Jorge Meléndez (Carlos’ brother), March 1919 to Feb. 1923; Alfonso Quiñonez (same as above), March 1923 to Feb. 1927; and Pio Romero Bosque (imposed by the family), March 1927 to Feb. 1931.³⁶ As long as the presidents’ policies did not threaten the interests of the military, the latter was content.

³² Browning, *El Salvador*, 189.

³³ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 31, 32.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Rafael Guidos Vèjar quoted in North, *Bitter Grounds*, 24.

³⁶ Ibid.

As a result of the Liberal revolution, El Salvador became a coffee republic, dependent on a single crop. By 1918, coffee exports made up 80.4 percent³⁷ of the Salvadoran economy and the value of coffee exports increased from \$7,372,000 in 1915 to \$22,741,000 in 1928.³⁸ The urban working class sector grew in the 1920s, as money poured into creating an infrastructure capable of handling booming coffee exports. Increased production elevated the importance and power of the coffee processors and exporters, and of banking, insurance, and commerce, expanding the oligarchy. These activities brought unprecedented prosperity to the urban sectors as increased profits flowed back into the cities.³⁹

A shaky democratization of the political system resulted, with railway workers, shoemakers, tailors, teachers, among others, calling strikes. One of the radical intellectuals to arise at this time was Augustin Farabundo Martí. Martí came from a landowning family in Teotepeque. In 1914 he entered the National University where the ideas of Comte were popular with the faculty. Finding Comte elitist and archaic, he joined a Marxist study group finding answers to Salvador's economic and social situation in the ideas of Hegel, Marx, and the anarcho-syndicalists. After challenging a philosophy professor to a duel Martí left the university without a degree. Nicknamed "El Negro" due to his dark features, Martí worked with a communist youth group and established a People's University to teach people to read while stressing radical politics. Besides the CAS he helped the Anti-Imperialist League and International Red Aid. After being expelled in 1925 for organizing workers in San Salvador, he represented El Salvador at the founding of the Central American Socialist (CAS) party in Guatemala.⁴⁰

³⁷ Smith, "The Origins of the Crisis," 6.

³⁸ Anderson, *Matanza*, 8.

³⁹ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 30-31.

⁴⁰ Sheldon B. Liss *Radical Thought in Central America*, Latin American Perspectives Series, Ronald H. Chilcote, no. 7, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 75-78.

When he returned to El Salvador in 1927, Martí was again arrested and imprisoned for his subversive actions, but was released after a hunger strike made him a folk hero. He was deported in 1928 and while traveling in New York he met relatives of Nicaraguan nationalist Augusto Cèsar Sandino and went to Nicaragua to work with him.⁴¹ The partnership was short-lived, because Martí, an internationalist and an admirer of Leon Trotsky, thought Sandino's nationalistic goals too narrow, and Sandino thought Martí too radical.⁴²

Martí also disagreed with the El Salvador's leading intellectual Albertos Masferrer, arguing that his reformist ideas not only attacked imperialism but also Communism. Through his journal *Patria* (the Homeland) Masferrer spread his philosophy—*vitalismo mínimo* (minimum vitalism)—which said all had a right to a materially and culturally decent life.⁴³ His words progressively calling for social justice combined with order and peace influenced the urban population.

With the Salvadoran population growing by 30,000 per year, Masferrer argued that the concentration caused by the expansion of coffee cultivation "is so unnecessary, dangerous, inhuman, and absurd that it can only be explained by the unhappy fact that long ago we stopped considering the need to think ahead."⁴⁴ With the subsistence plots of peasants being the source of the half again increase in land dedicated to coffee production between 1918 and 1928,⁴⁵ Masferrer's analysis seemed to forecast El Salvador's immediate future.

⁴¹ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 73; and Benjamin Keen, *A History of Latin America, Volume II: Independence to the Present*, Fourth Edition (Boston and Toronto: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 465.

⁴² LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 75; and Liss, *Radical Thought in Central America*, 77, 78.

⁴³ North, *Bitter Grounds* 33; and Liss, *Radical Thought in Central America*, 76

⁴⁴ *Patria*, December 29, 1928; cited in Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 43.

⁴⁵ Anderson, *Matanza*, 8.

Depression And The Establishment Of The Modern Salvadoran Economy

When the Great Depression struck, the dispossessed peasants lost the slim work opportunities open to them and their wages fell to eight cents a day.⁴⁶ Table 2 illustrates the catastrophic impact the Depression had on value of Salvadoran coffee. As prices fell dramatically, from an average of \$0.25 per pound in 1925 to \$0.09 in 1935,⁴⁷ Salvadoran farmers decided it was more economically feasible not to harvest the 1930 crop. Prices fell 62 percent between 1928 and 1932 causing many smaller growers to lose their farms, with 28 percent of coffee holdings changing ownership during the first years of the Depression.⁴⁸ The land concentration was accompanied by the expropriation of an additional 2,000 hectares of land for coffee production—from 93,000 to 95,000 between 1931 and 1932. Though this was a modest increase, the lands seized were subsistence communal areas increasing the animosity of the *campesinos* toward the growers.⁴⁹

Table 2. Salvadoran Coffee Exports, 1925-35

	1925	1926	1927	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1935
Volume (kg mn)	32.0	50.6	36.2	46.8	58.6	54.6	39.7	56.2	50.1
Value (\$ mn)	30.4	46.7	25.2	84.1	23.9	21.7	12.9	19.5	24.2

Source: Rafael Guidos Vèjar, *Acenso del Militarismo en El Salvador*, San Jose, 1982, 142; cited in James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 91.

Farabundo Martí went back to El Salvador and formed the PCS in 1930. The group gained much organizational strength by the links it established with the leadership of the *Federación Regional de Trabajadores de El Salvador* (FRTS), which claimed a

⁴⁶ George Black, *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 83.

⁴⁷ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 90.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Matanza*, 8-9, cited in Ibid, 91.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 106-107n15.

membership of 75,000 workers and had links with the independent peasant leagues in the western coffee zones.⁵⁰ Though the PCS could influence the leagues this never translated into direct control⁵¹ For example, the PCS could barely restrain peasants in the Ahuachapàn department at the end of 1931. The elite following the uprising of 1932, though, would use these links, as justification for a crackdown.

In this politically charged organizational atmosphere, President Pio Romero Bosque, the last of the so-called Meléndez Quiñónez dynasty, called for open elections to occur in January, 1931. As the economic crisis deepened, the *Partido Laborista*, or Labor Party, and its presidential candidate Arturo Araujo, a wealthy landowner with a message of agrarian reform, became increasingly popular. With support from the majority of the urban middle and working classes, students, peasants, and Augustin Farabundo Martí's recently organized Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), Araujo was elected President in a close and bitter race. He assumed office on March 1, 1931.⁵²

By December, lack of success by the reform government led to its ouster by a group of young, discontented army officers. In February 1931, the officers had asked Araujo to equalize the pay among officers and enlisted men, to pay the military on a monthly instead of daily basis, and to have payday during the first few days of the month. He responded favorably to the ideas, but never acted on them. Araujo neglected what Elam considers the first priority of Latin American presidents—rapid payment of the military.⁵³ From September through November, all the officers in El Salvador went without their salaries. In December, citing public discontent and a threat to the

⁵⁰ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 76.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² North, *Bitter Grounds*, 34; and LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 72.

⁵³ Robert V. Elam, "The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45," in *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, 2d ed., Revised and Expanded, eds. Brian Loveman, et al. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1989), 139.

“preservation of their institution,” the military overthrew Araujo’s government and named Vice President General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez as the new leader of the country.⁵⁴ The United States, citing the provisions of “The Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1923,”⁵⁵ refused to recognize the *golpe* as legitimate, and did not open relations with the Hernández Martínez government, which had agreed to let the PCS participate in local elections.

On January 22, 1932, a rebellion in the urban and rural sectors of El Salvador occurred. Afraid of a Communist take-over, the United States and Canada offered to intervene with marines from ships hurriedly stationed off the coast of El Salvador. The Salvadoran government, recalling the five-year-stay of U.S. marines in nearby Nicaragua, declined; and by the end of the third day it had crushed the first Communist-inspired insurrection in the Americas.

Although the urban and rural movements were linked by the general crisis and the ties between the peasant leagues, the PCS, and the FRTS, the uprisings were distinct in several areas. The urban uprising planned by the PCS after the municipal elections scheduled for January 3-5 was canceled. Central to the plan was a mutiny by military draftees in a garrison in San Salvador. When the hastily organized plan was discovered in advance by the regime the mutiny was suppressed and Farabundo Martí and two of his aides were arrested on January 18. They were in jail during the uprising and subsequent backlash.⁵⁶

Even though there would be no troop support the rest of the PCS leadership decided to go ahead with the urban insurrection. The regime’s advance knowledge made

⁵⁴ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 74.

⁵⁵ Edelberto Torres Rivas, “Crisis and Conflict, 1930 to the Present,” in *Central America Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 78.

⁵⁶ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 96, and Liss, *Radical Thought in Central America*, 77.

defeat certain and quick in San Salvador.⁵⁷ The other leaders, including Mario Zapata, Alfonso Luna and Francisco (Chico) Sánchez, were rounded up and executed. The killing of insurrectionists in the capital and Ilopango, though small compared to the slaughter in the rural areas, claimed the lives of hundreds of unionists and supporters of the deposed Araujo.

The rural insurrection, also starting on the night of January twenty-second, lasted three days, and was concentrated in the western, intensively farmed coffee departments of Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, and Santa Ana. Peasant leaders were in contact with the PCS, but operated with considerable independence.⁵⁸ The headquarters of the revolt was in the village of Juayúa, an area in which coffee growers had expropriated the traditional lands of the indigenous Pipil before the 1881 and 1882 land decrees.⁵⁹

Led by local Pipil *caciques* (headmen of the villages), such as José Feliciano Ama and Felipe Neri, the main organizational units of the revolt were the strictly Indian religious organizations—the *cofradías*. These associations mixed indigenous and Catholic customs and created cohesive groups of the population that were tapped by the PCS.⁶⁰ The driving point of the uprising was the massive hunger and poverty of the indigenous people. Dunkerley argues that due to these facts and the independence of the *caciques* from the PCS, the revolt took “a resolutely peasant character in its ritualistic celebrations and humiliation—infrequently, execution—of local representatives of the state and landlord class.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Elam, “The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45,” 142.

⁵⁸ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 96.

⁵⁹ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 38; and Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 96.

⁶⁰ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 36.

⁶¹ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 96-97.

Dunkerley also maintains that this distinctly Indian character limited support for the rebellion, as reflected in its failure to take control of any major city. By the second day, their control of villages had been reduced to Juayúa alone.⁶² The *campesinos*, armed only with machetes, met a well-equipped army which easily decimated them. This clash and its immediate aftermath became known simply as the *Matanza* (massacre).

Though the *campesinos* only killed a total of around 100 officials and elite, the backlash was harsh. Anderson documents what occurred:

Around Izalco a roundup of suspects began. As most of the rebels, except the leaders, were difficult to identify, arbitrary classifications were set up. All those who were found carrying machetes were guilty. All those of a strong Indian cast of features, or who were dressed in a scruffy, *campesino* costume, were considered guilty. To facilitate the roundup, all those who had *not* taken part in the uprising were invited to present themselves at the *comandancia* to receive clearance papers. When they arrived they were examined and those with the above-mentioned attributes were seized. Tied by the thumbs to those before and after them in the customary Salvadoran manner, groups of fifty were led to the back wall of the church of Asunción in Izalco, and against that massive wall were cut down by firing squads.⁶³

By the end of January, the Hernández Martínez government was encouraging the elite to form paramilitary outfits armed by the military to patrol the streets of San Salvador and kill “Communists” on sight.⁶⁴ These civilian forces were the predecessors of the right-wing death squads, which became most active in the early 1980s.

At his trial Farabundo Martí was said, “I do not wish to defend myself because my work and that of my young comrades will be justified.” He was executed on February 1. His ideas would unite El Salvador’s dispossessed for years to come.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid, 97.

⁶³ Anderson, *Matanza*, 131. *Matanza* was for a number of years the only book which dealt with the events of 1932 in El Salvador. North criticizes Anderson stating that he: “focuses on the urban and party influences rather than analyzing the structure of the peasant community” (North, *Bitter Grounds*, 36.)

⁶⁴ Elam, “The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45,” 143.

⁶⁵ Farabundo Martí quoted by Anderson, *Matanza*, 66.

After the massacre, which claimed around 30,000 peasant lives—roughly 1 percent of the Salvadoran population,⁶⁶ the United States and the oligarchy both reversed their respective views of the government. The *Matanza* proved to the United States that Hernández Martínez could maintain order in El Salvador. Preferring order to “indigenous radicalism,” the United States granted informal recognition later that year.⁶⁷ The oligarchy, pleased at the deaths of thousands of troublesome peasants made Hernández Martínez a “hero.”⁶⁸ For the rest of the century until the end of the civil war the government used the threat of Communism as a reason to systematically exclude reformers through violent means.⁶⁹

Hernández Martínez’ regime can be viewed as a fundamental realignment of political power in the country, and the beginning of a system of institutional military rule, which, though enduring several crises, lasted until 1979. In this system the oligarchy allowed the military to control governmental policy, especially domestic order, while retaining real economic power. The oligarchy achieved this through either controlling joint economic endeavors, or simply refusing to comply with laws it viewed as unfavorable.

Institutional Military Rule And Modernization (1933-1960)

Hernández Martínez’ dictatorship suffered a stormy existence. Though Hernández Martínez devalued the colón, a measure long sought by the oligarchy, he

⁶⁶ Durham, *Scarcity and Survival in Central America*, 44.

⁶⁷ Sources differ on when formal recognition was granted. Dunkerley argues it was 1936 (*Power in the Isthmus*, 98); while LaFeber argues it was 1934 (*Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d edition, 75-6).

⁶⁸ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 75.

⁶⁹ Kenneth M. Coleman, “The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power: The View from 1990,” in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U.S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, eds. Kenneth M. Coleman, et al. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 43-44.

initiated many programs the coffee growers disliked. In 1934 his regime began a central bank, which took over issuing notes from private institutions. A state credit bank followed the next year, but oligarchic interests were allowed to control 60 percent of the shares (the *Asociación de Cafetaleros*—40 percent; and the *Asociación de Ganaderos*—20 percent). This crafty move, along with the reorganization in 1942 of the primary national body for coffee marketing, from the *Asociación de Café* (1929) into the *Compañía Salvadoreña de Café*, integrated the private sector into state ventures it previously had opposed. In addition, the government pushed through exchange controls (1935) and tariffs to protect artisan enterprise (1939).⁷⁰

During this time the government increased the strength of the National Guard and brutally suppressed even moderate political opposition that it regarded as “Communist” subversion. By 1934, Hernández Martínez had replaced almost all civilians in his government with members of the National Guard, which had become the “dictator’s praetorian guard.”⁷¹

Hernández Martínez strengthened links with the Axis powers, and by November 1938, El Salvador, for \$200,000 worth of coffee, had acquired six Italian Caproni bombers, three Fiat tanks, three heavy tractors (easily converted into armored cars), and the use of Italian military technicians. As late as 1940 officers were sent to Germany and Italy for training, and a member of the German Wehrmacht was in charge of the military training school (*Escuela Militar*) in El Salvador. June 1940 saw support for the Allied cause become a national crime and a month after Italy’s declaration of war, three hundred

⁷⁰ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 98.

⁷¹ For an excellent study of the effects of systematic exclusion of reformists see Coleman, “The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power,” 33-54. Coleman put forward the thesis that there is “a correlation between political history and the degree to which revolutionary struggle has advanced.” He argues that in Central American countries the more reformist elements have been excluded in the first seventy-five years of this century, the more likely successful revolutionary struggle will take place in the last twenty-five years. (*Ibid*, 35)

of Hernández Martínez's *Pro-Patria* party Blackshirts paraded through downtown San Salvador.⁷²

Yet, Axis sympathy became economically undesirable. By 1940 El Salvador's European coffee market, disrupted by World War II, had been replaced with United States trade. The Inter-American Coffee Agreement of 1940 established quotas and set coffee prices at the 1920 level of 13.4 cents per pound—a low but guaranteed price which provided a stable market for the Salvadorans. Central to the agreement was severing ties with Axis regimes and following the United States example of declaring war on them. So Hernández Martínez reversed his position, publicly supporting the Allied cause in October of the same year. By 1943 the United States accounted for 96.4 percent of Salvadoran coffee sales, up from 14.9 percent in 1930.⁷³

Though willing to change his opinion on international issues, Hernández Martínez' repression at home, along with the dominant principle of retaining control of the government, remained constant. Despite growing public and military discontent, Hernández Martínez, through a series of "reforms" to the election law, continued as president until 1944.⁷⁴

In early April of that year, a massive strike brought the entire city of San Salvador to a standstill after an attempted coup met with severe repression. Hernández Martínez ordered mass arrests after the failed coup and executed ten army officers accused of leading the revolt. The April 10 executions, by a firing squad in San Salvador, were an extremely rare occurrence Latin American military history.⁷⁵ In addition to these public

⁷² Elam, "The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45," 144-45; and Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 154n9.

⁷³ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 90, 117-18.

⁷⁴ Elam, "The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45," 147.

⁷⁵ Michael McClintock, *The American Connection, Volume 1: State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador* (London: Zed Books, 1985; 1987), 130. The following section relies heavily on Anderson's and McClintock's research.

executions, Hernández Martínez violently put down a student uprising causing a loss of support from middle class civilians, who then joined in the strike.⁷⁶ On May 8, responding to a visit from the U.S. ambassador, Hernández Martínez abdicated. Through the strike, civilians had helped cause the abdication of a president. Yet, the nation still remained under military control without a functioning democratic government.⁷⁷

General Andres Menéndez became interim president for five months, and allowed enough political space that formerly clandestine groups involved in the strike became confident enough to engage in public activities. On October 21, 1944, San Salvador was filled with thousands of people celebrating the overthrow the day before of Guatemalan dictator General Federico Ponce Vaides in a young officer's coup. During the celebrations, a former member of Hernández Martínez's government—Colonial Osmin Aguirre y Salinas, toppled Menéndez's government. Described by Anderson as "the personification of the coffee-grower interests,"⁷⁸ he launched a massacre of the protesters in the square, and during his short tenure as provisional president carried out a campaign of terror against all who supported the ouster of Hernández Martínez.⁷⁹

In 1945 General Salvador Castañeda Castro became president in an election controlled by Aguirre. Continuing his predecessor's "reign of terror" he permanently drove out most of the radicals living in El Salvador.⁸⁰ The most far reaching achievement of Castañeda Castro's government was giving the Minister of War power over all of the security forces, thus removing the ability of the president, or police directors, to nullify

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Matanza*, 152.

⁷⁷ Elam, "The Military and Politics in El Salvador, 1927-45," 147-50.

⁷⁸ Anderson, *Matanza*, 153.

⁷⁹ McClintock, *The American Connection*, 131.

⁸⁰ Anderson, *Matanza*, 152-3.

the military hierarchy.⁸¹ This action was to safeguard against future presidents attempting to create Hernández Martínez-type dictatorships.

When it appeared that Castañeda Castro, like Hernández Martínez, intended to illegitimately extend his term in office, young officers in the army revolted. On December 14, 1948 “the Majors’ Coup,”⁸² also known as the “Revolution of 1948,”⁸³ brought officers to power that embarked on a program combining moderate reforms with political repression for radical elements of society.⁸⁴

The military’s official party, the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity (*Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática*; PRUD), founded in 1949 by Oscar Osorio elected him unopposed to the presidency in 1950.⁸⁵ His administration drew up a new constitution which guaranteed the rights of workers, and enacted some modest reforms in the urban sectors, including starting a social security system. With the help of a general administrative survey by a private U.S. consulting firm, the government’s performance and the economy greatly improved.⁸⁶

The general disposition of his regime was to make government play a more “functional” role in the economy by promoting industry in various ways. This included building the largest hydroelectric plant in Central America, the Río Lempa, and constructing a modern port in Acajutla to increase foreign trade.⁸⁷

⁸¹ McClintock, *The American Connection*, 131.

⁸² Anderson, *Matanza*, 153.

⁸³ McClintock, *The American Connection*, 132.

⁸⁴ William M. Leogrande and Carla Anne Robbins, “Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador,” in *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, 2d ed., Revised and Expanded, eds. Brian Loveman, et al. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1989), 481.

⁸⁵ McClintock, *The American Connection*, 133-4. Anderson argues that Osorio defeated José Asencio Menéndez in a 1950 election “marked by charges of fraud (*Matanza*, 153).”

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Torres Rivas, “Crisis and Conflict, 1930 to the Present,” 88.

Elevated coffee prices during the postwar period, combined with modest agricultural diversification, caused El Salvador's economy to boom.⁸⁸ By 1957 the value of Salvadoran coffee exports was 5 times that of 1945 (Table 3).⁸⁹ This came about due to coffee prices rising over 800 percent between 1940 and the peak period of 1954-1957 (Table 4); and because coffee production increased from 73,000 metric tons in 1949 to 83,200 in 1957.⁹⁰

Table 3. Salvadoran Coffee Exports, 1940-57

	1940 <i>a</i>	1950 <i>a</i>	1957 <i>b</i>
Value (1945 \$ millions)	12.2	68.9	61.1

Sources: *a.* James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 153n6; *b.* Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 352.

Note: 1. Number is five times the value of 1945 exports—a conservative figure. See above, source *b.*

Table 4. Salvadoran Coffee Prices

	1925 <i>a</i>	1930 <i>a</i>	1940 <i>a</i>	1945 <i>a</i>	1950 <i>b</i>	1954-57 <i>b</i>
Value (U.S. cents/lb)	25	16	7	13.4	40.44	61.55 ₁

Sources: *a.* James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 106n7; *b.* James Wilkie (ed.), *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1980), table 2526, p. 340.

Note: 1. average price, peak period

Starting in 1945 the oligarchy began to diversify and planted 13,000 hectares of cottonseed. Nursed by state bank credits, "Cotton Fever" swept through the country and by 1956, 40,000 hectares were producing the crop. Salvadoran yields, at 843 kilos per hectare, were some of the highest in the world.⁹¹

An important point to recall is that the "developmentalist program" of the officers did not threaten the overall structure of Salvadoran society. The coffee oligarchy viewed

⁸⁸ Dunkerley, "El Salvador, 1930-89," 61.

⁸⁹ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 352.

⁹⁰ Torres Rivas, "Crisis and Conflict, 1930 to the Present," 90-1. The average of coffee prices in New York from 1940-44 were quoted at from 11.7 cents per pound.

⁹¹ Torres Rivas, "Crisis and Conflict, 1930 to the Present," 92.

modernization as necessary, and a government controlled by the military as favorable for internal security to a true democratic system. This new “partnership between oligarchs and officers” strengthened the Salvadoran military institutional system.⁹² During this same period of economic boom, and regime-building, El Salvador had been stripped of any semblance of economic independence from the United States.

Table 5 illustrates trends in El Salvador’s trade between the years 1915 and 1955. By 1924 German trade with El Salvador had increased at the expense of both the United States and Britain. For the United States this trend reversed after the Depression—showing up as increased trade in 1935. By 1940, World War II and the Inter-American Coffee Agreement of 1940 effectively cut off all Salvadoran trade to Germany. If we use LaFeber’s value of total Salvadoran trade at \$46 million,⁹³ the United States was responsible for over \$39 million of Salvadoran exports in 1945.

Table 5. Exports to and Imports from Three Countries, Five-Year Intervals, 1915-1955
(In Percent)

Year	United States		Germany		United Kingdom	
	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import
1915	50	65	#	#	45	12
1920a	56	79	#	#	36	8
1925b	26	61	18	10	1	13
1930	24	49	29	9	1	13
1935	48	38	13	25	3	14
1940	75	67	#	1	#	8
1945	85	68	#	#	#	5
1950	86	67	#	3	2	4
1955	64	57	17	18	2	4

Sources: a. James Wilkie (ed.), *Statistics and National Policy*, (Los Angeles: University of California, 1974), table 3J, p. 285.

Notes: # = Zero or negligible; a 1919; b 1924

Though the country retained a favorable balance of trade, the money from these transactions only benefited a fraction of Salvadoran society. In 1949 the U.S. State

⁹² Leogrande and Robbins, “Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador,” 481.

⁹³ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 93.

Department's Office of Intelligence Research (OIR), studying why most Latin American countries did not have "stable and democratic systems" argued that:

the economic development of these countries, adapted to the shifting market of the industrial countries of the northern hemisphere and handicapped by a system of large landed estates, was so unbalanced as to prevent the emergence of an economically strong and politically conscious middle class.⁹⁴

The political repression of Osorio's presidency attempted to stifle any political opposition. "Reds" were found in industrial unions and were frequently arrested and exiled. In the early 1950s a government whose reformist program did not extend to internal security declared several states of siege. One vague law called for draconian punishment for a large group of crimes linked to "communist and anarchist doctrines."⁹⁵

When Osorio's 6-year term expired his Minister of Defense, Colonel José María Lemus, replaced him. Lemus reopened the Salvadoran borders to those exiled by Osorio, and allowed some urban trade union activity. Between 1958 and 1960, though, a recession in the United States caused a steep drop in coffee prices and sales. The inability of Lemus' government to counter the effects, combined with a refusal to recognize any of the opposition's congressional wins caused economic and civic unrest. The response, tied to anxiety over the Cuban revolution of 1959, was the harsh repression of a student protest. The government's declared state of siege was met with greater protests, followed by yet harsher repression.⁹⁶

On October 26, 1960, a reform-minded junta, fearful that Lemus' repression would lead to a revolution, overthrew his government, stating that Lemus had "governed

⁹⁴ Office of Intelligence Research, No. 4780, "Political Developments and Trends in Other American Republics in the Twentieth Century," 1 Oct. 1949, 5, National Archives, Record Group 59; cited in LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 93.

⁹⁵ "Law for the Defense of the Democratic and Constitutional Order (27 November 1952)" from the 1953 Ministry of the Interior annual report; cited in McClintock, *The American Connection*, 135.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

outside the law.”⁹⁷ The new government, composed of three military officers and three liberal civilians, immediately began releasing Lemus’ political prisoners and promised free elections in 1962. The U.S., fearful that the civilians in the junta were sympathetic to Fidel Castro, whose revolution had toppled Cuba’s U.S.-supported government in 1959, refused recognition.⁹⁸ In El Salvador nonrecognition proved fatal.

Political Unrest And The Movement Toward Civil War (1961-1980)

In late January 1961 right-wing officers, led by Colonel Julio Rivera, overthrew the junta. They promised to cut all relations with Castro, welcome foreign investment, and crack down on students.⁹⁹ PRUD was replaced by the Party of National Reconciliation (Partido de Conciliación; PCN) as the new official party sponsored by the military. The PCN allowed more political freedom in the center than Lemus and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC; formed in 1960) was allowed to win fourteen congressional seats in 1964 and in 1966 the PDC candidate, José Napoleón Duarte was allowed to win the San Salvador mayoralty. The political space acted as “a safety valve and [helped] to refurbish the image of the regime within the Alliance for Progress.”¹⁰⁰

The Kennedy administration recognized the government and began implementing the Alliance for Progress program in the country. By linking access to money for reforms to “military counterinsurgency programs,” the president hoped that the “peaceful revolutions” of the Alliance would bring true social change. Kennedy warned that unless this happened, violent revolutions were “inevitable.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Communiqué issued by the junta cited in *ibid*, 136.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹⁹ Barry and Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Dunkerley, “El Salvador, 1930-89,” 62.

¹⁰¹ Kennedy quoted in LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 156.

After a Central American Common Market was created in 1961, U.S. government and private capital poured into the region trying to shield it from Castro-like revolutions.¹⁰² After the Salvadorans promised changes, including land reform, they received from the United States over \$1 million yearly in military assistance during the 1960s and over \$65 million in North American investments. President Lyndon B. Johnson declared with pride that El Salvador was “a model for the other Alliance countries.”¹⁰³

Not readily visible in the Alliance statistics was the corruption. The Alliance helped the elite and military tighten their grip on the country as they realized funds could be obtained without instituting the promised reforms. When more land was needed for cotton and sugar production, peasants and tenant farmers were driven off their plots. During this period (1950-60) staple food supplies for the poor decreased dramatically, and “Salvadorans ranked among the world’s five most malnourished peoples.”¹⁰⁴

By 1969, over 300,000 Salvadorans had fled to neighboring Honduras looking for food and work.¹⁰⁵ Honduras began expelling the migrants in June 1969, causing El Salvador to file a complaint to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission that Honduras was committing genocide. On July 14, the two nations went to war for four days in what became known as the Soccer War, because the conflict followed three soccer games in the qualifying rounds for the 1969 World Cup.¹⁰⁶ Thousands of people on both sides of the border were killed and over 130,000 homeless refugees returned to El

¹⁰² Murat Williams, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, 1961 to 1964 in an interview conducted by Mike Farrell in *El Salvador: Another Vietnam* (New York: Icarus Films, 1981).

¹⁰³ Quoted in LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 175.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 176.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 177.

¹⁰⁶ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 61.

Salvador. The decade-old Central American Common Market collapsed, thus closing important markets El Salvador had begun to rely on. Honduras sealed off the border which had acted as a safety valve for El Salvador.¹⁰⁷

Between 1961 and 1971 El Salvador's capital-intensive manufacturing sector grew by 24 percent, while employment in this sector grew by only 6 percent.¹⁰⁸ However, the number of self-employed in nonagricultural sectors overall tripled in this era, creating an industrial group that made up 42 percent of urban wage earners and 27 percent of those economically active in this sector.¹⁰⁹ This relatively well-developed group, combined with the middle-class and a marginalized group of street peddlers—"running into the tens of thousands"—would later make-up the mass movements contributing to El Salvador's unrest.¹¹⁰

As was the case in the 1920s, increased industrialization led to trade union organization. From 1962 to 1972 union membership effectively doubled to 49,886 members,¹¹¹ though labor militancy quickly brought repression and fear of another *Matanza*. From 1948 to 1952 the Committee of Worker Union Reorganization (*Comitè de Reorganización Obrero Sindical*, CROSS), had existed legally. When Colonel José María Lemus allowed opposition parties in 1960, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and the First Union Congress (*Primer Congreso Sindical Nacional*, PCSN) formed. Out of the latter's organizational base grew the militant General Confederation of the Workers of El Salvador (*Confederación General de Trabajadores de El Salvador*,

¹⁰⁷ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 177.

¹⁰⁸ Harold Jung, "Class Struggle and Civil War in El Salvador," in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 64, 69.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 69.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 70.

¹¹¹ North, *Bitter Grounds*, 55. In 1962, the number of union members was 25,917. By 1975 union membership was at 64,186. The following section relies heavily on North, 55-57.

CGTS).¹¹² To counter radicalism, a U.S.-affiliated trade union, the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT),¹¹³ created the Salvadoran General Confederation (*Confederaciòn General de El Salvador*, CGS) in 1958.¹¹⁴

As Salvadoran labor shifted leftward, government repression increased. However, the CGS, now backed by the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), an AFL-CIO organization with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) links, avoided persecution, and in fact encouraged the persecution of CGTS members.¹¹⁵

In 1963, the radicalization of *campesinos* led the CIA, Agency for International Development (AID), and U.S. military advisors to organize the National Democratic Organization (ORDEN), as a pro-government peasant organization.¹¹⁶ The group, besides gathering intelligence, also acted as a paramilitary outfit that attacked alleged subversives—destroying their villages, killing them, and abducting others.¹¹⁷

Out of ORDEN arose the White Hand (*Mano Blanca*) and Regalado's Armed Forces (FAR), two of the country's first death squads.¹¹⁸ Evidence shows that Roberto D'Aubuisson, a member of the CIA-created, presidential intelligence service ANSESAL, coordinated their activities. By the 1980s, D'Aubuisson's role had propelled him to national prominence.

¹¹² Ibid, 56.

¹¹³ Barry and Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book*, 215; and Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as Organizers* (Albuquerque: The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, second printing, 1987), 4.

¹¹⁴ Barry and Preusch, *AIFLD in Central America*, 32. Blee calls this union the General Confederation of the Workers of El Salvador. For clarity, the former will be used.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. For a detailed looked at the CIA links see *ibid*, 6-10.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 33.

¹¹⁷ Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 468.

¹¹⁸ Tom Barry, *Central America Inside Out: The Essential Guide to Its Societies, Politics, and Economies* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 166. Dr. Antonio Regalado turned a boyscout troop into the deathsquad FAR. *Ibid*, 206-7 (note 30).

To counter rural unions the AIFLD organized the government-approved Salvadoran Communal Union (*Unión Comunal Salvadoreños*, UCS). By 1975, the UCS had organized some 70,000 members into its centrist program.¹¹⁹ Although persecution of groups like the Catholic Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (*Federación Católica de Campesinos Salvadoreños*, FECCAS) increased, repression of UCS was very limited.¹²⁰

Church persecution resulted when its traditional alliances with the military and the oligarchy came under fire during Vatican II (1962-65). During the 1960s, under Pope John XXIII, the Church began going through liturgical and organizational changes. He issued two encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), which argued for the human rights of education, a decent standard of living, and political participation.¹²¹ While he still criticized socialism, he also challenged the absolute right of private property and the Church's support of capitalism.¹²²

Vatican II shifted the Church's focus to what Blee argues was a "social institution based on a living and changing community."¹²³ Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967), emphasized this further, and he called on the Latin American bishops to analyze their societies.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 366.

¹²⁰ Barry and Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book*, 216.

¹²¹ Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People: The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America—The Catholic Church in Conflict with U.S. Policy* (New York: Doubleday and Viking Penguin, 1980, 1982, and 1991), 31.

¹²² As early as 15 May 1891, Pope Leo XIII ("the worker's Pope") in the *Rerum Novarum*, the Catholic Church put forward criticisms about the labor conditions capitalism caused. Despite this, liberation theology views Vatican II as a turning point in church doctrine.

¹²³ Kathleen M. Blee, "The Catholic Church and Central American Politics," in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U.S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, eds. Kenneth M. Coleman, et al. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 57.

¹²⁴ Raymond Bonner, *Weakness and Deceit: U.S. Policy and El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 66-67.

Vatican II was implemented in the region at the second convention of the bishops of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM II) at Medellín, Colombia in 1968. During this time traditionalists in the church who were committed to moderate reform while others, such as Brazilian Bishop Dom Helder, asked for the creation of a “church of the poor.”¹²⁵

The voices arguing for dramatic change won out at CELAM II. They produced documents which argued that “Latin American nations had not been well served by either capitalist or Communist models of development.” Instead, CELAM II called for “new models of society, created through active participation of the masses.”¹²⁶

Brazilian Paulo Freire’s model, in which communication between teachers and students on the issues of daily life results in education and the possible dismantling of “oppressive structures,” was illustrative. This model was used by a number of priests, nuns, and lay workers in El Salvador who combined the religious and political implications of the daily life experiences of their impoverished constituency into lessons about injustice.¹²⁷

The so-called “base communities” consisted of groups of people from similar backgrounds, income levels, and types of employment. Priests organized peasants, who began to question why the elite lived in luxury while they were starving. Through base communities, CELAM II’s doctrines of social justice spread rapidly throughout Latin America.¹²⁸ As Salvadoran theologian Jon Sobrino states:

In El Salvador . . . poverty has a primary relationship with death. . . . Faced with this situation, the church must choose life. This must be done insofar as a *Salvadoran* church is concerned, because without that option [for the poor] the

¹²⁵ Quoted in Blee, “The Catholic Church and Central American Politics,” 58.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 59.

church would not be responding . . . and would be neither credible nor relevant. (Original emphasis)¹²⁹

CELAM II gave birth to the “theology of liberation,” based on the writings of Latin American theologians such as Sobrino and Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez.¹³⁰ Liberation theologians accepted Karl Marx’s class analysis, while rejecting his political ideology as incompatible with Christianity. Gutiérrez used Marxism as a way of analyzing the causes of the poverty and injustice in El Salvador and other countries in Latin America. He argued that instead of the standard Judeo-Christian tradition of deductive theology, the process should be inductive. The deductive process

. . . imposes its own, prior idea of God on to Christ, and if he does not fit it, he is twisted and deformed to achieve that purpose. . . , [while an inductive process shows,] the whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is really the history of Israel and of Jesus, set forth in the most varied literary genres. The Event always preceded the Word.¹³¹

Accusing the Church of being more concerned with rules and rituals than with people, liberation theologians called for a social analysis that was based on the differing spiritual and cultural perspectives of people in individual societies.¹³² They argued that the church should not lead people in a predetermined direction, but guarantee that they have the freedom to determine their own direction.¹³³ In the eyes of the elites of El Salvador and elsewhere, Marxism, base communities, and unions linked the Church to a growing revolutionary threat.

¹²⁹ Jon Sobrino, “The Option for Life: Challenge to the Church in El Salvador,” in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 138-9. Sobrino is El Salvador’s leading proponent of liberation theology.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Blee, “The Catholic Church and Central American Politics,” 59.

¹³¹ Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, 30.

¹³² Blee, “The Catholic Church and Central American Politics,” 59.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 57.

This threat significantly increased in the 1970s as five guerrilla groups formed.¹³⁴ In 1970, a radical wing of the PCS, led by Salvador Cayetano Carpio, formed the armed *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación-Farabundo Martí* (FPL) as a response to ORDEN and other right-wing paramilitary groups.¹³⁵ The founders of *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP) were disenchanted ex-PCS members, middle-class students influenced by Castro's revolution, radicalized religious activists, and Christian Democrats.¹³⁶ ERP resulted, in part, from the election fraud of 1972. Working for reform, Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte, an engineer schooled at Notre Dame, and his PDC running mate, Guillermo Ungo, were handily winning the presidential election when the national radio station went dead. When broadcast resumed, however, Colonel Arturo Molina, the army's candidate, led the voting. The fraud brought an attempted coup that ended with 300 people injured or killed. After being arrested and severely beaten, Duarte was forced into exile.¹³⁷

A 1975 internal crisis rocked the ERP. When one of its leaders, Roque Dalton García, an internationally regarded Salvadoran historian and poet, suggested a less militant policy to gain mass support, he was executed.¹³⁸ A third guerrilla group formed when large faction left the ERP, in protest of the execution, to form the Armed Forces of National Resistance (*Resistencia Nacional*, RN—also known as *Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional* or FARN).

¹³⁴ The five are: the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación-Farabundo Martí* (FPL); the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP); the *Resistencia Nacional* (RN)—also known as *Fuerzas Armadas de Resistencia Nacional* or (FARN); the *Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos* (PRTC); and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL).

¹³⁵ Jung, "Class Struggle and Civil War in El Salvador," 77.

¹³⁶ This summation comes from LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 245; and Robert S. Leiken, "The Salvadoran Left," in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 189.

¹³⁷ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 244.

¹³⁸ Jung, "Class Struggle and Civil War in El Salvador," 77.

In the mid-Seventies, the RN soon made an alliance with the *Frente de Acción Popular Unificada* (FAPU), breaking the traditional separation of armed factions from mass organizations. FAPU, a broad coalition, included teachers, *campesinos*, Communist party members, professors, and radicalized clergy.¹³⁹ By the next year, two FAPU unions, FECCAS and the teacher's union ANDES, left and joined the *Unión de Trabajadores del Campo* (UTC) to form the *Bloque Popular Revolucionario* (BPR). The UTC soon established links with the FPL that mirrored the RN-FAPU relationship.¹⁴⁰

In the 1970s two more guerrilla groups formed: the *Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores Centroamericanos* (PRTC, 1976) and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL). The Costa Rican-based PRTC and its political wing, the *Movimiento de Liberación Popular* (MLP), wanted a regional revolution to encompass Central America. Stating that armed revolt was necessary, the PCS, under Jorgè Shafik Handal, formed a guerrilla wing—the FAL.¹⁴¹

In February 1978, the ERP formed a political arm, the *Liga Popular 28 de Febrero* (LP-28), named in commemoration of the “Monday Massacre” of 1977.¹⁴² Blatant fraud in the 1977 election had brought General Carlos Humberto Romero—the “far-right, repression-without-reform faction” candidate—to power.¹⁴³ A five-day occupation of San Salvador's Plaza Libertad by thousands of peaceful opposition party (UNO) supporters followed. At two in the morning on February 28, troops moved in and

¹³⁹ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 371; and Leiken, “The Salvadoran Left,” 189.

¹⁴⁰ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 372.

¹⁴¹ Ibid; Barry and Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book*, 204; and Barry, *Central America Inside Out*, 139.

¹⁴² Leiken, “The Salvadoran Left,” 190; and Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, 73.

¹⁴³ Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., “El Salvador: A Political Chronology,” in their *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 54.

opened fire, killing over two hundred people.¹⁴⁴ Over 1000 people, including the UNO candidate Ernesto Claramount, had taken refuge in the *El Rosario* church. The Red Cross and Salvadoran Archbishop Chàvez y Gonzàlez arranged a 4 A.M. truce. The government declared a state of siege the next day.¹⁴⁵

As military tensions increased and peaceful options closed, the reformist center moved increasingly toward the revolutionary left. Ideological differences were subordinated and group distinctions blurred. The reformists in El Salvador were crushed and society became polarized between those who would use violence to defend the status quo and those who would use violence to overthrow it.¹⁴⁶

Charged with inciting class warfare, CELAM-influenced priests and communities became targets.¹⁴⁷ A right-wing death squad killed Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande, a teenager, and a peasant in his seventies as they drove to the town of Paisnal for mass.¹⁴⁸ In January (1977), a month prior to his death, Father Grande had spoken prophetically at a peasant march:

In this country a poor priest or a poor catechist from our community will be lied about and threatened; they will kidnap him under cover of darkness and they might even kill him.

I greatly fear that very soon the Bible and the gospel will not be allowed within the confines of our country. Only the bindings will arrive, nothing else, because all the pages are subversive—they are against sin. And if Jesus was to cross the border . . . they would arrest him. . . . accuse him of being unconstitutional and subversive, a revolutionary, . . . [with] ideas contrary to democracy. . . . They would crucify him again, . . .¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Bonner, *Weakness and Deceit*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, 73.

¹⁴⁶ Coleman, "The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power," 42-43.

¹⁴⁷ Lernoux, *Cry of the People*, 70.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 73.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 74.

Father Grande became a martyr. Ignoring the government's state of siege, over 100,000 people attended his funeral in San Salvador, the only Mass in the country that Sunday. The archbishop, seven other bishops, and four hundred priests were in attendance.¹⁵⁰ The Church declared three days of mourning after his death and warned that all violence, from the left and right, creates more violence.

Violence did follow as the FPL kidnapped and murdered the country's foreign minister, Mauricio Borgonovo Pohl. Though the Church strongly condemned the kidnapping, the government launched "Operation Rutilio," in which an estimated three hundred peasants lost their lives and eight Aguilares-area priests were deported as subversives.¹⁵¹

An increasing number of expulsions of foreign missionaries, kidnappings, and fires on church properties occurred. The violence only increased the commitment of church workers to organize more base communities. This led to more repression and death squads that used slogans such as "Be a patriot, kill a priest."¹⁵²

Oscar Arnulfo Romero (not related to General Romero), a conservative, was appointed archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. Romero quickly moved toward the left as he viewed the Church as being under attack from the right. He went to the Vatican complaining that government repression was increasing the split between the church and the government.¹⁵³

The archbishop's pleas brought international scrutiny to the situation. After the government refused even minor reforms, the United States, fearing another Nicaragua, encouraged an October 15, 1979 coup by younger Salvadoran army officers. The

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 61-62, 75.

¹⁵² Blee, "The Catholic Church and Central American Politics," 61.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 62

Revolutionary Governing Junta, led by Colonel Adolfo Majano, contained important civilians. Romàn Mayorga, rector of the *Universidad Centroamerica*, and Guillermo Ungo, of the Social Democrats, both with ties to the center-left coalition the Popular Forum (*Foro Popular*, FP), gave the junta legitimacy.¹⁵⁴

In January 1980, however, civilian members of the junta and the entire cabinet resigned in protest when efforts to force the ultra-right Defense Minister, Colonel José Guillermo, into retirement, failed. Washington kept silent at the *derechización*, (rightward drift) of the government it continued to fund.¹⁵⁵ Popular organizations, including the BPR, FAPU, LP-28, MPL, and the Democratic National Union (UDN), created the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses (*Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas*, CRM), and 200,000 members marched in San Salvador on January 22.¹⁵⁶

The only reformist group to join the second junta was the Christian Democrats. In February, largely due to U.S. pressure, the government nationalized banking and announced a land reform program. In response, death squads fired on demonstrations and killed more of the reform-minded center, including the Attorney General, Christian Democratic Mario Zamora.¹⁵⁷

Archbishop Romero repudiated “the dictatorship of the rich”¹⁵⁸ and in a February letter to President Carter recounted how U.S. aid had only increased government-sponsored violence. To defend human rights Carter must:

—Prohibit military aid to the Salvadoran government;

¹⁵⁴ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 247-48.

¹⁵⁵ Diskin and Sharpe, “El Salvador,” 56.

¹⁵⁶ Gettleman, et al., “El Salvador: A Political Chronology,” 56.

¹⁵⁷ Diskin and Sharpe, “El Salvador,” 56.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Sobrino, “The Option for Life: Challenge to the Church in El Salvador,” 139.

—Guarantee that your government will not intervene, directly or indirectly, with military, economic or diplomatic pressure in determining the destiny of the Salvadoran people.¹⁵⁹

While saying mass on March 24, Archbishop Romero was assassinated. The assassination—masterminded by D'Aubuisson¹⁶⁰—caused many laity and pastoral workers to either flee the country or go underground, actively supporting the revolutionaries.¹⁶¹ Shortly before his murder, the Archbishop had prophesied, “If I am killed, I shall rise again in the struggle of the Salvadoran people.”¹⁶² To peasants and local religious leaders the Church became a symbol of resistance to the government.

Against this backdrop, the second junta dissolved on March 28, 1980 as moderate Christian Democrats, including Mariò's brother Rubèn Zamora, resigned from the government and their party. They formed the Popular Social Christian Movement (MPSC), which joined with the CRM in a Democratic Revolutionary Front (*Frente Democrático Revolucionario*, FDR), the largest political movement in Salvadoran history.¹⁶³

On November 28, perhaps in response to a series of strikes staged in the summer, governmental security forces murdered and mutilated six FDR leaders. Seeing that nonviolent political opposition in El Salvador had become impossible, the leadership,

¹⁵⁹ Monsignor Oscar A. Romero, “Avoiding Bloodshed: A Letter to President Carter,” in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador. Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 136.

¹⁶⁰ D'Aubuisson has long been linked to the assassination. In 1993 the Commission on the Truth in El Salvador stated, “There is full evidence that . . . Roberto D'Aubuisson gave the order to assassinate the Archbishop and gave precise instructions to members of his security service, acting as a ‘death squad,’ to organize and supervise the assassination.” Quoted from United Nations, *From Madness To Hope: Report of the Commission on the Truth* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1 April 1993), 131.

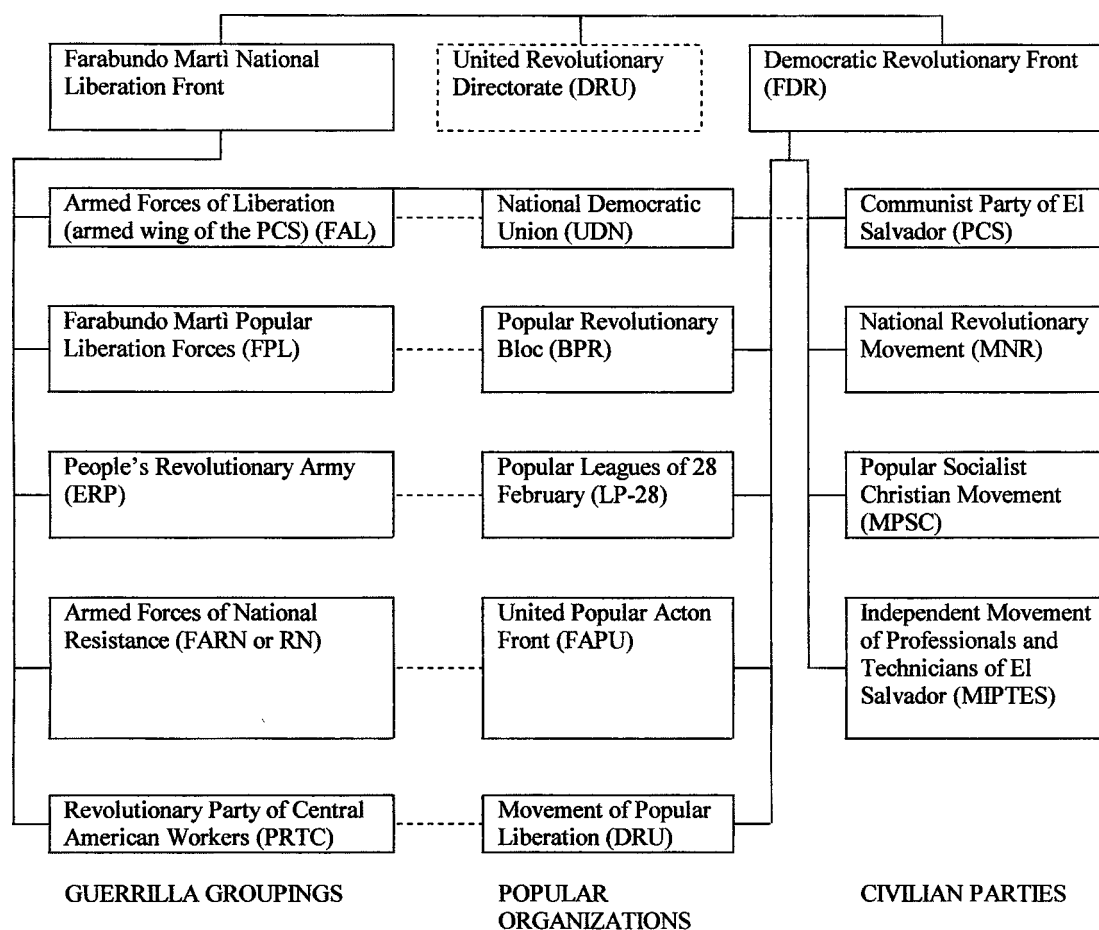
¹⁶¹ Blee, “The Catholic Church and Central American Politics,” 62.

¹⁶² Quoted in Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 471.

¹⁶³ The preceding synthesis relies heavily on Barry, *Central America Inside Out*, 140-42; Barry and Preusch, *The Central American Fact Book*, 206-7; and Diskin and Sharpe, “El Salvador,” 57-60.

including the newly appointed president, Social Democrat Ungo, went underground,¹⁶⁴ forming a strongly nationalistic alliance with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*, FMLN), the coordinating committee of the guerrillas that had been created in October.¹⁶⁵ Table 6 illustrates the alliances of the left.

Table 6. The Salvadoran Opposition



Source: Robert S. Leikin, "The Salvadoran Left," in Marvin E. Getteman, et. Al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated, (New York: Grove Press, 1986, 188.

¹⁶⁴ Diskin and Sharpe, "El Salvador," 59.

¹⁶⁵ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 398. The FMLN was named for the founder of the PCS. Its predecessor, *Dirrección Revolucionaria Unificada* (DRU) was formed in the Spring of 1980.

As state-sponsored violence increased, Carter's support of the junta decreased. On December 3, 1980, in a shallow grave near San Salvador, four U.S. churchwomen were found. They had been raped and killed by members of the National Guard.¹⁶⁶ The next day Carter cut off all military and economic aid and called for a full investigation. In response, the third junta was dissolved, and the PDC's newly returned Duarte became president of the fourth. Satisfied that the inclusion of Duarte gave the government legitimacy, Carter reinstated economic aid.¹⁶⁷

Duarte, however, was powerless. He added a civilian facade to a military-controlled junta, which presided over the bloodiest era since the *Matanza*.¹⁶⁸ Carter failed to realize that the political center Duarte supposedly represented did not exist. The Duarte administration's unwillingness to incorporate the "extra-electoral" popular organizations into the process made legitimacy impossible.¹⁶⁹ The far right controlled the country.

On January 5, 1981 two right-wing hit men assassinated two AIFLD advisors, Michael Hammer and Mark Pearlman, working in El Salvador on the land reform program, and Josè Viera, the president of the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Reform. By the end of Carter's term a full-blown civil war had erupted in El Salvador.

¹⁶⁶ Gettleman, et al., "El Salvador: A Political Chronology," 56, 57; and LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 258. On December 16, 1980, Jeane Kirkpatrick, future U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, in a *Tampa Tribune* interview, hinted how the future administration would interpret political violence by Salvador's right. She said: "The nuns were not just nuns. . . . They were political activists [for] the *frente* [FMLN] and somebody who is using violence to oppose the *frente* killed these nuns." Quoted in Donna Whitson Brett, and Edward T. Brett, *Murdered in Central America: The Story of Eleven U.S. Missionaries* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 193.

¹⁶⁷ Gettleman, et al., "El Salvador: A Political Chronology," 57. U.S. aid to El Salvador for 1980 totaled \$150 million.

¹⁶⁸ William M. LeoGrande, "After the Battle of San Salvador," in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U.S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, eds. Kenneth M. Coleman, et al. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 113.

¹⁶⁹ Diskin and Sharpe, "El Salvador," 59.

The Civil War (1981-1989)

On January 11, 1981, the FMLN, convinced of its ability to overthrow the government, launched a “Final Offensive.” The FDR called a general strike the next day.¹⁷⁰ Fearing an FDR-FMLN victory, Carter, in one of his last acts as president, reinstated military aid to Duarte. This caused the offensive to stall.¹⁷¹

By January 18, 1981, Ronald Reagan’s administration had sent \$10 million to the government. The “Final Offensive” failed and the guerrillas retreated to their bases in northern El Salvador.¹⁷² Unable to achieve a quick victory the guerrillas announced that they were ready for a negotiated peace. Duarte, the FDR, the Pope, the International Christian Democrats, and the Socialist International all agreed to allow El Salvador’s new archbishop, Arturo Rivera y Damas, to broker a negotiated settlement. Washington refused to support this.¹⁷³

The Reagan administration, arguing that “drawing the line” against “communist aggression” was necessary,¹⁷⁴ sent Pentagon officials to advise the Salvadoran military on “operations, planning, coordination, and control of major combat operations.”¹⁷⁵ While

¹⁷⁰ Ibid; and Gettleman, et al., “El Salvador: A Political Chronology,” 57.

¹⁷¹ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 2d ed., 254-55.

¹⁷² Gettleman, et al., “El Salvador: A Political Chronology,” 57; and Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 472.

¹⁷³ Diskin and Sharpe, “El Salvador,” 60.

¹⁷⁴ Then Secretary of State Alexander Haig quoted in Benjamin C. Schartz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building* (Santa Monica: RAND: National Defense Research Institute, 1991), 1.

¹⁷⁵ Walter LaFeber, “Introduction: The Reagan Policy in Historical Perspective,” in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U.S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, eds. Kenneth M. Coleman, et al. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 4; and Department of Defense reports, “U.S. Training Teams in El Salvador as of 31 August, 1982,” and “U.S. Training Teams in El Salvador as of 25 October, 1982,” quoted in Daniel Siegel and Joy Hackel, “El Salvador: Counter Insurgency Revisited,” in *Low Intensity Warfare: Counterinsurgency, Proinsurgency and Antiterrorism in the Eighties*, eds. Michael T. Klare, et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 117.

CIA agents helped security forces become more effective *esquadrones de la muerte* (death squads), U.S. officials claimed that the squads were simply vigilantes who were “taking the law into their own hands.”¹⁷⁶

The Reagan administration argued that the junta, which was responsible for eight hundred civilians deaths a month in 1981,¹⁷⁷ was reformist, and that “prompt, free, and open elections” would show the legitimacy of the government. Officials endorsed land reform to undermine the appeal of the left.¹⁷⁸ The Nationalist Republican Alliance party (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista, ARENA), a coalition of the oligarchy, conservative professionals, and D’Aubuisson’s death-squad network, won the 1982 Constituent Assembly elections. The neo-fascist¹⁷⁹ ARENA, created by D’Aubuisson in September 1981, can be seen as the first independent party of the oligarchy since 1932 and as “a major reorganization” of power in the country.¹⁸⁰

Before 1979, the system of military institutional power survived three major crises: 1) 1944, when the personalist regime of Hernández Martínez was overthrown; 2) 1948-50, when the oligarchy accepted modernization through developmentalist and statist policies; and 3) when, in the aftermath of the reformist junta of 1960, the PCN, replacing the PRUD as the official party, allowed the opposition to win some government seats in

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Enders before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 2, 1983. Quoted in Siegel and Hackel, “El Salvador,” 115.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 129.

¹⁷⁸ Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 473.

¹⁷⁹ “The word fascism is a term not to be thrown about lightly. . . ; yet the ARENA party in El Salvador seemed, at least until its mid-1985 housecleaning, to be a reasonable facsimile of a Central American fascist organization. . . . In classic European fascist parties, extreme nationalism and militarism were main ideological principles. . . . [Recognizing the limits of El Salvador being a weak state] It may be that in the comparative analysis of fascism, a category must be reserved for small-power fascism.” Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., “ARENA: The Salvadoran Right’s Conception of Nationalism and Justice,” in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 162.

¹⁸⁰ Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 351-2.

1963. Though there were changes in appearance the system adapted and persevered with the oligarchy contented with an economic veto over governmental policy until the oligarchy viewed the system as ineffective after the 1979 coup.

ARENA threatened to make D'Aubuisson provisional president, but Álvaro Magaña, a "moderate" banker, was appointed chief executive of El Salvador, after Washington had applied immense pressure. D'Aubuisson became president of the assembly.¹⁸¹ The "demonstration election," which the left boycotted (having received death threats), justified Washington's assertions that the PDC did not have support.¹⁸²

The rightist faction gutted the three-stage land reform program. Phase I initially "limited" landownership to no more than 500 hectares. This preserved the medium-sized land holdings thought to be the "heart of the export sector"—the oligarchy's coffee plantations.¹⁸³

Regardless, the program still nationalized 376 estates. By January 1983, 244 owners were compensated with thirty-year bonds and twenty-two percent of the agricultural land was redistributed among 94,383 families—accounting for twenty-two percent of peasant households. The right channeled Phase I reforms to members of ORDEN and the goal of helping sixty percent of total rural families failed.¹⁸⁴

The right-wing dominated legislature annulled "Phase II" of the reform, which would have affected about 200 farms and benefited another 35 percent of the targeted

¹⁸¹ The following relied heavily on Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 473; Siegel and Hackel, "El Salvador," 129; and Diskin and Sharpe, "El Salvador," 62-4.

¹⁸² Frank Brodhead's, "Demonstration Elections in El Salvador," in Marvin E. Gettleman, et al., *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, revised and updated (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 174-180. Brodhead's thesis is that the elections were for domestic consumption—when results were not favorable to Washington, a way to subvert the results became policy.

¹⁸³ Billie R. Dewalt and Pedro Bidegaray, "The Agrarian Bases of Conflict in Central America," in *Understanding the Central American Crisis: Sources of Conflict, U.S. Policy, and Options for Peace*, eds. Kenneth M. Coleman, et al. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991), 27-28. The following analysis relies heavily on *ibid*, 19-32; and Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 470-471.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*; and Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 470.

population. Phase III, the “land for tiller” program, which allowed sharecroppers and other tenants to claim parcels of land they had been working for years, was also halted. This undercut efforts to attract popular support for the government.¹⁸⁵

The next two years (1982, 1983) saw the FMLN launch offensives that significantly damaged the government’s military and economic potential. The source of the FMLN’s arms was in dispute but:

Contrary to the Reagan administration’s claim, based largely on fabricated or dubious data, that the bulk of these arms came from Cuba, Nicaragua, or other external sources, the evidence seems overwhelming that the most important source of weapons was the capture of U.S.-supplied government arms.¹⁸⁶

The M16-armed rebels’ success led to a shake-up in the military and its tactics. General Carlos Eugenio Vides Casfiova, an advocate of U.S.-devised counterinsurgency doctrines, replaced Defense Minister Josè Guillermo Garcia, the last of the Romero era officers. Under Vides Casfiova’s leadership government troops became more disciplined and human rights abuses lessened. Modern tactics were employed making the military more effective.¹⁸⁷

In 1984 the Salvadoran military began a U.S.-directed air war against the insurgents. Washington made the strafing, bombing, and aerial reconnaissance possible by increasing the number of attack helicopters in the U.S.-exported fleet from nineteen to forty-six.¹⁸⁸ This reconnaissance allowed U.S.-trained pilots to zero in on the rebels and their civilian sympathizers.

The civilians, or *masas*, were predominately elderly people, women, and children living in contested areas such as Morazàn, Usulutàn, and by the Guazapa volcano. This

¹⁸⁵ Dewalt and Pedro Bidegaray, “The Agrarian Bases of Conflict in Central America,” 28.

¹⁸⁶ Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 472.

¹⁸⁷ Siegel and Hackel, “El Salvador,” 118.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

“strategic or logistical rearguard,” as the U.S. embassy in San Salvador called them, “must be killed, terrorized into obedience, or forced to flee contested areas in order ‘to separate the fish from the water.’”¹⁸⁹ El Salvador was engaged in a no-win war of attrition.

By 1984, these tactics—and nominal aid from socialist countries—had increased rebel numbers from the 3,500 surviving the “Final Offensive,” to an estimated 10,500.¹⁹⁰ Correspondingly government troops had risen to 40,000. The FMLN response included three parts:

(1) breaking down into small units to avoid destruction of main-force guerrilla units and to stretch out enemy forces; (2) concentration on economic sabotage, hit and run ambushes, and the use of mines to wear down the government forces and keep them off balance; and (3) placing new emphasis on political propaganda and organizing, particularly in the western provinces and urban centers, to build an infrastructure for spreading the war throughout the country and into the urban areas (particularly San Salvador.) In a sense, the first two elements were designed to buy time for the third to bear fruit.¹⁹¹

That same year, Duarte beat D’Aubuisson in a presidential run-off election, ensuring continued economic and military aid from the United States.¹⁹² His CIA-directed campaign promised peace, agrarian reform, and improved labor conditions. He

¹⁸⁹ US Embassy Cable from El Salvador 25 January 1984, quoted in *ibid*, 119. When asked about this then US Embassy Spokesperson Dan Hamilton argued that “the guerilla relationship with the *masas* complicates matters, . . . civilians do get killed in bombings.”

¹⁹⁰ LaFeber, “Introduction,” 4. This number is the middle of LaFeber’s “9,000 to 12,000.”

¹⁹¹ George Vicker, “The Political Reality After Eleven Years of War,” in *Is There a Transition to Democracy in El Salvador?*, eds. Joseph S. Tulchin, et al. (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 32. This strategy was put forward by the FMLN General Comand in a June 1984 meeting. In June 1985, after a lengthy evaluation, a modified version was adopted at the General Command meeting in Morazán. *Ibid*, 52.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 5; and Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 473.

initiated, then broke off peace talks with the FMLN, and failed to put into place any significant reforms.¹⁹³

The United States discouraged Duarte from enacting reforms. The U.S. Embassy argued that the right-wing opposition and the business community, not the FMLN, would sabotage his efforts. Any effort to address the crisis in the country by raising taxes on the wealthy or through land reform would fail in the ARENA-controlled assembly and further alienate the right.¹⁹⁴ By 1986 Duarte had announced several measures that fortified the private sector, moving him away from earlier reformist rhetoric.¹⁹⁵

Encouraged by Duarte's victory, Salvadoran labor organized, called strikes, and tried to join the political process again. The right responded with increased death squad activity. To keep his support Duarte publicly condemned the repression. In January and October 1986, however, Duarte announced economic austerity programs to continue funding the war, and his political base deserted him.¹⁹⁶

The Esquipulas II agreement signed in August 1987 by the presidents of five Central American countries, called for regional peace. The presidents agreed to establish open democratic systems with free elections and to respect human rights. They also pledged to seek an end to the civil wars in the region through national reconciliation with armed insurgents.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Ibid, 473.

¹⁹⁴ Vicker, "The Political Reality After Eleven Years of War," 32.

¹⁹⁵ Wim Pelupessy, "Economic Adjustment Policies in El Salvador During the 1980s," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 71, Vol. 18 No. 4, Fall 1991, 49.

¹⁹⁶ Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 473-74.

¹⁹⁷ LeoGrande, "After the Battle of San Salvador," 117.

True to the accords, Duarte met with the FMLN. During the talks, he called for a general amnesty of all political prisoners. After objecting that the proposed amnesty would leave right-wing vigilantes unpunished, Herbert Anaya, the president of the nongovernmental Human Rights Commission, was assassinated. In protest the FMLN broke off the talks.¹⁹⁸

In January 1989, the FMLN announced a new peace plan, and the guerrillas for the first time agreed to take part in Salvadoran elections on condition that the elections were postponed for six months, to allow enough time to organize a political campaign. This was a significant gesture because for the first time the FMLN dropped their demand of guaranteed power-sharing.¹⁹⁹

The military and ARENA made overtures to the rebels, but Defense Minister Vides Casañova threatened to overthrow the government if the election was delayed. With only 3.8 percent of eligible voters participating, ARENA candidate Alfredo Cristiani won the presidential election. To continue U.S. aid, ARENA had found a candidate the Bush administration could compare to Duarte. Hand-picked by D'Aubuisson because he had the appearance of a moderate, this coffee grower went to school in the United States and spoke fluent English.²⁰⁰

Cristiani, fulfilling an election promise, initiated peace talks with the FMLN. The talks broke off when a cease-fire was offered only if the rebels disarmed. Violence in the country noticeably increased.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Barry, *Central America Inside Out*, 141.

¹⁹⁹ LeoGrande, "After the Battle of San Salvador," 117.

²⁰⁰ Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 476.

After a death squad bombed the headquarters of the National Federation of Salvadoran Workers (FENASTRAS), killing the union president, Febe Elizabeth Velásquez, a rebel offensive followed (November 1989) which brought the fighting into middle- and upper-class neighborhoods in San Salvador.²⁰² Due to their initial success the FMLN ordered its units to hold their ground and called for a general uprising. The uprising did not materialize and the FMLN sustained serious casualties when the armed forces bombed the barrios occupied by the rebels. Within two weeks the rebels withdrew from the urban areas.²⁰³

During this offensive, “the US-trained ATLACATL battalion . . . [broke] into the living quarters of Jesuit administrators of the Universidad Centroamerica and killed six in their sleep,” including Ignacio Ellacuria, the rector, and Ignacio Martín-Barò, vice rector and the leading public-opinion pollster of El Salvador. The killings were preceded by twenty-four hours of radio statements claiming that the priests were communists.²⁰⁴

The November offensive made the major parties involved in the war—the FMLN, the Salvadoran government, and the U.S.—reevaluate their strategy and tactics. All opted for negotiations aimed at “a cease-fire and political settlement,” instead of continuing to wage war.²⁰⁵

For the rebels the offensive showed that a popular uprising in the cities was unrealistic in the short term. The cost, in material and humans, was heavy requiring a

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Coleman, “The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power,” 46.

²⁰³ Vicker, “The Political Reality After Eleven Years of War,” 35. The following analysis relies heavily on Vicker.

²⁰⁴ Coleman, “The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power,” 46.

²⁰⁵ Vicker, “The Political Reality After Eleven Years of War,” 36.

massive military slow down so the rebels could regroup and resupply. Though the FMLN's tactics and strategy (set in 1985) were not invalidated by the failure of an uprising, a reassessment of the "strategic balance" between political and military goals was needed. Yet, the guerrillas realized they faced a changed world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas, and decreasing Russian support for Cuba, all five FMLN organizations supported seeking a negotiated solution to the conflict.²⁰⁶

"The Battle of San Salvador" made two things apparent to Washington. First, that despite a decade of U.S.-directed counterinsurgency, the rebels, in what was called "an ideal proving ground"²⁰⁷ for low-intensity warfare, were still a viable fighting force, not likely to be defeated soon. Second, that the indiscriminate strafing of the city's barrios, killing over 1000 civilians, and the murder of the Jesuits during the offensive destroyed the notion that the United States had reformed the Salvadoran military.²⁰⁸

The Salvadoran government was faced with the fact that the FMLN still had the capacity to wage a guerrilla war for "seven or eight more years" without government efforts significantly being felt. This fact, combined with Bush administration warning of less money as a result of the end of the Cold War, US budget restraints, and a hostile Congress due to the Salvadoran government's actions during the offensive, made a

²⁰⁶ Anjali Sundaram, and George Gelber, eds. *A Decade of War: El Salvador Confronts the Future* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991), 257.

²⁰⁷ Reagan Ambassador to Costa Rica Lewis A. Tambs and Lt. Com. Frank Aker, "Shattering the Vietnam Syndrome: A Scenario for Success in El Salvador," unpublished manuscript, 1983) quoted in Siegel and Hackel, "El Salvador," 112.

²⁰⁸ LeoGrande, "After the Battle of San Salvador," 111-112, 115.

negotiated solution feasible. With all of the actors agreeing that negotiations were in their “short-run interest” a “window of opportunity” had opened in El Salvador.²⁰⁹

Peace Accords To The Present

After a decade of war the country was spent. With seventy thousand dead, an estimated \$1.2 billion in damages, and a GNP 20% lower than in 1979, continued civil war would certainly crippled the future of the country.²¹⁰

Both Cristiani and the FMLN asked Secretary-General of the United Nations Javier Pèrez de Cuèllar to mediate the peace process. After months of negotiations both sides signed the Geneva Agreement on 4 April 1990. The Agreement committed both sides to find a political end to the armed conflict, promote democracy, guarantee civil rights, and unify Salvadoran society. At the same time negotiations themselves were to be secret with both sides keeping allies in the country informed. The agreements also called for the peace negotiations to be under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his representative Mr. Alvaro de Soto, and to act as an intermediary between the two parties.²¹¹

The General Agenda and Timetable for the Comprehensive Negotiating Process, signed at Caracas on 21 May 1990, established a two-phase process. The first phase

²⁰⁹ Vicker, “The Political Reality After Eleven Years of War,” 36-7.

²¹⁰ Larry Minear, “Civil Strife and Humanitarian Aid: A Bruising Decade,” in *World Refugee Survey 1989 in Review* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1990), 15; Charles D. Brockett, *Land, Power, and Poverty: Agrarian Transformation and Political Conflict in Central America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 206; José Z. Garcia, “Tragedy in El Salvador,” in *Current History* 89, 1990, 11. The following analysis relies heavily on Edward S. Mihalkanin’s, “Contemporary El Salvador,” paper presented to the Southwest Social Science Association, 1 April 1994.

²¹¹ United Nations, *El Salvador Agreements: The Path To Peace* (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 1992), 1-5.

would call for agreements to end of the conflict and protect the non-combatants. Included in this phase were changes to “the armed forces, human rights, the judicial and electoral systems, reforming the Constitution, economic and social issues and U.N. verification.” The second phase covered the same areas as the first but with a focus on integrating members of the FMLN into all areas of society. A cease-fire was agreed to take place by the middle of September.²¹²

On 26 July 1990 the first substantive agreement, the San Jose Agreements on Human Rights, were signed. The agreements called for the creation of a bill of rights for the people of El Salvador and a United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). The bill of rights included the right of people “to associate freely with others for ideological, religious political, economic, labour, social, cultural, sporting or other purposes.” Other rights included freedom of the press, freedom of movement, and the protection of labor rights among others. The agreement gave ONUSAL the power to verify the political agreements in the peace process were being followed. Just as important both parties pledged to provide support for ONUSAL through facilities, security and providing any information asked for. Additionally, all ONUSAL recommendations were to quickly be taken into account, and neither would try to hinder the mission. ONUSAL officially began work on 20 May 1991, with full implementation of its staff throughout the country on 26 July 1991.²¹³

The Mexico Agreements of 27 April 1991 were the first to require Salvadoran constitutional reforms with a focus on judicial and electoral reforms. These reforms were

²¹² Mihalkanin, “Contemporary El Salvador,” 24.

²¹³ Ibid., 26-28.

to limit the functions of the Armed Forces to the outward defense of national integrity and the sovereignty of El Salvador. In addition, security forces were to be constitutionally separated from the military. The agreements also called for a human rights ombudsman to be appointed and the elimination of forced disappearances, political arrests, and torture. Only uniformed officers with warrants could arrest citizens. Those arrested also would have the right to counsel and *habeas corpus*. In addition, Salvadorans were guaranteed a free press, the right to assemble, and the right to free travel.²¹⁴

The Mexico agreements also created the Commission on the Truth assigned to investigate “serious acts of violence that have occurred since 1980.” The outgoing Salvadoran Legislature approved the constitutional changes on 30 April 1991 and the incoming one ratified all of the amendments and approved the Commission on the Truth.²¹⁵

The Truth Commission’s mandate was defined as follows:

“The Commission shall have the task of investigating serious acts of violence that have occurred since 1980 and whose impact on society urgently demands that the public should know the truth.”

While investigating the Commission is to consider the following:

“(a) The exceptional importance attached that may be attached to the acts to be investigated, their characteristics and impact, and the social unrest which they gave rise; and

(b) The need to create confidence in the positive changes which the peace process is promoting and to assist the transition to national reconciliation.”²¹⁶

²¹⁴ “Report From El Salvador,” *El Rescate Human Rights Department*, January 1-13, 1992, 2.

²¹⁵ United Nations, *El Salvador Agreements*, 16-17.

²¹⁶ United Nations, *From Madness To Hope*,” 18.

The agreement also called for the government and the FMLN to “put an end to any indication of impunity on the part of the officers of the armed forces, particularly in cases where respect for human rights is jeopardized.” To accomplish this both sides agreed to refer the issue to the Truth Commission.²¹⁷

The New York Agreement of 25 September 1991 called for the creation of the Consolidacion De La Paz (COPAZ), a coordinating committee to serve “as a mechanism of control and participation of the government, FMLN and political parties.” An ONUSAL representative and the Archbishop of San Salvador were given observer status. COPAZ was to have access to any site connected with the peace agreements and make recommendations on implementing the accords. COPAZ membership consisted of “two representatives of the government, including a member of the armed Forces, two representatives of the FMLN, and one representative of each of the parties or coalitions represented in the Legislative Assembly.” Decisions by COPAZ were decided by a majority of the members.²¹⁸

On January 1, 1992, the United Nations announced an accord, the New York Act I, ending the civil war waged in El Salvador for over a decade. The 75-page peace plan, signed moments before midnight, capped twenty months and twenty-four rounds of talks between the Salvadoran government and the leftist guerrillas.²¹⁹ Emerging from a day and night of negotiations that he had directed, Javier Pèrez de Cuèllar, the departing U.N. Secretary-General, stated to negotiators that the New Year “will be the year of peace and

²¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

²¹⁸ United Nations, *El Salvador Agreements*, 32-33.

²¹⁹ Tim Golden, “Accord Reached to Halt Civil War in El Salvador: U.N. Leader Ends Term Nudging Both Parties Into an Agreement,” *New York Times*, 1 January 1992, 1; and “Report From El Salvador,” *El Rescate Human Rights Department*, January 1-13, 1992, 1.

harmony for a country very dear to you."²²⁰ Both sides embraced and promised to schedule implementation talks.

Accepting the New York treaty, Cristiani admitted that El Salvador had been engaged in a war with "profound social, political, economic and cultural roots." His admittance that a principal problem in El Salvador has been "the absence of a truly democratic order" amounted to revolutionary words.²²¹

After signing the accords, when asked if the agreement was worth the eleven-year war, FAL leader Shafik Handal answered:

Of course . . . There will be great changes in the political and social life of the country and, after sixty years of military domination, the country will now be relieved of this weight.²²²

The agreement is *literally* a negotiated revolution covering eight areas. First, the armed forces are to be subordinate to civil power, respect human rights and be reformed. To accomplish this troops are to be reduced by 50 percent within twenty-four months, and the officer corps is to be purged of the worst human rights abusers. In addition, the National Guard, Treasury Police, National Police, National Intelligence Department, the five elite battalions of the Civil Defense, paramilitary groups, and territorial patrols are to be dissolved and a National Civil Police (PNC) is to be formed.²²³

Second, the PNC, guaranteed an initial \$20 million in funding, will have FMLN participation on all levels, including an advisory commission that assists the director. A

²²⁰ Golden, "Accord Reached to Halt Civil War in El Salvador," 1.

²²¹ Quoted in LeMoyne, "Out of the Jungle," 29.

²²² "Report From El Salvador," *El Rescate Human Rights Department*, January 1-13, 1992, 2.

²²³ Ibid, 4. The following summation relies heavily on United Nations, *El Salvador Agreements* and *El Rescate's* above-cited report.

six-month training session for all candidates will be mandatory for this security institution with "a concept of public security as a service of the state to its citizens with respect for human rights."²²⁴

Third, the accords call for constitutional reforms with a focus on judicial and electoral reforms. Reforms are called for which limit the functions of the Armed Forces to the outward defense of national integrity and the sovereignty of El Salvador. In addition security forces are to be constitutionally separated from the military.²²⁵

Fourth, the July 26, 1991 San Jose Agreement is to be implemented.²²⁶

Fifth, social and economic reforms are included in the U.N.-guided agreement. All agricultural property exceeding 245 hectares is to be turned over to the state for redistribution. The FMLN-controlled areas will be legally given to them through a landownership process. International aid is to go directly to communities, and nongovernmental organizations instead of through the government.²²⁷

Sixth, the Salvadoran government has promised to release all FMLN political prisoners. The agreement also calls for the safe return of exiles, *lisiados* (disabled FMLN combatants), and others who left the country because of the conflict. The last political participation rights granted to the FMLN were the legalization of rebel radio stations and recognition of the FMLN as a true political party.²²⁸ Seventh, February 1, 1992 was the date set for the official cease-fire. The combatants were to start a separation process in

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid, 5.

²²⁸ Ibid.

which the FMLN would retreat to zones it controls, and the military would return to its barracks. By January 25, the agreement called for the rebels to be concentrated into 50 sites, while the army was to be located in 100. Under the peace plan, the FMLN can keep its weapons for nine months after the cease-fire starts. Both the army and the FMLN are to be monitored by ONSUSAL; they must secure the commission's permission before leaving designated areas.²²⁹

The final area addressed by the accords is compliance. Eight days following the cease-fire the agreement called for COPAZ to oversee the implementation of all political agreements reached by the parties.

The New York Act II signed on 13 January 1992 stated that agreement was made on outstanding issues. On 16 January 1992 the final Peace Agreement was signed at Mexico City reiterating the provisions of the New York Acts I and II.²³⁰

Onusal And The Truth Commission

ONUSAL was initially established to verify the San Jose Agreement on Human Rights. The mandate grew to include verification of all agreements aimed at ending a decade-long civil war between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN. The Peace Agreements called for the process of ending the armed conflict to be completed by 31 October 1992. By this date, the government was to have implemented several major commitments of a political and institutional nature. FMLN combatants were to have been demobilized, disarmed and reintegrated into civilian life in government programmes by this date. The difficulty of the issues concerned led to major delays in the overall implementation of the peace process. As a result the implementation date was

²²⁹ Ibid, 5.

²³⁰ Mihalkanin, "Contemporary El Salvador," 31.

rescheduled for 15 December 1992. The FMLN agreed on the new deadline but the Salvadoran government reserved agreement on several areas and ceased the restructuring, reduction and demobilization of its Armed Forces. On 15 December 1992 the war between the Government of El Salvador and the FMLN was formally ended even though outstanding issues were still not resolved. The night before the FMLN was legalized as a political party.²³¹

On 8 January 1993 the Salvadoran government formally asked for United Nations to observe the March 1994 elections for the presidency, the Legislative Assembly, mayors and municipal councils. The Security Council agreed on 27 May 1993 expanding the ONUSAL mission to include observation of the elections. The electoral monitoring duties of ONUSAL would end on 31 March 1994. A runoff would extend the electoral monitoring duties of ONUSAL.²³²

From the beginning ONUSAL faced an uphill battle. A lack of organization led different offices to log the same information and direct staff in conflicting ways. In October 1991 ARENA president and San Salvadoran Mayor Armando Calderón Sol accused ONUSAL of favoritism toward the FMLN, and in November 1991, government troops opened fire on ONUSAL observers visiting with a high level FMLN commander. Judges have also consistently attempted to interfere with ONUSAL duties.²³³

²³¹ United Nations, "ONUSAL: United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador," (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2000), http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/onusal.htm.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Americas Watch, "El Salvador, Peace and Human Rights: Successes and shortcomings of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL)," Volume No. 4, No. 13, 1992, 9-10.

Even with all of these problems ONUSAL was successful in curbing civil rights violations in El Salvador. The size of the staff²³⁴ and its dispersion around the country, combined with the stature of the U.N. all played a role in improving the situation. ONUSAL also was effective in the redeployment of the Armed Forces of El Salvador and in the FMLN forces gathering in locations specified by the Peace Agreements.

The Commission on the Truth was created to investigate serious acts of violence that had taken place since 1980 and which should be made public. Belisario Betancur, former President of Colombia; Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, former Foreign Minister of Venezuela; and Thomas Buergenthal, former President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and of the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights were appointed by the Secretary-General to make up the Commission.

The Commission collected 22,000 complaints of human rights violations that had occurred between January 1980 and July 1991. These were categorized as violence against opponents by agents of the State; massacres of peasants by the Armed Forces; death squad assassinations; violence against opponents by the FMLN; and the murder of judges. An overwhelming majority of the complaints are against those allied with the Salvadoran government. Among other findings the report found the assassination of Archbishop Romero was planned and ordered by D'Aubuisson;²³⁵ the murder of the Jesuit priests at Central American University was planned and ordered by several colonels, carried out by the Atlacatl battalion and then covered up;²³⁶ and the four

²³⁴ United Nations, "ONUSAL." There were 380 military observers; 8 medical officers; and 631 police observers plus there was also a provision for some 140 civilian international staff and 180 local staff.

²³⁵ United Nations, *From Madness To Hope: Report of the Commission on the Truth*, 127.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 46-54.

American church women were murdered by the Salvadoran National Guard and were systematically covered up all the way to the top of the National Guard.²³⁷

The Commission's report also had recommendations divided into four areas: recommendations inferred directly from the results of the investigation; eradication of structural causes linked directly to the acts examined; institutional reforms to prevent repetition; and steps towards national reconciliation. The Commission also listed several concrete actions that it argued needed to take place. First all those cited in the Report be removed from positions of power. Second, The entire Supreme Court should resign. Third, current armed groups needed to be investigated. Fourth, the reforms agreed to in the Peace Agreements needed to be completed. Finally, a fund for the victims of political violence needed to be established.²³⁸

The Salvadoran government launched a vitriolic attack on the Report. President Cristiani attacked it as against the majority of Salvadoran's wish to "forgive and forget." Since he viewed the report as one-sided he deemed it unfair to prosecute against those named while others ran free.²³⁹ The Supreme Court refused to resign and General Ponce attacked the report as "unjust, incomplete, illegal, unethical, biased, and insolent."²⁴⁰

The National Assembly responded by approving the Law of General Amnesty for the Consolidation of Peace on 20 March 1993. Cristiani signed the law two days later. The law provides a blanket amnesty for all who committed war crimes before 1 January

²³⁷ Ibid., 62-66.

²³⁸ Ibid., 176-178; and Mihalkanin, "Contemporary El Salvador," 39.

²³⁹ Americas Watch, "El Salvador, Accountability and Human Rights: The Report of the United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador," 1993, Vol. 5, Issue No. 7, 20.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

1992. The legislature did not care that the law violated the Salvadoran Constitution, the American Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.²⁴¹

1994 Elections To The Present

On 20 March 1994 Salvadorans went to the polls. Nearly 1.45 million cast votes for president, vice president, deputies to the Legislative Assembly and municipal council members. ARENA easily won all three areas. ARENA member and mayor of San Salvador Armando Calderón Sol was voted president, receiving almost 50% of the vote in the first round of the election against 6 other candidates. In the runoff he received 68% of the vote compared to 32% by the PDC's Rubèn Zamora. In the Legislature ARENA won 39 of 84 seats. Combined with ARENA's allies the National Reconciliation Party (PCN) the right controlled the Legislative Assembly by one vote. ARENA also won 212 of the 262 municipal councils.²⁴²

Though ONUSAL observed the elections, Vickers and Spence²⁴³ and Stahler-Sholk²⁴⁴ show the electoral process was flawed by a number of procedural problems, including defects in voter registration and the unfair distribution of state campaign funds and a campaign of fear by the right. According to Stahler-Sholk, 74,000 applications for

²⁴¹ Mihalkanin, "Contemporary El Salvador," 41.

²⁴² George Vickers and Jack Spence, "Elections: The Right Consolidates Power," *NACLA Report of the Americas*, Vol. 18, No.1, 1994, 6-11. See also Mario Lungo, "FMLN Mayors in 15 Towns," *NACLA Report of the Americas*, Vol. 29, No.1 (1995): 33-36.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Richard Stahler-Sholk, "El Salvador's Negotiated Transition, from Low Intensity Conflict to Low Intensity Democracy," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 19, 1995, 1-53.

voter registration cards were rejected, and 35,000 issued cards were never picked up.²⁴⁵ Public Campaign fund allocation favored ARENA who received 54% compared to 31% for the PDC and 7% for the FMLN-MNR-DC coalition. This mainly hurt the FMLN coalition in local races.²⁴⁶

The ARENA party ran a campaign that argued that a vote for the left was a vote to return to war. One “anonymous” ad showed a little hand pointing to a crayon drawing. The little girl’s voice speaks as the hand draws pictures. The first two the voice identifies as mommy and daddy. The third picture drawn is of a little girl missing a leg. The voice identifies this as “me” and that she lost her leg due to a terrorist mine. The voice over tells the viewer that even though the terrorist want people to forget, she doesn’t think mommy and daddy will forget.²⁴⁷

Advertisements like these and voter intimidation has led Wantchekon to argue that the most important component in this election was fear of post-electoral violence and doubt that the peace agreements would be implemented. Though the war was fought to end poverty ending the war was the number one issue on voter’s minds superceding poverty. In rural areas where the FMLN should have been strongest the peasants voted for ARENA overwhelmingly because they viewed the party with guns as being able to keep the peace.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Leonard Wantchekon, “Strategic Voting in Conditions of Political Instability: The 1994 Elections in El Salvador,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 32 No. 7 (October 1999): 814-15.

²⁴⁷ Vickers and Spence, “Elections: The Right Consolidates Power,” 6.

²⁴⁸ Wantchekon, “Strategic Voting in Conditions of Political Instability,” 817.

The Salvadoran election of 1994 was relatively unique. Recently, in Africa (South Africa, Benin) and in Latin America (Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua), when democratization comes the electorate generally chooses a Social Democratic or centrist party. El Salvador is the exception to the rule and chose a party of the right.²⁴⁹ At the same time the elections were a success because they were the first elections in which real opposition was allowed and the results of the election were allowed.²⁵⁰

Under Calderón Sol, El Salvador continued to encounter problems implementing outstanding agreements relating to the armed forces, public security, the land-transfer programme, reintegration programmes and the recommendations of the Commission on the Truth. ONUSAL stressed that after its mission ended on until 30 April 1995 there would still be outstanding issues.²⁵¹

The land-transfer program stalled due to a lack of support by the Salvadoran government. By February 1995 only 17,000 beneficiaries out of 47,000 eligible had received land: 53% of the FMLN members and ex-combatants and 30% of ex-members of the Salvadoran military. Those that did receive land faced difficulty obtaining credit, technical assistance and training.²⁵²

Citing a need for ideological redefinition away from leftist dogma and authoritarianism to a more modern view of politics, two groups, the ERP and the RN splintered from the FMLN in December 1994. In March 1995 the ERP and the RN

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 814.

²⁵⁰ Carlos M. Vilas, "A Painful Peace: El Salvador After the Peace Accords," *NACLA Report of the Americas*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (1995): 8.

²⁵¹ United Nations, "ONUSAL."

²⁵² Carlos M. Vilas, "A Painful Peace," 8.

combined with the National Revolutionary Movement, a small party that has membership in the Socialist International, to form the Democratic Party. The three remaining groups in the FMLN, the FPL, the PRTC and the PCS-as well as those remaining members of the ERP and RN, exists more as tendencies instead of separate organizations.²⁵³

The ARENA party also splintered. Cristiani had been aligned with the so-called “golden ring,” a group of investors who benefited greatly from the privatization of banks under Cristiani. Caldron Sol’s allies were the business and military groups that felt marginalized by Cristiani. The inability of Caldron Sol to displace members of the “golden ring” from the Arena party and government has led to charges of corruption and a betrayal of the ideals of D’Aubuisson from the farther right members of ARENA. In response two founding members of ARENA, Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa and Kirio Waldo Salgado formed the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD) to run separately and denounce perceived corruption in the ARENA party.²⁵⁴

The elections of 16 March 1997 show a shift in the electorate. The Arena Party and the FMLN split the Legislative Assembly with ARENA getting 28 seats to the FMLN’s 27 seats. The FMLN won elections in six of the 14 departments and now controls a larger percentage of the population than ARENA. If FMLN allies are included it holds a majority in the Legislative Assembly. The significance of this is that the FMLN for the first time has an opportunity to legislate and help decide future Supreme Court appointments, giving hope to a more balanced judiciary. On 1 June 1999, El Salvador went to the polls to elect its president. ARENA candidate Francisco Flores

²⁵³ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

Perez received 52% of the vote compared to FMLN candidate Facundo Guardado's 29%.²⁵⁵

Though some of the reforms from the peace accords have been executed, many Salvadorans argue that post-war El Salvador is no better off than before the war. The country suffers from high unemployment, poverty, discontented ex-combatants and an explosion of guns leading to high homicide rates. Due to these factors a full 20% of Salvadorans still live abroad. With 6,122,515 people in the smallest Central American country the future appears rocky for El Salvador. The country's economy suffers from a poor tax collection system, factory closings and weak prices for its main export coffee. Inflation has decreased to single digits in the last few years, and though there is still a substantial trade deficit exports are slowly growing. Yet, 48% (1999 est.) of the population lives below the poverty line and 7.7% (1997 est.) of the working age population are jobless. The main question is can a peripheral country like El Salvador, whose primary exports are offshore assembly, coffee, sugar, shrimp and textiles participate in the modern world economy in a way that is beneficial for the whole of its population? Even with newfound democratic principles the answer, so far, appears to be no.

²⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2000* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Public Affairs, 2000) online version: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/es.html>.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Wallerstein's Contradictions

Wallerstein's theory does have apparent contradictions. Since the late 1970s world-system analysis has been criticized for presenting a reified concept of the world-system, with ignoring historically specific development, and with focusing on stratification analysis while ignoring class analysis.¹ Wallerstein has been charged with making real an abstraction (reification) and in doing has allocated attributes to concepts.

According to Zeitlin:

The world economy itself, so it is said, apparently, "assigned specific economic roles" within itself to its own "zones," and these "zones" then "use different modes of "labor control" and so forth. What has happened here, unfortunately, is that the theory's atemporal categories have imperceptibly been given *a life of their own* and have imposed [whatever their author's intentions] on the social reality that was meant to be understood by them, so now the categories make that reality fit their own a priori selves. (emphasis added)²

An illustration of this is in world-system theory's analysis of colonialism.

Bergesen and Schoenburg argue that the world-system has a "distinct organic quality," whenever internal complicatedness arises, the system pulls itself together and "reaffirms

¹ The analysis on criticisms relies heavily on So, *Social Change and Development*, 220-30.

² Maurice Zeitlin, *The Civil Wars in Chile (Or the Bourgeois Revolutions That Never Were)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 227, quoted in So, *Social Change and Development*, 220-1.

its fundamental social relationships.”³ They argue that this reification actually obscures research instead of clarifying it.

At the same time critics argue Wallerstein offers an “unwitting historical teleology”—events are used to clarify the origins of the world-economy, but these same events occurred because of the world-economy. This is the circular logic of believing, for example, that the Bible is the word of God, because in the Bible, God says so.⁴

Second, critics charge that Wallerstein ignores historically specific development. As a result of studying the big picture he ignores the “concrete analysis of historically specific interrelations in particular societies.” By looking at the world-system as real, other concrete social relations between states are obscured rather than revealed.⁵

Last, critics state that by focusing on “exchange relations and the distribution of rewards in the market,” Wallerstein ignores class conflict. For him class is just a position in the world division of labor. It has been argued that Wallerstein’s analysis

conceals the real nature of class relations and mystifies their historical origins. . . [T]here are no relations of compulsion, coercion, and exploitation. . . Slaves, serfs, tenant farmers, yeomen, artisans, and workers become mere technical occupational categories.

Reification

Answering his critics, Wallerstein makes it unambiguous that he sets forth simply

³ Albert Beresen and Ronald Schenberg, “Long Waves of Colonial Expansion and Contraction, 1415-1969,” in Albert Beressen (ed.) *Studies of the Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 239. 231-277.

⁴ Quoting Zeitlin in *Ibid*, 221.

⁵ *Ibid*.

a set of hypothesis within world-system analysis, open to debate, refinement, rejection. The crucial issue is that defining and explicating the units of analysis—the historical systems—becomes a central object of scientific enterprise.”⁶

Defenders of world-system theory argue that if world-system theory is viewed “as a concept rather than as a reified reality, then it can become a very useful tool for research.”⁷ Wallerstein points out that it would be impossible to “analyze intelligently any social phenomenon, however ‘micro’ it may seem, without placing it as an element constrained by the real system in which it finds itself.”⁸ For example, class theorists wrongly regulate international trends to a minor role in national development. Though international trends, or “global dynamics,” are not the only factors determining a country’s development they do play a significant one. So argues that “[v]ery often global dynamics start the chain of social change, influence the contour of class struggle, set the limits and bounds within which national development takes place.”⁹

Lack of Historically Specific Studies

World-system theorists do agree that the theory has primarily looked at international trends. But this fact should not limit researchers from applying the world-system perspective to historically specific national and local studies. Many historically

⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein “World System Analysis,” in *Social Theory Today*, ed. Anthony Giddens and Jonathan H. Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 318, quoted in So, *Social Change and Development*, 226.

⁷ So, *Ibid.*

⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, “Revolutionary Movements in the Era of U.S. Hegemony and after,” in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy: Studies in Modern Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 12. Quoted in So, *Social Change and Development*, 226.

⁹ So, *Ibid.*

specific studies have already been completed.¹⁰ This thesis studies how the historical processes of the capitalist world-system—such as the cyclical vicissitudes of the world-economy, industrialization, and international security trends—have affected class struggle and the transformation of the politics, if not the economics of Salvadoran society.

Stratification Analysis

Not only does Wallerstein view class struggle as “central to the dynamics of Capitalism” but that it is important to use world-system theory to study why it has taken so many divergent forms.¹¹ Unlike his critics, Wallerstein sees class as an ever-changing process instead of a reified group. Classes are not permanent; they are in constant flux, forming, breaking apart and reforming.

Class Conflict and El Salvador

Wallerstein argues that peripheral states can take advantage of world-market contractions and seize a chance to change positions in the capitalist world-system. A peripheral state can do this through import-substitution of heavy industries—Brazil, for example. The one caveat to this is a periphery must be relatively strong state to begin with. El Salvador, as a weak state, was unable to take advantage of world-economy contractions.

¹⁰ Two examples are Alvin Y. So, “Developing Inside the Capitalist World-Economy: A Study of the of the Japanese and Chinese Silk Industry,” *Journal of Asian Culture* 5:33-56 (1981); and Christopher Chase-Dunn, “Globalization From Below in Guatemala,” paper presented to the Guatemalan Development and Democracy Conference: Proactive Responses to Globalization (26 March 1998) Online version: <http://www.jhu.edu/~soc/.ladark/guatconf/guatconf.htm>.

¹¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, “How Do We Know Class Struggle When We See it?” *Insurgent Sociologist* 7 (1977): 105. Quoted in So, So, *Social Change and Development*, 227.104-106.

What Salvadoran elites did do during these times was to strengthen and expand their holdings by further expropriation of land. Of interest is that domestic expansion happened during both expansions and contractions of the world-economy. This dynamic runs through the whole of Salvadoran history from the 1600s to the late twentieth century.

Coercion versus Cooptation

Both coercion and cooptation were used to control oppositional movements. Early coercion by the Spanish and the local elites (the so-called Fourteen Families) through the expropriation of land was a necessary function of market-expansion by the capitalist-world economy. This argument also applies to early forms of expropriation by the nascent Salvadoran state

The second way El Salvador has attempted to control oppositional groups is through cooptation. Wallerstein sees cooptation as one of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. Though opponents may be eliminated in the short run he argues “they always up the ante for the next oppositional group created in the next crisis of the world-economy. In the end the cost rises higher and higher until “the advantages of cooptation seem ever less worthwhile.”¹²

Before the civil war in El Salvador, cooption had taken the form of the allowance of limited labor organization at different times (the 1920s, the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s); reformist coups taking power; and the somewhat open elections in 1931 and 1972.

¹² Wallerstein, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System,” 35.

These two different approaches —coercion and cooptation—are key to understanding Salvadoran history and class conflict. Wallerstein asserts:

The third essential element of a capitalist world-economy is that the appropriation of surplus labor takes place in such a way that there are not two, but three, tiers to the exploitive process. That is to say, there is a middle tier, which shares in the exploitation of the lower tier, but also shares in being exploited by the upper tier. Such a three-tiered format is essentially stabilizing in effect, whereas a two-tiered format is essentially disintegrating. We are not saying three tiers exist at all moments. We are saying that those on top always seek to ensure the existence of three tiers in order the better to preserve their privilege, whereas those on the bottom conversely seek to reduce the three to two, the better to destroy this same privilege. This fight over the existence of a middle tier goes on continually, both in political terms and in terms of basic ideological constructs (those that are pluralist versus those that are manicheist). This is the core issue around which class struggle is centered.¹³

Wallerstein stresses:

I am not arguing that three tiers *really* exist, anymore than I am arguing that two poles *really* exist. I am indifferent to such Platonic essences. Rather, I am asserting that the class struggle centers politically around the *attempt* of the dominant classes to create and sustain a third tier, against the *attempt* of the oppressed classes to polarize both the reality and the perception of reality...

That is to say, classes do not have some permanent reality. Rather they are formed, they consolidate themselves, they disintegrate or disaggregate and they are re-formed.¹⁴

As one section of the dominant class in El Salvador attempted to stabilize society through cooptation, another sought to short-circuit those efforts through violent coercion. Reformists were excluded from power and the divisions between the center and the left evaporated causing El Salvador to lose its stabilizing middle tier.

The irony is that the extreme right thought its actions were the *only* rational way to stabilize El Salvador, while in fact, it was the precise reason for the instability. In the

¹³ Immanuel Wallerstein, "Class Formation in the Capitalist World-Economy," in Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 223.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 324.

past, it appeared that repression and coercion had always brought stability to the country. This view though, was flawed.¹⁵

Throughout its history, the increased violence needed to appropriate land, combined with persistent concentration of surplus capital in a few hands, actually had a destabilizing effect on the country. Salvadoran history shows a country with a rich tradition of labor activism and syndicalism beginning in 1872. Indigenous rebellion in the area of El Salvador dates from the 1600s and intersected, at least nominally, with the domestic labor movement from the 1920s up to the *Mantanza*.¹⁶

By the mid-1970s, there was no more middle-tier. The lack of any opportunity for reform moved the center toward the revolutionary left. This movement perfectly illustrates Wallerstein's point about class fluidity. Ideological differences were subordinated and group distinctions blurred. Salvadoran society became polarized between those who would use violence to defend the status quo and those who would use

¹⁵ As detailed in Chapter III of this thesis the influx of U.S.-military aid and advisers significantly increased the destabilization. U.S. was responding to a perceived threat of Soviet expansion further into the U.S. sphere of influence. In the end the Soviet Union's unsound economic system crashed and U. S. policy goals in El Salvador were achieved—an inevitable revolution was stopped—at least in the short run. The moral question is at what cost? The world-system question is how long could the revolution in El Salvador have lasted. Would the United States, the most powerful core state in the capitalist world-system, have actively gone to war if not just one, but a second country had followed Cuba's example one?

Another world-system study of the relations between the Eastern Bloc countries and U.S. during this period of history up to the present would be fruitful. The collapse of Soviet-style communism does not invalidate Wallerstein's theory. World-system theory would argue that with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc all of those countries are reintegrated completely into the capitalist world-system. This has caused the United States to reemerge as the dominant hegemonic power as capitalism has new areas where it can expand. In the end the contradictions of capitalism will still collapse the system—it will just take longer.

¹⁶ Liss, *Radical Thought in Central America*, 64, 65. "Skilled Artisans nevertheless managed to form mutual benefit societies. The Concordia Society of Artisans, the oldest organization of its kind in Central America, formed in 1872." Also, in 1912 El Salvador hosted the *First Central American Labor Congress*. By 1917 around 50 unions existed in the state.

violence to overthrow it. But unknown to the right, the more it tried to stabilize through repression the more inevitable conflict became.¹⁷

The amount of cooption necessary to bring stability back to El Salvador was enormous. Though ARENA still controls the presidency, the FMLN and its allies control the Legislative Assembly and more than half of the country's population.

In many ways one must wonder if this is a bitter pill for the FMLN. This is what makes system-analysis so useful in understanding El Salvador. Though there is movement from the periphery to the semiperiphery it is limited to states unlike El Salvador. The vast majority of Salvadorans forever will live in poverty and as the country rides the waves of the capitalist world-economy it appears that it will not be smooth sailing. There is a bit of determinism in world system-theory after all.

World-system analysis effectively erases the differences between history, political science and economics. World-system theory allows us to study not only how the long-term local trends of landlessness, poverty and repression helped lead to the Salvadoran civil war, but also allows us to study how other factors—such as United States involvement, the role of liberation theology, or long-term economic trends of the world-system—also came to bear. It offers a useful theoretical framework in which to analyze El Salvador, or any other country. This study could have equally covered any number of states, big or small. Research using the world-system perspective would allow insightful studies comparing two peripheral states, or a peripheral state and a semiperipheral one or even a core and peripheral state.

¹⁷ A non-world-system view of this is Coleman, "The Consequences of Excluding Reformists from Power," 33-54.

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This Thesis was typed by J. Michael Gividen.