

# ***Democratization Through Peace: The Difficult Case of Guatemala***

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The Guatemalan peace process—the negotiation and initial implementation of far-reaching peace accords ending the country’s 36-year civil war—provides an excellent opportunity to revisit a number of ongoing discussions about political democratization and social justice in Latin America. The first part of this article summarizes how, beyond ending the war, this peace process contributed significantly to the democratization of Guatemala; how it opened up political space and what gains have (and have not) been achieved in the content of the accords signed. The rest of the article analyzes the Guatemalan experience from the early 1980s to the present as a means to address some of those broad theoretical debates about democratization and social justice.

No pretense is made of “settling” the conceptual debates about political democracy; instead, the goal is to interpret (and draw lessons from) Guatemala’s political evolution. Such an interpretation should contain no disjuncture between the analytical use of terminology about democracy and public discourse about actually lived experience. Hence, we should not assign the label “democracy” or “democratic transition” to situations and time periods that were not experienced as such by large numbers of Guatemalans. When and how did a genuine democratic transition begin in Guatemala? Can we characterize as a “democratic” transition the period from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, when the political-electoral transition had begun but not yet the peace process? The answers to these questions rest on an analysis of the interaction between elections and the peace process in opening up Guatemala’s exclusionary political system.

From this follows a broader question: What does the Guatemalan experience add to the ongoing debates among different paradigms or schools of analysis about political democracy in Latin America? This essay will argue that experiences such as Guatemala’s, involving societal ruptures and decades-long civil wars, cannot be fully understood simply in the context of one (useful but limited) body of literature about democratic transitions.

The most commonly accepted definition in the contemporary political science literature is one or another version of the “procedural minimum.” That perspective, which was developed mainly to deal with transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule in southern Europe and

the Southern Cone, provides partial insights. Nevertheless, for the cases of the Central American countries that underwent revolutionary turmoil during the 1980s, it must be complemented by other bodies of literature that highlight the participatory dimensions of democratization. In particular, key elements of the Guatemalan experience are best captured through the lens of the classical tradition that emphasizes participatory as well as procedural elements of democracy.

In addition, because 60 percent of its population is indigenous, the quality of political democracy in Guatemala will be profoundly affected by issues of cultural diversity. Finally, beyond the debates about the nature of political democracy lies the highly contested and still unresolved issue of its relation to social-economic equity or justice—especially in this era of neoliberal economic policies. This issue also can be reexamined in light of the Guatemalan peace process. In all of this, the purpose is to theorize the experience of Guatemala from the early 1980s to the present and, in the process, to enrich the broader debates.

### **“DECENTRAURIZATION” AND OTHER DEMOCRATIC GAINS**

In Guatemala as elsewhere, a peace negotiation is, in the end, a political settlement, and much of what it can immediately deliver concerns postwar political arrangements. Particularly striking in the Guatemalan case are the democratizing elements of both the negotiation process, with its provisions for broad input and participation, and the content of the accords as signed.

It is important to remember that as recently as 1992–93, hardliners among Guatemala’s military and civilian elites were determined not to negotiate a settlement permitting a legal presence or political participation by the insurgent left or its allies. They regarded virtually all civil society organizations as the guerrillas’ allies or “façades.” Particularly after the signing of a negotiated peace in neighboring El Salvador in January 1992, the elites vowed “never” to tolerate such an outcome in Guatemala. Yet the Guatemalan army and government found themselves involved in precisely such a process between 1994 and 1996.

#### **The Path to Negotiations**

Guatemala’s civil war began in 1960, just a few years after the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of the democratic nationalist government of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954. Over the next 3½ decades, several phases of the war pitted leftist insurgent organizations (which united in 1982 as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, URNG) against U.S.-trained and supported counterinsurgency forces of the Guatemalan army. The first phase, during the middle and late 1960s, was centered in the east-

ern, primarily ladino (mestizo or hispanic) part of the country. After the devastating army counteroffensive of 1966–68, the guerrillas retreated, regrouped, and reentered the country in the early 1970s.

The war's subsequent phases took place mainly in Guatemala's western highlands, with many indigenous communities serving as the guerrillas' major support base. The army responded in the early 1980s with a brutal "scorched-earth" campaign that left 100,000 to 150,000 dead or "disappeared" between 1981 and 1983 alone, and that has been widely regarded as genocidal (see Falla 1978, 1994; Le Bot 1995; Jonas 1991; on U.S. relations with the army, Jonas 1996). As the civil war subsequently entered a lower-intensity phase, the late 1980s saw the beginnings of a move toward peace. The URNG recognized that a strategy based on military victory or "taking state power" was unworkable; its costs made it totally unacceptable to the noncombatant population. Shortly after the return to elected civilian government in 1986, the URNG began to propose dialogue and negotiations for a political settlement to the war.

For several years, the army and the government, headed by Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo (1986–90) stubbornly refused to negotiate, insisting that the insurgents had been "defeated" and therefore must disarm unilaterally without negotiating any substantive issues. They maintained this stance even in the face of the 1987 Central American Peace Accords negotiated (in Guatemala City) primarily to end the Contra war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. By 1990, however, even army and government spokesmen had to acknowledge that Guatemala's war was continuing. The implicit admission that neither side could "win" the war militarily created the conditions, beginning in the spring of 1990, for serious discussions to end it.

By this time, considerable political pressure for peace had built up in Guatemala as well as internationally. During 1989, the National Reconciliation Commission (established by the 1987 peace accords) sponsored a national dialogue. Although boycotted by the army, the government, and the private sector, this dialogue expressed a clear national consensus among all other sectors in favor of a substantive political settlement.

The dialogue process projected a series of URNG meetings with the political parties and "social sectors" (private enterprise, popular and religious movements), and finally with the government and the army. The 1990 sessions included a September meeting between the URNG and the umbrella organization of big business, CACIF (Chamber of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations), an event unthinkable for the previous 30 years. Beyond the formal meetings, the dialogue process opened up opportunities, even in a repressive context, for public discussion of issues that had been undiscussable for decades. In this sense, it became an important avenue for beginning to democratize Guatemala.

In early 1991 the newly elected government of Jorge Serrano opened direct negotiations with the URNG. Over the next year, there were agreements in principle on democratization and partial agreements on human rights. The precariousness of the process became evident, however, when it stagnated in mid-1992 and moved toward total breakdown during the last months of Serrano's crisis-ridden government. The Serrano government turned out to be more interested in imposing a cease-fire deadline than in resolving the substantive issues on the 11-point agenda (ranging from human rights and demilitarization to indigenous rights and social-economic issues); this stance by the government was unacceptable to the URNG.

The entire peace process was derailed by the May 1993 *Serranazo*, or attempted *autogolpe*. Serrano's attempt to seize absolute control (initially but briefly supported by some factions of the army) unleashed a major political and constitutional crisis. After being repudiated by virtually all sectors of civil society and the international community, the *Serranazo* was resolved through the (very unexpected) ascendance of Human Rights Ombudsman Ramiro de León Carpio to the presidency (see Jonas 1994; McCleary 1997). But the peace process remained at a standstill during the rest of 1993. The new government, which was closely allied with the dominant wing of the army high command, presented negotiation proposals that, in essence, would have required the URNG to disarm without any substantive settlements. These proposals were rejected almost unanimously throughout Guatemalan society (except by the army and the private sector) and were viewed as completely nonviable by the international community.

In January 1994, these tactics having run their course, the negotiations were resumed, but on a significantly different basis. A special representative of the United Nations Secretary General replaced Msgr. Rodolfo Quezada Toruño of the Catholic Bishops' Conference as moderator. This paved the way for significantly increased involvement by the international community, raised the stakes in the negotiations, and gave the entire process a less reversible dynamic (see Jonas 2000; Baranyi 1995; Padilla 1995, 1997; Torres Rivas and Aguilera 1998). The January 1994 Framework Accord established a clear agenda and timetable. (The agenda was maintained, but the deadlines became totally unrealizable in practice.) This accord also formalized a role for a broad-based Assembly of Civil Society (ASC), which comprised virtually all organized sectors of civil society (even, for the first time, women's organizations), as well as the major political parties. Only the big business sectors represented in CACIF decided not to participate.

The ASC was notable for the diversity or plurality of political-ideological positions represented in its ranks; unlike El Salvador's popular organizations in relation to the FMLN, the ASC was by no means a

simple instrument of the URNG. As the main agreements were being hammered out, the ASC—after itself engaging in a fascinating process of consensus building—offered proposals to the negotiating parties on each issue. The proposals, though not binding, had to be taken into account by the two parties, and the URNG adopted many of them as its own negotiating positions.

Having gained new experience participating in national politics during the *Serranazo*, the grassroots organizations had been increasingly demanding to participate in the peace process. The formation of the ASC gave them that opportunity. This was particularly important for sectors (such as grassroots and progressive groups, leftist trade unions, peasants, and indigenous) that had always rejected electoral participation and prided themselves on their antisystem political culture of *denuncia* (accusation) as a manifestation of political resistance. Their ASC experience was the precursor to the eventual participation by many of those sectors in the 1995 election.

A breakthrough Human Rights Accord was signed in late March 1994, calling for the immediate establishment of international verification mechanisms to monitor human rights. For months afterward, however, the government took no steps to comply with its obligations under the accord, and the mandated UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA) did not arrive until November of that year. At the table, two new accords were signed in June 1994, dealing with the resettling of displaced populations and forming a watered-down truth commission (*Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico*) empowered to *esclarecer*, or shed light on, past human rights crimes but not to name the individuals responsible. The latter accord sparked fierce criticism from popular and human rights organizations. On the ground, meanwhile, human rights violations worsened, leaving the definite impression that the government was going through the motions of a peace process without intending to change anything.

For these reasons, as well as the complexity of the issue, no agreement was reached on the next theme, Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, until March 1995. The signing of this accord was a landmark achievement for a country whose population is 60 percent indigenous, and it mandated far-reaching changes in the country's institutions.

Meanwhile, the dynamics of the upcoming November 1995 general election in Guatemala had a direct impact on the peace process, and vice versa. No presidential candidate received an absolute majority in the first round of that election. A January 1996 runoff pitted modernizing conservative Alvaro Arzú against Alfonso Portillo, a stand-in for former dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt, who opposed the peace process. Arzú won by a scant 2 percent. In addition to appointing a "peace cabinet," Arzú underscored his intention to establish civilian control over

the army by shaking up the army high command and the army-controlled police. These and other actions created a new political climate of confidence and paved the way for an indefinite cease-fire between the rebels and the army in March 1996.

Once the formal peace negotiations were reinitiated and after intensive consultations with the private sector, an Accord on Socioeconomic Issues was signed, in May 1996—this time with CACIF support. Because of the compromises involved, the accord generated considerable controversy among popular organizations before the ASC eventually endorsed it. The crowning achievement of the peace process came in September 1996 with the signing of the Accord on Strengthening of Civilian Power and Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society—the demilitarization accord. This accord mandated constitutional reforms subordinating the army to civilian control and restricting the army's role to external defense while creating a new civilian police force to handle all internal security matters.

The operational accords, signed in December 1996, dealt with a definitive cease-fire, constitutional and electoral reforms, the URNG's legal reintegration (entailing a partial amnesty for both the URNG and the army), and a timetable for fulfillment of all the accords. After the URNG leadership's dramatic return to Guatemala on December 28, the historic Final Peace Accord was signed in Guatemala's National Palace on December 29, 1996, amid considerable national celebration and international attention. Thus ended the first phase of the peace process that the Guatemalan elites had vowed "never" to permit.

How did this "never" turn into acceptance? The UN played a role that no other mediating force could have played in facilitating agreements between the government and the URNG. Six international governments played an important supporting role as the "Group of Friends" of the peace process.<sup>1</sup> In Guatemala, slowly but surely, despite fierce resistances and significant delays, the peace process acquired credibility. At many times, its volatility and fragility evoked images of the Middle East negotiations between Israel and the PLO. But with all its difficulties, the logic of the peace process, broadly understood, came to offer the best opportunity to democratize a thoroughly exclusionary system and to make important changes that would have been highly unlikely or impossible under any other circumstances.

Even within the recalcitrant CACIF, more pragmatic, "modernizing" fractions became invested in the peace process; they recognized that it was the only way to avoid being isolated and left behind in the global economic and transnational world of the twenty-first century. For its part, the seemingly all-powerful army, despite appearances to the contrary, found itself increasingly on the defensive, with its legitimacy and authority decreasing. Internationally, given the changes in the world and

in Guatemala since 1990, blatant “peace resisters” in the Guatemalan army could no longer count on U.S. support (Jonas 1996). In short, none of the major Guatemalan players had anywhere to move but forward.

Seen in its totality, the negotiation process was a great step forward for Guatemalan democracy. The accords constituted a truly negotiated settlement, much like El Salvador’s of 1992. Rather than being imposed by victors on vanquished, they split the difference between radically opposed forces, with major concessions from both sides. This exercise in the culture of compromise was a real novelty in Guatemala.

Additional process-related gains for democracy have accumulated since the signing of the peace accords. Most of the accords contain important provisions for participation in decisionmaking, including *comisiones paritarias* (with equal representation from the government and indigenous organizations) and a host of other multisectoral commissions. In addition, the implementation of the accords has given rise to a far-reaching culture and practice of *consultas*, involving some (though not all) policymakers in direct interchanges with citizens and social organizations, some of them outside the capital city (also a novelty). Finally, the accords provide innovative mechanisms, such as the *Foro de Mujeres* (Women’s Forum), for training and “capacity building” among those who have never had such opportunities.

If fully implemented, the accords could open up an opportunity for significant transformations of Guatemalan society. But even after the final peace signing in December 1996 and the initial implementation of some accords, the road has contained minefields of serious resistance from those who held power in the old system.

### **Content of the Accords: Democracy Without Social Justice**

Taken as a whole, the accords ended 42 years of painful Cold War history and provided a framework for institutionalizing full political democracy in a country that has not enjoyed such democracy since 1954. Taken one by one, the accords are a mix of genuine achievements and serious limitations; they represent a series of compromises between radically opposing viewpoints. The obligations they impose on the Guatemalan government, nevertheless, are now written down in black and white and are subject to international (that is, UN) verification.

The first breakthrough was the human rights accord, signed in March 1994. It was important not so much for any new concept of human rights (as these were already guaranteed in the 1985 Guatemalan constitution) as for the new mechanism it created for ending the systematic violation of those rights in practice: a UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA). The UN’s on-the-ground, in-country presence signified the international community’s intention to monitor respect for human rights, and this definitively altered the political context (see Jonas 1999).

Second, at the heart of the entire arrangement is the September 1996 demilitarization accord. It requires far-reaching constitutional reforms to limit the functions of the army, which, since the 1960s, has considered itself the “spinal column” of the Guatemalan state and has involved itself in everything from counterinsurgency and internal security to civic action and vaccinating babies. Henceforth, the accord stipulates, the army will have a single function: defense of Guatemala’s borders and its territorial integrity. The accord also eliminates the dreaded paramilitary Civilian Self-Defense Patrols (PACs) and other counterinsurgency security units, reduces the size and budget of the army by one-third, and creates a new civilian police force to guarantee citizen security. Finally, it mandates necessary reforms of the judicial system to eliminate pervasive impunity.

Some years ago, Guatemalan writer Carlos Figueroa Ibarra (1986) offered the unforgettable image of the “centaurization” of the Guatemalan state; that is, its conversion into a counterinsurgency apparatus that was half-beast, half-human—a mix of civilian and military power, with the military component predominating. The demilitarization accord mandates the “decentaurization” of the state as the precondition for strengthening civilian power and genuine democratization. It is also the precondition for Guatemala’s governability and viability in the twenty-first century. As the failure of the 1993 *Serranazo* showed, the state-as-centaur is no longer viable.

If the battle for full implementation is won—which cannot be taken for granted in Guatemala—this accord will stand out for marking profound changes in the rules and principal players of Guatemalan politics, which Booth (1998, 2) denominates as a “regime change.” For those who have lived under Guatemala’s militarized and thoroughly exclusionary political system all these years, ideological pluralism is a significant achievement.

The third significant gain is the March 1995 Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This accord goes far beyond antidiscrimination protections to mandate a constitutional reform redefining Guatemala as a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual nation. If fully implemented, this agreement will require profound reforms in the country’s educational, judicial, and political systems. It lays the formal basis for a new entitlement of Guatemala’s indigenous majority and establishes their right to make claims on the state. This accord, together with independent initiatives by a variety of indigenous organizations, also creates a new context for social and political interactions and for a more democratic political culture.

Of course, some of the accords contain serious limitations, flaws, and omissions. Most immediately visible is the weakness on issues of bringing justice to victims of the war. Guatemala’s truth commission was empowered neither to take judicial action nor even to name individually those responsible for human rights crimes. This accord, which generated

howls of protest in Guatemala when it was first signed in 1994, was compounded by the partial amnesty of December 1996 for some crimes committed by the army as well as the URNG. The amnesty covers war-related crimes, excluding genocide, torture, and forced disappearances but not extrajudicial killings. Essentially, the accord throws the responsibility back to the courts; but the judicial system, due to be reformed through the 1996 Accord on the Strengthening of Civilian Power, still operates within a generalized framework of impunity and threats.

Also serious are the shortcomings in the 1996 Accord on Socioeconomic and Agrarian Issues. This accord recognizes poverty as a problem—for Guatemala, this is a step forward—and accepts, in principle, governmental responsibility for the well-being of the population. It commits the government to increase the ratio of taxes to gross domestic product from less than 8 percent (the lowest in the hemisphere) to 12 percent by 2000. (The battle actually to institute the tax reforms has been one of the fiercest of the postwar period; see Jonas 2000.) The accord sidesteps the issue of land reform, however, and contains no measures to create jobs or address the alarming rate of unemployment and underemployment, which in the 1990s was 66 percent.

The compromises and omissions on these issues are not surprising, given the need to win the consent of the private sector, the government's conservative economic agenda, and the generally neoliberal policies coming from the international financial institutions. The daily lives of most Guatemalans will not improve directly as a result of the accords. Socioeconomic policies will result, as they do everywhere else in Latin America, from political struggle once all political forces are legalized. The steady deterioration of social conditions in El Salvador since 1992 has been an ominous precedent.

More generally, Guatemala's democratic reforms are by no means automatically in place, but have required additional battles, with some of the most crucial elements mandating changes in the 1985 Constitution. In short, the peace process and the accords have changed many rules of the political game and created a new political scenario. If the forces of the left are coherent and intelligent enough to use it well, the peace process gives them the space to fight for many of the goals not achieved in the accords themselves. Nevertheless, with the signing of the accords, Guatemala's "peace resisters" and defenders of the old order immediately began sharpening their knives. Until the fundamental battles of the second (implementation) phase of the peace process are won, Guatemalan democracy will remain fragile and unconsolidated.

## **DEMOCRACY WITHOUT ADJECTIVES**

It is the premise of the rest of this article that fulfillment of the peace accords, particularly on demilitarization, is the necessary precondition

for full development of political democracy. The quality of that democracy will also be affected by the degree of citizens' participation (both individual and collective) in using democratic institutions to improve their lives. Starting from this premise, the Guatemalan experience has implications for the broader debates in Latin America.

### **How Democratic Was the "Pacted Transition?"**

How does the broadly democratizing experience of Guatemala's peace process compare to that of the electoral democracy restored during the mid-1980s through an interelite pact? This question presupposes another: how to characterize the "pacted transition" period from the early 1980s through the early 1990s, before the peace process was fully under way (although it had begun). By what criteria shall we judge the quality of democracy during that previous period? It was certainly a political transition, but can it be considered a "democratic transition"? And if not, how and when did the transition become more democratic?

During that period, Guatemala did experience a transition pacted between civilian and military elites and did hold elections that were considered "free and fair" (nonfraudulent), as well as competitive. Those elections, however, did not represent all political tendencies. Furthermore, as described more empirically elsewhere (Jonas 1991), at the same time, a repressive-coercive counterinsurgency apparatus was effectively stifling basic freedoms (of expression, assembly, and so on) and imposing military control on entire sectors of the rural population. Only the Reagan State Department cheerfully proclaimed Guatemala a "consolidated" and "posttransitional" democracy, after nothing more than the 1985 election (Jonas 1989). More sober and rigorous academic analysts implicitly acknowledged the problem when they had to invent new categories of democracy (restricted, pseudo, *tutelada*, façade, *democradura*) to include Guatemala in the "democratic family." When it becomes necessary to add all those qualifiers or adjectives, the definition of democracy is being stretched beyond acceptable limits.

In Guatemala itself, the debates about the "democratic transition" have been very sharply contested. Guatemalan army officers and some of their civilian allies generally assert that the army guided Guatemala to democracy, beginning with the 1982 coup, continuing through the Constituent Assembly (1984), the new Constitution (1985), and the 1985 elections that restored civilian government in 1986. Hence, according to this interpretation, far-sighted army officials and their civilian allies should go down in history as the fathers of contemporary Guatemalan democracy. Some civilian social scientists concur that the democratic transition began in the early 1980s, although most of them do not credit the army with having "graciously" conceded real power to civilians (see Padilla 1996b, 33; Héctor Rosada in ASIES 1998, 32).

A second debate focuses on the period of elected, formally civilian rule beginning in 1986 (the governments of Cerezo, Serrano, and de León Carpio), which a number of Guatemalan analysts take as the starting point for contemporary Guatemalan democracy (Aguilera 1996a, 1997; Arévalo 1998; Azpuru 1999). Generally, their argument is not the simplistic one based only on having civilian presidents; despite the large quotient of power held by the army, they maintain, these governments saw the gradual undermining of military power, finally even the subordination of military to civilian power.

While it is true that the army lost absolute power or saw its power undermined, the idea of calling this period “democratic” without any further qualification has been challenged. Torres Rivas (1989, 1996), for example, has described it as an “authoritarian transition to democracy.” Of course, there were changes (a “transition”) beginning in 1982; one could even say in hindsight that it eventually became a “transition toward democracy.” But this is quite different from characterizing it as a “democratic transition” per se, particularly the period 1982–85.

Elsewhere (Jonas 1991, 1995), I have argued in detail that because power was not effectively transferred from the army to civilians, the transition from overt military rule to elected civilian government in Guatemala during the mid-1980s was not so much a “democratic transition” as the top-down liberalization of an authoritarian regime—a process generally agreed to be quite different from genuine democratization. In the Guatemalan case, the regimes of the late 1980s and early 1990s made no serious attempt to impose civilian authority over the military (with the brief exception of Serrano, at the very beginning of his government). Liberalizations can be controlled: openings can be shut at will, as was attempted in Guatemala as recently as the 1993 *Serranazo*. Indeed, the *Serranazo*'s failure was the first real sign that a deeper, truly democratic transition was beginning.

After the necessary “recomposition” of the counterinsurgency state to resolve its internal and external crises of legitimacy (beginning in 1982–83), what existed from 1986 through the early 1990s can be described as a civilian version of the counterinsurgency state, having its own particularities but leaving the army a great deal of power—though not absolute power—over civilian authorities. In essence, what did not change was the prevalence of a predominantly coercive state on an ongoing (not exceptional) basis and of military domination, as opposed to hegemony or creation of social consensus.

The counterinsurgency state is a project not simply of the army but of the ruling coalition (including economic elites) as a whole. But civilian counterinsurgency states have their own contradictions, particularly in their responses to popular protest.<sup>2</sup> Formally, the post-1986 civilian government reestablished the rule of law; but Guatemalans did not feel

protected by it or behave as if their rights were protected. On paper, the 1985 Constitution contained basic liberal democratic guarantees, but that same constitution codified the counterinsurgency institutions (such as army-controlled PACs and “model villages”) that violated such guarantees in practice, particularly in total ex-conflict zones. From 1986 through the mid-1990s, for the most part, civilian presidents allowed the army to rule from behind the scenes and feared challenging the army’s prerogatives. In short, the ruling coalition ceded, and the politicians accepted, very restricted spaces for autonomous action.

To be sure, the constitutional framework provided some important shelters from which citizens or popular organizations could organize forcibly to open broader spaces. Nevertheless, as documented by virtually all human rights reports covering the period from 1986 through the mid-1990s, the levels of repression directed against those who tested the limits and the pervasive climate of fear marred the liberalization to such a degree that the climate could not be considered favorable to citizen participation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the levels of impunity and arbitrariness, especially by military authorities, and the absence of due process in the judicial system were striking. As late as 1995, MINUGUA reports still identified impunity as the major obstacle to real improvements in the human rights climate (MINUGUA 1995–99).

Elections during this period—specifically, those of 1985 and 1990–91—were free of fraud, and certainly featured competing political parties (18 or 19 of them). They could not, however, be called “representative,” as many studies have demonstrated (IHRIG/WOLA 1985; Trudeau 1989; Castaneda 1990; NDI 1991; Jonas 1989, 1995). Far from being fully pluralistic, they were ideologically restricted, with virtually all forces to the left of center excluded, as well as persecuted, until 1995.<sup>4</sup> As a result, many real issues were left undiscussed in the electoral arena. Many citizens were too inhibited by fear to engage in political activity of any kind.

Finally, these elections were characterized by ever-declining levels of voter participation. Abstention (among registered voters, not counting over 30 percent of the potential electorate that was not registered) rose from 31 percent in the first round of the 1985 presidential election to 44 percent in the first round of the 1990–91 presidential election, and reached the absurd extreme of about 80 percent in the 1994 congressional election.<sup>5</sup>

None of these points should be interpreted as dismissing the critical role of elections in any democratizing process. The 1985 election in particular, the first serious contest in two decades, awakened high hopes among Guatemalan citizens about the change from military to civilian rule, although these hopes were subsequently dashed. The main virtue of the 1990–91 election was the transfer of power from one elected civilian government to another—an important advance for Guatemala but still a

“fraudulent pluralism,” according to one centrist analyst (Cruz Salazar 1991). The U.S.-based National Democratic Institute, which observed that election, concluded that Guatemala was consolidating an “exclusionary democracy,” still lacking in basic political guarantees (NDI 1991). In short, these elections overall (through 1994) were so exclusionary as to be insufficient grounds by themselves for establishing a claim to “democracy.”

Under the surface, during those years, the right engaged in an intense internal debate over whether to tolerate any autonomous political actor (the URNG, once it laid down its arms, or any other leftist force). The right was obsessed with the problems of the URNG’s insertion into civilian political life and, more fundamentally, the forces in civil society that would become the social and political bases for leftist parties. The right’s fears were not unfounded: private presidential polls showed that the URNG had come to enjoy a 10 percent *simpatía* in the spring of 1992, even while it was illegal. Indeed, many observers agreed that any new force untarnished by the crisis of the existing parties had the potential to gain support rapidly, once its participation was permitted.

Because the peace process could potentially open up the previously exclusionary system, it became a source of tension within the army and the private sector. There were constant pressures to end it and thereby to close the spaces it had begun to open. This was the particular logic underlying human rights violations during this period: hardliners in the security forces were striking out against movements that might function autonomously, precisely in order to avoid a truly pluralistic politics.

Any real democratic gains made during this period evolved from a *sui generis* interaction between the elections and the peace negotiations that democratized the political transition.<sup>6</sup> The peace process had its own dynamic, an articulation between the formal negotiations and the concurrent empowerment of forces in civil society (especially indigenous Maya); this dynamic affected electoral politics as much as the reverse. It was precisely this complex interplay of forces that differentiated Guatemala’s transition from one pacted simply between civilian and military elites. This is what helped transform the (sub)minimalist democratic procedures of the late 1980s into a more participatory experience.

A further example of this mutual interaction came in 1995, when the dynamics of the general election campaign affected the peace process, and vice versa. Early that year, the URNG issued an unprecedented call for people to vote, which was interpreted as signaling an implicit shift toward political means of struggle. Meanwhile, for the first time in 40 years—in no small measure because of the peace process—a left-of-center coalition of popular and indigenous organizations, the New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG), known as the “left flank” of the ASC, was formed to participate in the elections. Equally significant was the August 1995 agreement signed on the Panamanian island of Contadora (brokered by the Central

American Parliament), in which the URNG agreed to suspend military actions during the last two weeks of the electoral campaign in exchange for a commitment by the major political parties to continue the peace negotiations under a new government and to honor the accords already signed. For the first time, the Guatemalan political class accepted in principle that the accords constituted "accords of state" and hence could not be jettisoned by any future government or Congress.

The November elections were marked by a very low level of participation (47 percent of registered voters). Arzú's 2 percent victory in the January runoff, with only 37 percent of the registered voters participating, at least assured the continuity of the peace negotiations.<sup>7</sup> (Despite the Contadora agreement, Ríos Montt's party had given signals to the contrary.<sup>8</sup>)

The major surprise of the 1995 election was the far-stronger-than-expected showing of the newly formed leftist FDNG. Although weakened by the lack of resources and prior political experience, the FDNG won 8 percent of the presidential vote and six Congressional seats, making it the third-strongest party in Congress. Alliances between the FDNG and locally based indigenous *comités cívicos* (civic committees) also won several important mayoralties, including Xelajú (Quetzaltenango), Guatemala's second-largest city.

The more pluralistic election of 1995 was a result of this complex interplay of forces; it would not have grown simply or automatically out of the electoral system itself. Something similar, involving nonelectoral as well as electoral forces (although without the indigenous or ASC components), took place in El Salvador; hence the particularity of what can be called the *camino centroamericano*, the Central American path of democratization.

The Central American path is characterized by a true negotiation between armed leftist insurgents and civilian-military elites as two semi-equal negotiating parties; it differs strongly from a more limited "pact" simply between civilian and military elites, as in Chile. The Central American negotiation processes involved mutual compromises in internationally verified political agreements, not counterinsurgent "winners" imposing a settlement on insurgent "losers." Rather than simply moving to the right, leftist and popular forces maintained considerable integrity on issues of democracy and (in Guatemala) indigenous rights, even though they implicitly agreed to defer social justice issues; after all, this was a negotiation, not a revolution.

There are other reasons why the Southern Cone model by itself does not fit Central America. Whereas the former involved "redemocratization," the latter had no such internal point of reference (with the exception of the brief, long-past 1944–54 interlude in Guatemala). It can even be argued that, especially in light of the extremely exclusionary and retrograde nature of Central America's political systems during recent

decades, the gains made in El Salvador and Guatemala are of equal or greater importance than those made in some of South America's "pacted transitions"—above all, that of Chile.<sup>9</sup> Southern Cone critics of the pacted transitions have addressed the shortcomings of those experiences in their own countries as the basis for alternative concepts of democracy.<sup>10</sup>

In several Central American countries, even nonrevolutionary demands, such as participation in elections, had to be won through armed revolutionary insurgencies that confronted counterinsurgency armies and exclusionary civilian elites—followed by negotiated solutions to the civil wars centering on the dismantling of the counterinsurgency apparatus. There simply were no electoral options for many citizens until the revolutionary left and other leftist forces created them. In El Salvador, the FMLN invented "new political practices" for consensus building during the course of its negotiations (see Lungo 1994). In Guatemala, it was the ASC, with its plurality of forces—some sympathetic to the URNG, some not, but most (except political parties) excluded from the electoral arena—that ultimately created space for the emergence of the FDNG as a leftist electoral option in 1995.

This analysis is not meant to suggest that there was one identifiable moment when Guatemala ceased to be a counterinsurgency state and became democratic. The evolution or process of change—in which what began as an army-controlled, top-down "authoritarian transition" eventually became a "democratic transition"—was very complex and contradictory. Even the three civilian presidents who subordinated themselves to the army, Cerezo, Serrano, and de León Carpio, were part of a process of liberalization or "political opening" that eventually permitted the formation of important democratic counterinstitutions (for example, the human rights ombudsman). The 1993 *Serranazo* itself was an important moment in galvanizing all of Guatemalan society for a return to the constitutional order. If it was not "the" moment when a more genuinely democratic transition began, it was certainly a key turning point.

The theoretical point here is that political-electoral openings or liberalizations of right-wing authoritarian regimes do not automatically or inevitably lead to full democratization, as Jeane Kirkpatrick (1979) argues. There was no way to predict in 1986 (much less in 1982) that a genuine democratization, going beyond a liberalization or political "opening," would occur in Guatemala. This process has begun now, largely because the negotiation of internationally verifiable peace accords, as well as MINUGUA's presence, extracted democratic concessions that no election could guarantee—and as a precondition for all else, the demilitarization of state and society. Furthermore, in the Guatemalan case, only the force of such accords has the potential to overcome the exclusionary internal resistances and to ensure the irreversibility of the democratic changes.

## Dimensions of the Democratic Project

It has become widely accepted among students of democratic transitions that civilian control over the military is a necessary condition for functional democracy. They therefore have included this criterion in their “expanded procedural minimum” definition of democracy. But is this a sufficient description? Does it fully capture the richness and complexity of the real experience—above all, in a country such as Guatemala, where the indigenous majority makes cultural pluralism a central issue? The multidimensional democratization that is occurring in Guatemala today requires broader theoretical horizons than those comprehended in the transition literature by itself.

Much of the theoretical literature on democratic transitions has taken as its starting point the Schumpeterian model, refined by Dahl’s “polyarchy”—from which are derived various “procedural minimum” conceptions, ranging from very minimalist to more “expanded.”<sup>11</sup> There are, however, other traditions from which to draw for discussions of democracy: first, the formulations based on classical conceptions of democracy as laid out by theorists such as Pateman (1970) and Morlino (1985) and applied to Central America, for example, by Booth (1989, 1995) and Montobbio (1997); and second, a number of contemporary contributions to the democracy literature drawing largely on the experience of social movements (for example, feminism, indigenism). These traditions, which fall outside the transition literature, provide a context for my broader argument about the potential for Guatemala’s democratic project.

Taking the broadest of the procedural definitions, the “expanded procedural minimum” goes beyond Dahl by adding two further conditions that are essential in the Latin American cases: the polity must be self-governing (sovereign) and it must have civilian control over the military (Karl 1990, 2), or at least the absence of a military veto. But even with civilian control over the military, this formulation explicitly excludes extensive “participation” as a requisite, stipulating that “all citizens may not take an active and equal part in politics, although it must be legally possible for them to do so” (Schmitter and Karl 1991, 83). Without begging the question of whether “all citizens” are active participants, the relative weight given to the participatory element is a real question.

Booth spells out an alternative approach to what he calls the “pluralist-elitist conception.” His alternative is rooted in the classical conception as laid out by Pateman (1970), among others: “participation by the mass of people in a community in its governance (the making and carrying out of decisions)” (Booth 1995, 5). As Montobbio argues about El Salvador, the classical tradition is particularly appropriate in cases (such as the Central American) involving ruptures of the social contract—that is, civil wars—as contrasted with “peaceful transitions” (1997, 18–21).

This tradition is based on a broad conception of citizens' rights and goes back to theorists from Aristotle through Mill; beyond not being legally precluded, political participation lies at the heart of democracy. Although the degrees of democracy may vary, this depends on "the amount and quality of public participation in decisionmaking and rule" (Booth 1995, 6). Hence, according to Booth and others, electoral participation is one important aspect but only one among others.<sup>12</sup> Referring specifically to Guatemala, Poitevin speaks of a concept of citizenship in which the population is more than an "occasional legitimator" of the existing power structure (through elections) and in which all sectors enjoy full freedom to organize and exercise effective power (1992, 27).

Why insist on the participatory element? First, even in regard to elections, it implies going beyond the absence-of-fraud measure to permit a critique of elections held in an overall context of a system that excludes certain ideological positions and retains many coercive-repressive elements. Second, starting from a broader conception of politics, it permits us to take into account participation outside the electoral arena, as well as formal electoral participation, and the interaction between them. Third, and perhaps most important, it provides a basis for appreciating the dimensions of democracy when it finally does come to exist; these include ideological and cultural diversity, the growing effectiveness of civil society, and an expanded conception of citizenship to include rights beyond those associated with the legal status.

These points can be developed by referring to several relatively "newer" or more contemporary bodies of literature that deal with non-institutional aspects of democracy; most of these grow out of practical social movement experiences in Latin America and elsewhere. Some of the themes emphasized in these newer literatures are citizenship and social citizenship (including cross-border rights), civil society, human rights, local power, feminism and its critiques of earlier conceptions of democracy, indigenous rights, liberation theology, and ecology and environmental justice. Much of the literature growing out of social movements emphasizes group rights as well as strictly individual rights (for specific references, see Jonas 2000, chap. 4, n. 18).

All these dimensions have great relevance for Guatemala. Many were manifest in the organizations that came together to form the ASC in the early 1990s, and others are taking shape in new forms of social organization today. Of special note are those most relevant to political democracy in a country that is 60 percent Maya: cultural rights alongside civil and human rights. Many of these are codified in the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is an implicit premise of that accord that political democracy cannot be fully achieved in Guatemala without recognizing and acting on the basis of the country's cultural diversity.

Aside from the accord, other recent on-the-ground advances by indigenous movements include the broader use of alternative forms of political organization. Among the most prominent of these are the *comités cívicos*, formed outside the traditional political parties, which did not fully represent indigenous interests (Ochoa et al. 1995; Gálvez et al. 1997; ASIES 1998). The 1995 mayoral victory in Quetzaltenango achieved the previously inconceivable goal of an indigenous mayor in a city that is half indigenous, half ladino. Various other initiatives promise to incorporate indigenous traditions of community democracy and customary law (*derecho consuetudinario*) (see Cojtí Cuxil 1991; Poitevín 1991, 1992; Solares 1992; Bastos and Camus 1993; Esquit and Gálvez 1997; Adams 1994, 1995; Warren 1998; on the contributions of *derecho consuetudinario* see Rojas Lima 1995; Sieder 1996).

Although ladinos still contest some of these issues as “divisive” or as threats to “national unity,” they are central to the quality of democracy not only for Guatemala’s indigenous peoples but also for the country as a whole. The assertion of cultural rights in this case is not “identity politics” but a new political framework for Maya-ladino social relations; it is now being reformulated in a discourse of intercultural as well as multicultural relations.

These reflections suggest that minimalist or primarily procedural conceptions of democratization, even when “expanded,” often sell democracy short by not emphasizing the full ideological and cultural diversity that is central to the participatory dimensions of political democracy and by failing to emphasize—indeed, often entirely missing—some of the most profound transformations in the rules of the political game. In Guatemala, the symbolic “moment” when these democratic transformations came closest to being formally “adopted” as a national project or agenda will be remembered as the signing of the peace accords more clearly than in any other moment since 1954—certainly more than in any of the elections between 1954 and 1996. (This is not to deny that the changes had begun several years before the signing of peace, and that their realization will take many years.) To use a crude indicator, on the evening of the signing, a telephone poll by the conservative daily newspaper *Prensa Libre* elicited a 77 percent “happiness” response; and despite limited expectations, “the prevailing mood [in the *Plaza Central*] was of being at the ushering in of a new historical era” (Hernández Pico 1997).

Experiences such as these also signify a potential transformation in political-cultural-social relations. As Vilas put it in a recent talk about Central America, even if a revolution fails, nothing in the country is the same as before, and people do not behave in the old ways. To illustrate from our discussion: the redefinition of the nation as multicultural poses the possibility of transforming the collective political culture of

Guatemalan society as a whole; certainly the indigenous population is engaging in new forms of behavior, and it is to be hoped that this will eventually elicit new responses from ladinos.

In Guatemala, furthermore, lifting the blanket of fear that permeated virtually all human interactions since 1954 constitutes, if not a revolution in the old sense, at least a very profound transformation. Subjectively, it expands the previously limited expectations for many previously excluded sectors, although they still live in poverty and face deeply entrenched elite opposition to change. Guatemalans are beginning to feel entitled to nothing less than what is enjoyed by citizens in the traditional Western democracies.

Some of these general observations have been substantiated by the findings of at least one major empirical survey documenting the expansion of political participation and a democratic political culture in Guatemala in the mid-to-late 1990s (Development Associates et al. 1998). (The working category of "democratic political culture" measured people's level of incorporation into political processes, interest in participation in decisions on issues affecting them, knowledge of their rights and obligations, and ability to organize to demand that public institutions fulfill their functions.)

From a historical perspective, Guatemala stands today on the threshold of possibly completing its long-interrupted national democratic revolution of 1944–54; but this time, having suffered the 42-year nightmare, people are experiencing democracy in a new way. Today, moreover, the incipient democratic revolution is broader than 50 years ago, as it includes new social protagonists, most notably Mayas and women. Although Guatemalan democracy remains very fragile and unconsolidated, one can begin to catch a glimpse of what "full democracy" might mean in the twenty-first century.

Among the survey's most important findings were the significant increases between 1993 and 1997 in the levels of political tolerance, participation in local government, and, even more notably, activity in civil society organizations (educational, religious, community development, and so on). By 1997, 78 percent of the 1,200 interviewees had participated in at least one such organization. A significant contrast was the ongoing lack of confidence in the judicial system and in the central government more generally, which could explain the gap between the high level of social participation and the low level of voting. Overall, the 1997 survey concluded that the signing of the peace accords was crucial to the changes between 1993 and 1997, that opportunities now exist to consolidate *democracia desde abajo* (from below), and that the stereotype of the unmovably authoritarian Guatemalan political culture is misleading, particularly among the indigenous population.

## The Unresolved Question of Social Justice

One persistently unresolved discussion about political democracy is its relation to social justice. While the issue is very broad, it is relevant in particular ways to the case at hand. It is widely argued that social justice issues, although not definitionally part of political democracy, have profoundly affected the fate of "new" democracies (and older ones) in practice, or, as some analysts have put it, the "quality of democracy." Others have begun to take this up as an issue of "social citizenship." Przeworski (1996) warns of the dangers of a new "monster": democracy without citizenship; that is, without the minimal necessary conditions for citizens to exercise their rights in practice. O'Donnell (1997) has expressed similar concerns. Montobbio (1997, 25) put it in slightly different terms for El Salvador, warning of a *congelación* (freezing up), in which "authoritarian enclaves" retain considerable power and the democratic transition is never fully consolidated, stable, or lasting. Consolidation, he continues, implies dealing not only with the elimination of military control but also addressing the country's historical problems, including massive social inequalities.

In recent Latin American experience, formal political democracy has generally been regarded as a precondition for struggles for greater social equality. Beyond that, the question is whether a fully democratic system can be sustained amid major social disparities or whether, eventually, the huge socioeconomic gaps will (directly or indirectly) undermine democratic gains. Latin America's experiences of the past two decades are mixed and open to a variety of interpretations. Some situations in South America suggest the difficulties of consolidating political democracy on a lasting and stable basis while simultaneously institutionalizing neoliberal measures that increase inequalities (see note 10 above). Venezuela illustrates the complexities: since the late 1980s, austerity policies have generated food riots, populist military coup attempts, and, in December 1998, electoral victory by the former coup leader, all in a country regarded for the last 40 years as a stable, consolidated democracy.

Countries emerging from longstanding civil wars or national liberation struggles inspired by revolutionary visions, such as the nations of Central America and not unlike South Africa's ANC-led struggle (see Wallerstein 1996) have particular dynamics. The traditional socialist revolutionary visions have clearly been modified in the last 20 years, but democratization has brought rising expectations for greater social justice. In the Central American cases, a major issue is whether the "structural causes" that gave rise to the revolutionary movements of the 1960s to 1980s are being addressed by the peace settlements of the 1990s. Even though peace did not bring social justice, the widespread expectation or demand remains very much alive. Social equity is not part of the definition of democracy, but it is unquestionably part of the panorama of issues opened up by democratization.

Coming out of a 36-year civil war, Guatemala is certainly experiencing this revolution of rising expectations. Yet Guatemala is surrounded by the chilling realities of social deterioration in El Salvador and, even more so, in Nicaragua. El Salvador's peace agenda has been undermined by the government's neoliberal economic agenda (see de Soto and del Castillo 1994; Boyce 1996; Montobbio 1997). Guatemala faces a host of dangers that typically plague postwar societies, as well as some that are peculiar to itself, which could undermine rather than consolidate democratic gains. One is a rise in common crime (partly driven by poverty and the lack of jobs) and concomitant authoritarian responses.

Few Guatemalans seriously discuss democracy without addressing these issues because they believe that, as long as nearly three-fourths of the population lives in extreme poverty, formal democracy will remain fragile. (In the Guatemalan case, the socioeconomic structure has been so skewed that even the World Bank recommends more state spending.) As Guatemalan analysts Poitevín (1992, 35–37) and Torres Rivas (1991) argue, social struggles have become the condition for liberal democracy: “a democratic process is not possible without a minimum basis for developing social relations of equality,” without a material basis for the exercise of citizen rights.

Liberal democracy, moreover, has arrived in Guatemala linked to a much broader national *imaginario* (vision) contained in the peace accords (Aguilera 1997). Torres Rivas refers to something similar in the concept of good government, which “seeks a permanent link between political freedom and social justice.” Good government is “a metaphor for the democratic search to put public order in the service of addressing the problems of the majority.” The link between democracy and social justice is necessary “to avoid discrediting the electoral system, the democratic premise, civilian governments chosen for their promises and programs, or politics itself” (1995, 46).

Gálvez (1995) and others use the concept of governability in a similar manner; that is, beyond formal institutionality, to refer more broadly to the relation between the state and civil society, particularly in meeting popular expectations. Hence, without being substituted for “political democracy,” the broader social dimension is linked to it time and again by a wide range of Guatemalans and Latin Americans in general; and the experience of recent years demonstrates the importance of this link in moving toward a society that is viable and stable (“governable”) as well as humane.

On the larger theoretical level, Wallerstein (1991) has written about the ongoing battle since the French Revolution over how to interpret the legacy of that struggle, particularly the debate between the libertarian and social emphases. Theoretically, there is no one correct answer but an ambivalent legacy (hence the struggle over interpretation). It is one

of the great ironies of history since the French Revolution that struggles for “liberty” (liberal democracy) have been led and won by revolutionaries—that is, those who also had a social justice agenda. As Vilas puts it, “at the root of popular acceptance of calls for revolution is an unavoidable democratic demand” (1994, 99).

Although they have succeeded in winning democracy, however, revolutionaries have generally not won the struggles for social equality. In Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, that historical tendency has apparently continued. The ability to win social justice is even further constrained today, in an era dominated internationally by neoliberal policy prescriptions, such as privatization and the dismantling of the social safety net. The unanswered question for progressive and leftist forces in Guatemala and the rest of Central America today is whether they can use the political space won through the peace accords to make significant social justice gains in the future. The answer to this question—which will have to be revisited many times during the next 10 to 15 years—will be essential to our long-range assessments of the *camino centroamericano*.

## EPILOGUE

As of mid-2000, 3½ years after the signing of the final peace accords, it is evident that the implementation phase of Guatemala’s peace process is just as difficult and dangerous as the negotiations were. Particularly after the beginning of 1998, the battles for implementation became more intense, as Guatemala’s veteran peace resisters challenged the substance and continuity of the process itself. The Arzu government, which had taken such bold initiatives to finalize the peace negotiations, was much more timid—on many occasions resistant—in regard to compliance with the accords.

The most difficult moment for the entire peace process came in May 1999, in regard to the constitutional reforms required to put into effect the most significant provisions of the accords on indigenous rights and on strengthening civilian power (limiting the functions of the army and reforming the judicial system). It had taken 1½ years to gain congressional approval of those accords (which was finally accomplished in October 1998, largely as a result of international pressures). But in the congressional package of reforms submitted for approval by a public referendum (as required by the Constitution), the reforms stemming from the peace accords were swamped by dozens of others that were unrelated to the accords. And while polls had shown ahead of time that the reforms were likely to be approved, a well-financed last-month blitzkrieg campaign by peace resisters (who urged a No vote, using blatantly racist anti-Maya arguments) succeeded in defeating the reforms—that is, in getting 55 percent for the No among the bare 18.5 percent of

the electorate that voted. Clearly, the main winner of this vote was abstention and the main loser was the peace process itself. (For a detailed analysis, see Jonas 2000, chap. 8.)

In the wake of this political disaster, the peace agenda was placed on hold until after the November 1999 election. That election brought to power the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), Ríos Montt's extreme rightist party, which had opposed the peace negotiations during the 1990s. Although incoming president Alfonso Portillo, himself a populist of sorts, made far-reaching promises to implement the accords, the FRG delegation, which dominated Congress, included former army officials who had been key players in the "scorched-earth" "dirty war" of the 1980s, not to mention Ríos Montt himself, who was to preside over Congress.

This victory for open peace resisters was somewhat mitigated by the election of nine members of Congress from the leftist coalition constructed by the newly legalized URNG and other progressive groups. Structurally, the consolidation of the left as the third force was an important step toward "normalizing" Guatemalan politics; for the first time since 1954, all political and ideological tendencies were represented.

The institutional transformations envisioned in the peace accords still had not occurred; despite the internal and external pressures for change during the late 1990s, Guatemala's political, judicial, and social institutions remained weak and dysfunctional as of mid-2000, still unable to guarantee basic rights in practice. In an effort no less important than what the accords prescribed on paper, the UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA), the UN Development Program, and other UN and international agencies invested huge amounts of resources and energy into institutional strengthening programs, especially the creation of a new civilian national police (independent of the army) and reform of the weak and corrupt justice system. By mid-2000, the civilian police force was still in formation, and the army continued to play a central role in internal security (in violation of the demilitarization accord).

The weaknesses of the justice system remained painfully clear, particularly after the highest-level political murder of recent years, the 1998 peacetime assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi. Gerardi was murdered two days after the Archbishop's Human Rights Office, which he had founded, released a report (ODHA 1998) attributing 85 percent of the killings during the war to state security forces (the armed forces and PACs). As of mid-2000, the Gerardi assassination, along with other major wartime crimes, remained unsolved and unpunished.

Eventually, in February 1999, the official Historical Clarification Commission released a far-reaching report based on nine thousand interviews. It attributed 93 percent of the human rights crimes committed during the war to the army and its paramilitary units (and just 3 percent to the URNG). It also established that some actions and policies of

the Guatemalan government during the 1980s were genocidal in nature, and it sharply criticized the U.S. role in supporting the apparatus of terror. It also recommended major institutional changes. But implementation of the Truth Commission's recommendations would require new battles, under a government now dominated by peace resisters.

More than three years after the signing of peace, then, it remains to be seen whether pressures from domestic pro-peace forces and their supporters in the international community could consolidate the incipient gains from the previous decade's peace negotiations. Although the continuity of the constitutional- electoral order and of the peace process appears intact, many other longstanding problems remain unresolved. The words of Salvadoran writer Roberto Turcios (1997, 118) capture an essential dilemma of interpreting postwar transitions such as those of El Salvador and Guatemala: "Looking back over the past 25 years, what you can see is a gigantic leap forward; but looking ahead, what stands out is uncertainty."

## NOTES

This article was written in 1998, before the May 1999 referendum on constitutional reforms or the November 1999 election; the epilogue was subsequently added. Despite the changes that may have developed since that referendum and election, I have not substantially altered the text, as its focus is the democratic project of the peace process rather than the vicissitudes.

Beyond the literature on democratization and on the Guatemalan and Salvadoran peace processes, this article is based primarily on several hundred author interviews, carried out between 1990 and 1999, with virtually all the key domestic and international players in the Guatemalan peace process and political arena, from all political perspectives. I am deeply grateful to them for cooperating generously and, in some cases, year after year. I wish to thank the North-South Center of the University of Miami, the Stevenson Program on Global Security at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and FLACSO/Guatemala for supporting the research for this article and for the larger book (Jonas 2000).

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1. The leading governments in the "Group of Friends" were Mexico, Spain, Norway, and the United States; Colombia and Venezuela were also nominal members, but less influential.

2. For a fuller argument that Guatemala under civilian rule during the late 1980s remained essentially a counterinsurgency state, see Jonas 1991, 171. I also argue there against exaggerated versions of the counterinsurgency state thesis, which view such a state as permanent, stable, self-perpetuating, or all-controlling.

3. For examples as recent as 1994, see annual reports by Americas Watch, Amnesty International, and even the U.S. State Department's Human Rights reports; also Jonas 1994.

4. The very small social democratic Partido Socialista Democrática (PSD) was permitted to participate, once its politicians had accepted the "rules of the game" (which included rejection of any possible alliance with the URNG) and the unspoken limits on its platform imposed by the military; meanwhile, some of its leaders remained in exile.

5. The more than 30 percent of eligible voters who went unregistered would bring the effective voter abstention rate to 52 percent in 1985 and 69 percent in 1990. More recent estimates of nonregistration are as high as 35 to 40 percent. In both years, moreover, abstention among registered voters increased significantly in the presidential runoff elections: from 31 percent to 35 percent in 1985, and from 44 percent to 55 percent in 1990–91. In addition, at least 12 percent of the ballots, more in some cases, were not valid (null or blank votes). See OAS 1997; Aguilera 1996b, based on official figures from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

6. Other analysts characterize that interaction quite differently. For example, Padilla argues that "democratization [that is, elected civilian rule] made peace possible, not vice versa" (1996a, iii). See also Azpuru 1999.

7. In terms of voter participation and abstention in the 1995–96 elections: in the November 1995 first round, participation was only 47 percent of registered voters (that is, abstention was 53 percent); these figures worsened to 37 percent participation (63 percent abstention) in the January 1996 runoff. Here again, about 30 percent of eligible voters were not registered to vote, meaning that effective participation rates were substantially lower (33 percent in November, 26 percent in January). Why did this happen despite the first-time option of a leftist party (FDNG)? Among other explanations, the FDNG came together very late in the campaign and virtually at the same time as the deadline for new voter registration. Political parties in general, moreover, remained totally discredited by their corruption and inefficacy during the first decade after the return to civilian rule. (For more detailed analyses of the obstacles to voting in the electoral system itself, see OAS 1997; Aguilera 1996b; Jonas 2000, chap. 8.)

8. The January 1996 presidential runoff nearly restored to (indirect but virtual) power an ex-dictator whose policies would have ended the peace process. If the antipeace Ríos Montt forces had won this low-turnout runoff election, even without fraud, the victory would have been for a democracy of the iron fist, another *democradura*, and the peace negotiations might well have been scuttled. Could such an outcome really have been regarded as advancing the cause of democracy in Guatemala?

9. Even in the late 1990s, General Augusto Pinochet retained substantial de facto veto power. The 1980 Constitution written under his dictatorship still reserves for the military four seats in the Senate and half the seats on the National Security Council. Furthermore, it took international initiatives in the fall of 1998 finally to resurrect the issue of holding Pinochet accountable for crimes against humanity.

10. Various Southern Cone analysts have argued that participatory democracy is essential to representative democracy and have associated participatory

democracy with a commitment to reducing socioeconomic inequality. To cite only a few examples, Argentine analysts Nun (1993) and Borón (1993, 1998), both of whom cite Dahl to bolster their arguments; and Brazilian analyst Wefort (1992).

11. In her pioneering treatment of the subject, Pateman (1970) suggests that the initial antipathy to including participation and mobilization emphases in discussions of democracy in U.S. political science models was partly a function of the Cold War ideological bias against "the other model" (that of Soviet–Third World socialism). Some even suggested that too much participation could be dangerous to democratic stability (see Pateman 1970, 10). In the recent literature regarding Latin America, the most careful constructions of the "expanded procedural minimum" can be found in Karl 1990; and Schmitter and Karl 1991. For a survey of the literature on this topic, see Collier and Levitsky 1997. Recently, several prominent "transitologists" have been moving toward discussing the importance of nonformal criteria and even some social issues as they affect political democracy. This can be seen in recent presentations by O'Donnell, Przeworski, Schmitter, and Karl, among others.

12. In addition, see, for example, Fagen's "working definition" of the "constituent elements" of democracy, which include "effective participation by individuals and groups in the decisions that most affect their lives" (1986, 258), along with classical individual rights and equality before the law. Similar emphases can be found in writings by González Casanova, Vilas, and others.

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