

**PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES IN CENTRAL AMERICA.
IN THE 1990 S**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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**INDIA
2006**



Date:28.7.2006

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES IN CENTRAL AMERICA IN THE 1990 S**", submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this university is my original work. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

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Preface and Acknowledgement

The recent failures of peace-building operations around the globe have reignited a theme in peace studies as to what has led to these failures. It has become pertinent to reassess the Central American peace-building operations as they are considered to be successful ones. But the contemporary state of politics and economy in the region hints towards whether there were flaws in these operations. Therefore there is a need to requestion the logical premises of these peace-building operations to understand the larger context and future implications of this process which is currently guided by the paradigm of Liberal Internationalism: installation of democracy and application of neoliberal economic order as a means to achieve peace.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first briefly captures the historical background of the conflicts and the role of the US in the region's geopolitics and assesses the role of regional initiatives in the peace process. The second critically examines the role of the International Community in the process of peace-building. In the third, it attempts to unravel the interlinkage between democratic transition and the process of peace-building. The next one does the same between economic liberalisation and the process of peace-building. The last chapter explores and relates some of the existing theories on peace-building in the light of Central America experience with tentative conclusions on prospects of the peace-building process in the wider framework of the International System.

An analytical and historical method is applied in the survey as it is more likely to yield a better understanding of the peace-building operations in the region. This method is employed, because an analytical pursuit is dependent on understanding the historical context of the conflict.

To all those who made this study possible, I'm very thankful to Prof. Abdul Nafey who guided me and has been a source of inspiration in this study. To all faculty who helped. To my family and friends who supported me throughout this study. Special thanks to Rosa Abraham who helped collect some of the sources used in the study.

CHAPTER I

Conflict and Peace in Central America

Introduction

The Central American countries in spite of the rich endowment of natural resources remained largely an authoritarian agrarian society located at the periphery of global expansion of capitalism. The historical experience of the Central American countries was strikingly marked by persistence of structures of domination, essentially inherited from colonial times. The independence from Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century could not release the Central Americans from these structural handicaps. Consequently, politics and economics remained confined among the miniscule elite, driven solely by self interest.

But underdevelopment was more than a phenomenon of structural hindrances in Central America as it was to a certain extent self-induced by the Oligarchy to retain its position of preeminence. The oligarchy's control over natural resources, especially land was so pervasive that it left the masses at the mercy of its discretion. As a result these made meaningful and peaceful evolutionary change in the social conditions of the masses largely affected by poverty very difficult and it led to the ever widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. Eventually, these deformities in the political and economical structures generated counteracting tendencies in the polity.

The modes of economic development in the region were predominantly agro-export, tilted in favour of big land owners and oriented towards the need of the western capitalist centers and so suffered from the lack of autonomy and essentially were open, small mono-culture economy. Therefore traditionally the region exported raw materials and imported manufactured goods mainly to meet the growing needs of the elite. Obviously, this lopsided arrangement besides economic imbalances resulted in concentration of wealth and increase in poverty.

These conditions further aggravated by the insertion of cash crop like coffee, cotton, bananas and private foreign capital into the economy especially private American capital notably that of United Fruit Company. It further disturbed the traditional agrarian structure which was already in favour of the Oligarchy leading to marginalisation and fragmentation of land holding except for community land among the rural masses. Nonetheless, the dependent-export oriented economy which earned the sobriquet 'banana republics' provided scope for industrialisation, geared towards the needs of the industrial economy of the west. 'The national economies in this area have traditionally relied on one or two product as the staple of international trade. El Salvador's chief export, coffee, accounts for more than 80 percent of her outgoing goods, in Guatemala the figure is 77 percent and only Nicaragua is little less hampered. With this dependence on one or two crops to provide the necessary expansion, development, and the importation off finished products for the home consumers, there was a dangerous reliance on the international market.'¹

One of the most remarkable development which changed the course of history in the evolution of Central American countries as a nation-state was the formation of the middle-sector. By the middle of 19th century the region witnessed a shift in the population pattern with slow movement of peasants from the rural areas to the industrial centers looking for better means of livelihood. Even though urbanisation dates much earlier, this new trend provided an impetus to the formation of the middle sector. This rapid expansion of urbanisation of Central American capital cities challenged the pre-eminence of the old *latifundios*.

During the 1970s the Central American nations shared many trends, 'the most important being a growing concentration of wealth. The national bourgeoisies were prospering greatly, while the middle class were growing and their living standards witnessed a considerable improvement. 'This trend contrasted markedly with increased rural and urban lower-class unemployment and decreased agricultural self-sufficiency

¹John, D. Martz, "Central America: the Crisis and Challenge", 1959, p. 23,

among the rural poor.² Eventually besides these disparities in the economy, the weakness of the Central American political system to accommodate new demands made peaceful means as a route of change, unviable and ineffective as an option.

Thus, seeds of dissent germinated at the heart of this historical exclusionary political and economic system which in course of time matured into revolutions. Therefore the nearly simultaneous outbreak of revolutions in Nicaragua and national revolts in El Salvador and Guatemala was not coincidental. And this is indicated by the fact that the middle sector played a significant role during the time of revolution in all these countries.

By 1970s, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala were marred by political instability and revolutionary governments. In addition, this state of affairs was aggravated with direct military interventions by the United States of America. These interventions tempered the course of the economy and politics in the region as it protected and promoted the interest of US private capital at the same supported the structures which perpetuated the dominance of the elite at the cost of majority of Central Americans.

The 'big stick' policy, 'dollar diplomacy' and other measures were all perfected in the first decade of the 20th century in Central America to safeguard US strategic goals in the region. The military interventions in Nicaragua and El Salvador etc. besides Cuba, Haiti and Dominican Republic led to prolonged occupation in this region. Eventually, under these circumstances all attempts to bring about changes were brutally repressed with violence sponsored by the state machinery in collusion with US government that sponsored counter-revolutionary agencies with military aids during the 1970s and 1980s during the time of the revolutions.

Therefore to understand the Central American Revolutions in its proper perspectives, it is necessary to demystify the strategic concerns of the United States no

² John, A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1991, p. 39-40.

doubt guided by the international political dynamics of cold war. 'In terms of economic interest, the Central American countries taken together represented only 2 percent of Latin American's GDP while the region's importance as a market for the US, measured in terms of per capita GDP is equally small: US\$472 per head versus an average figure of. US\$1964 for Latin America as a whole. In 1980, US direct investment in Central America amounted approximately US\$ 1.1 and the average rate of profit on such investment was considerably lower than in the rest of America.'³ Besides, the economic interest which was relatively small as indicated, the United States treated the region as an area of traditional influence. From this stand point, the revolutions challenged the US hegemony and threatened to affect the credibility of US power in the broader equation of cold war politics in the region.

US economic involvement in the region was further downsized with the expansion of the conflict, withdrawal of US capital from the region exacerbated the situation of the region's severe economic crisis; the magnitude of it reflected by an absolute fall in the regional GDP and a regional current account deficit of US\$2355 million for 1982. According to the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), a number of countries, nearly half the economically active population was unemployed , and the region's term of trade have deteriorated by nearly 25 percent compared to 1977-78. In 1981-82, US official aid to the region totaled US\$828.6 million, or 70 percent of total US aid to Latin America. In addition much of this was military aid; in the case of El Salvador, military aid accounted nearly 80 percent of total US financial assistance.⁴

Most scholars dealing with the region, opines that, the recent national revolts of Central America were products of a complex combination of developmental changes both in internal and external political processes. One of the most fundamental reasons for the revolutions was the exclusionary economic system. During 1970s grievances against these asymmetrical set up rapidly escalated. Consequently, the pressure on the system

³ George, Irvin and Xabier, Gorostiagas George Allen and Unwin, "Towards an alternative for Central America and the Carribean", 1985, p. 14.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 14.

demanding changes matured into political parties, labour unions, religious community organisers and revolutionary groups. These were all dealt with violent repression in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. But the repression proved counter productive and actually helped forged revolutionary coalitions that aspired for changes. Hereby a brief survey on the political, economy and social conditions of Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador which triggered these revolutions would put the issue in proper perspectives.

I. Background to the Conflict in Central America

Nicaragua

Nicaragua has comparatively rich natural resources from that of her neighbours. Almost eighty percent of the population is involved in agriculture which occupies only ten percent of the area and more than half of the country is covered with valuable forest. Besides, producing the best beef in Central America, the broad tropical plains of the east are ideal for bananas and sugar cane. But the independence from Spain in 1821, instead of generating vigor for the much needed changes was followed by sporadic internal strife among the Church, the agricultural, industrial and commercial elites and the military further aggravating the general stagnation in the society. Consequently, the power struggle among these contenders left Nicaragua enveloped in an environment of political uncertainty and insecurity.

Somoza's Regime and Nicaragua

An insurrectionist movement under Augusto Sandino was maturing itself to bring about changes in the system. The US perceived this development as detrimental to her interest and was already employing measures to stabilise the situation since 1907. These efforts found an answer in Somoza. The US troops withdrew in 1932 with Somoza as the director of the army to pursue the insurrectionists. On January 1, 1937 Anastasio Somoza took office as the Nicaraguan president and remained till 1956. The arrival of Anastasio Somoza in the political scene of Nicaragua marks a turning point in the Nicaraguan

politics as the regime further strangled the Nicaraguan society which was already regressive.

The insurrectionist movement in 1934, 'Sandino agreed to make peace and came to Managua under a preparatory truce to disband his guerrillas. Sandino was murdered later and Somoza has been blamed by his opponents but the incident was so shrouded in secrecy that to this day the truth have never been told.'⁵ After this event there was no turning back for Somoza and the transition from Yankee occupation to Somoza's dictatorship took place rapidly who ran Nicaragua virtually as a private estate. In 1937, Nicaragua was harried by a pressing economic crisis, one which had prevailed with varying severity for years. National economy rested upon the fluctuation of the international prices. In addition to the fiscal deficit, taxes oppressed a large segment of the population. Moreover, the political arena witnessed a rapid militarisation.

The Somoza regime remained oblivious to these serious fissures in the system and never pursued policies to adequately address this brewing crisis which ultimately threw him out of power. It is contended that, Somoza's formula for rule was simple and effective: (1) appease and co-opt 'important' domestic power contenders, and (2) cultivate the 'friendship' of the United States.⁶ Surprisingly, Somoza also cultivated support from both the conservative and the liberals and maintained a facade democracy with the military playing as a linchpin to sustain his dictatorial hold on the power.

The regime retained the military apparatus of the state under the control of the family member and most of the top command remained at their hands. Moreover, Somozas managed to isolate the military from the Nicaraguan people. The military almost became synonymous with illegal business and functioned more like a Mafia group in disguise. But the most important tool at the hands of the Somozas was their friendship with the United States. And the regime followed a pro-United States stand in the realm of

⁵ John, D. Martz, "Central America: the Crisis and Challenge", 1959, p. 164-167.

⁶ Thomas, W. Walker, "Nicaragua in Revolution", 1982, p. 16.

international politics and at times even managed to manipulate this relation to suit their interests.

Consequently, the overall impact of Somoza rule on Nicaraguan society was largely unconstructive. The US initiated Alliance of Progress meant for improvement in the social conditions was consumed by the large non-functional bureaucracy which was created in the early 1960s. Moreover, the economic policy of the regime which was aggravated the social conditions of the masses. On top of this, the regime's policy of accommodating the interest of rich cotton planters led to a massive rural dislocation of peasants as they were driven from the land making their social conditions even more desperate and thereby fomenting impulses of revolution.

In due course of time Nicaraguan of all classes became increasingly alienated by the growing greed and brutality of the regime. The decline of working-class wages in the 1960s and early 1970s revitalised the nation's long suppressed industrial labour movement, which stepped up organising and used work stoppages and strikes to seek wage gain between 1973 and 1975. The decline of middle-class living standards also led to considerable unionisation and strikes among white-collar workers like health workers and teachers. Meanwhile, Catholic social workers, missionaries, and priest began organising unions among peasant wage labourers and the peasant union movement also gained momentum especially after 1975.

The economic decline stimulated the formation of the Nicaraguan private-sector pressure organisations and fueled their increasing calls for political and economic reforms, especially after 1974. For example, the Union Democrática de Liberación, an association headed by business leaders, appeared in 1974. Such private sector groups as the Instituto Nicaragüense de Desarrollo (INDE) promoted working-class cooperatives. New opposition political parties (the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) also became increasingly active in Nicaragua in the 1960s and 1970s, and new anti-Somoza factions of the old Conservative and Liberal parties appeared during the 1970s. Student opposition to the regime also swelled during the 1970s. The FSLN, the only rebel group

to survive out of some twenty that had appeared between 1959 and 1962, greatly expanded its links with university student groups during the 1970s.⁷

Two major events accelerated this process of popular dissatisfaction. The first was the 'Christmas Earthquake' of 1972, which destroyed most of the capital city. The international relief funds to meet the needs of the crisis were manipulated by Somoza and his accomplices who controlled the dispersion. Secondly, soon after the quake, the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN) pulled off a very successful hostage-ransom operation. Humiliated and enraged by the success of the Sandinistas, the dictator declared a stage of siege, instituted full censorship of the press and launched the Guards on a campaign of terror in rural areas where the FSLN guerrillas were believed to be active.

Under this campaign of terror 'hundreds of peasants were raped, tortured, murdered and many were taken away never to be heard again.'⁸ By the mid-70s, the counter insurgency operation of Somoza's regime had led to a mass violation of human rights. Consequently, opposition from diverse groups such as the labour, the church hierarchy and a large segment of the commercial and industrial elite started to challenge competence of the regime. And by early 1970s the disintegration and collapse of Somoza system began under Anastasio Somoza Debayle.

These rapidly deteriorating political scenarios brought the Carter's administration to apply pressure on the regime to reinstate limited freedom of the press in September 1977 which was under siege by the censor imposed by the regime. These turn in the events was adequately taken advantage by the Opposition daily, *La Prensa* to expose the corruption and brutality of Somoza regime. Moreover, there was an increase in the activity of FSLN which started to attack the National Guards. Simultaneously, 'The Twelve', a group of prominent business, religious and professional leaders, advocated inclusion of the FSLN to bring about necessary reform in the system. Therefore, the stage

⁷ John, A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1991, p. 49.

⁸ Thomas, W. Walker, "Nicaragua in Revolution", 1982, p. 18.

was set for the struggle, which many Nicaraguan refer to as the 'War of Liberation'. The assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a courageous journalist and the editor of *La Prensa* on January 10, 1978 gave the final impetus to ignite the time bomb which was already there and it finally exploded into a revolution.

El Salvador

El Salvador is mainly an agricultural country with sixty-two percent of the population living in rural areas. Coffee is the main export crop and it covers 85 percent of the total export which leaves the country vulnerable to the fluctuation of prices in the international market. 'El Salvador's stability and progress were increasingly threatened over the years by the growing number of people, especially landless farmers, excluded from sharing equitably in the nation's economy and participating meaningfully in the political system. The conflict grew out of a history of social, economic and political inequities. As in many Latin American societies, there were great disparity in income, land tenure and social justice in El Salvador.'⁹

During the 1950s and 1960s, El Salvador's best agricultural land was converted to capital-intensive cultivation of export crops (mainly cotton). These changes reduced access to land by subsistence tenants, squatters and smallholders. 'During the 1960s, pressure on the land increased dramatically as the overall number of farms grew by 19 percent but the area under cultivation shrank by 8 percent. The 1965 agriculture minimum wage reduced the number of *colonos* and *aperceros* (peasants cultivating for subsistence a plot donated by the owner) by one-third and caused the amount of land so employed to decline by four-fifth.'¹⁰

⁹ William, A. Barnes, "Incomplete Democracy in Central America: Polarisation and Voter Turnout in Nicaragua and El Salvador", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1998, p. 146.

¹⁰ John, A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1991, p. 44.

Therefore, it is evident that the economic expansion of the 1960s and 1970s was not felt by all sections of the society. In fact, Salvadoran workers' share of the expanding national income deteriorated as production and investment became more and more centralised. 'El Salvador's capitalist elite grew relatively and absolutely wealthier during the mid-1970s, but this pattern changed abruptly at the end of the decade. The Nicaraguan insurrection disrupted the Salvadoran trade and production, coffee prices fell and extensive Salvadoran domestic political unrest surfaced, together causing sharp decline in investment. El Salvador's GDP, which had grown at more than 5 percent per year for five years, declined 3.1 percent in 1979 (a 5.9 percent decline on a per capita basis'.¹¹

The national income deteriorated while production and investment became more centralized. The coffee growing elite had invested roughly four times as much in industry as any other Salvadoran group and had attracted about 8 percent of the foreign capital investment in the country. While the total output of the Salvadoran industry more than doubled between 1967 and 1975, wages and salaries represented 22 percent of national income, while capital accounted for 56 percent of national income as profit, dividends, interest, and rent. The majority of Salvadorans, excluded from the benefits of this growth, were prevented from adequately satisfying their needs.¹²

In the realm of politics the military had controlled the machinery of government in El Salvador from 1948 until 1978 and it resulted in economic chaos and polarisation of society between extremists of the Left and the Right. Consequently, the demand from the populace on the military-dominated political structure for political liberalisation was accompanied by the political awakening of the lower classes and emergence of opposition political leaders intensified these demands, especially in the aftermath of the Salvadoran-Honduran war of 1969. By early 1970, armed movement emerged in the

¹¹ John, A. Booth, "Socioeconomic and Political Roots of National Revolts in Central America", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1991, p. 45.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 45.

system with objectives to rectify the skewed nature of political and economic structures of El Salvador.

Therefore, in spite of the military's Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática-Partido de Conciliación Nacional (PRUD-PCN) control on the national government, new opposition parties representing the entire ideological spectrum appeared continuously during the 1960s. In an early signs of growing opposition, two reformist parties developed, the Social Democrats' Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) in 1959 and the Social Christian' Partido Democrata Nacionalista (UDN) in 1967. Moreover, in the 1970s, Salvadoran *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) increasingly pressed demands for political and economic reforms on the government.

Besides these many peasant organisations also sprang up during this era, encouraged partly by the modest proposals for land reform put forth by the regime of Colonel Arturo Armando Molina. Several broad coalitions formed, the first being the *Frente de Acción Popular Unida* (FAPU), which in 1974 grew out of labour unions, peasants organisations, university student groups, a teacher's association and the Communist party. Five Salvadoran guerilla organisations emerged between 1970 and 1979 and each guerilla group formally coalesced with unions and other popular organisations to mount an armed challenge against the government.

Guatemala

More than half of the populations of Guatemala are Mayan by origin, a nation within a nation. The Mayan person has played almost a negligible role in politics, but they were very vital in the economic life of the country as a work force. It is remarkable that the long drawn Spanish rule and ladino domination had not overrun the indigenous culture and they have largely remained untouched by the western world. There is no question that land was a vital economic asset in Guatemala, as it signified wealth and power. Coffee and cotton are the principal exports. Recurrent revolutions and dictatorial

regimes soon followed the independence from the Spanish colonial rule. Moreover the structures of domination were retained by the elite in Guatemala.

Land had been unequally distributed in Central America with concentration of large tracks in the hands of few and Guatemala was no different. But this pattern deteriorated rapidly with the expansion of export of cotton and beef production in the 1960s and 1970s. This economic expansion besides tempering the agrarian structure in the interest of the elite came together with reduction in agrarian wages and rising unemployment, affecting the conditions of the lower sections. Therefore the question of land reform and integration of indigenous people in the mainstream culture remained at the heart of the political instability of Guatemala. Discussed briefly below, are some of the defining moments in Guatemalan history.

The revolution of October 1944 brought Juan Jose Arevalo at the helm of Guatemalan politics. But the 1954 CIA sponsored coup d'etat ended the democratic regimes that had governed Guatemala. It was replaced by an extremely repressive counter revolutionary regime which reversed the social and economic reforms. The heavy repression employed by the military regime made organising of opposition groups extremely difficult until the late 1960s, although Marxist guerilla opposition to the conservative regimes arose in 1962. But popular mobilisation renewed in Guatemala during the late 1970s but it was at a much lesser scale than it was in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Guatemala's civil war began in 1960 in opposition to military dominated governments, infested with corruption. Nonetheless, the military-sponsored democratic opening led to a gradual resurgence of labour and social opposition movements. 'The reversal of the revolution and its land reform set the stage for forty years of turbulent and polarised history.'¹³

In early 1970s deteriorating economic conditions and decline of the manufacturing wages led to a marked increased in unionisation and industrial disputes during the government of Genera; Kjell Laugurad Garcia (1974-1978). The poverty of

¹³ Susanne, Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U.S in Guatemala", *Foreign Policy*, No.103, 1996, p. 146.

the Indian peasants was further aggravated by the 1976 earthquake, which devastated much of the highland. The damage caused by the 1976 earthquake to lower-class housing helped mobilise slum dwellers into two confederations that later organised a transport strike and press for housing assistance. Moreover the CEBs organised *campesinos* into making demands and also developed community and labour groups among Guatemala's long inactive Indian populace at the close of the decade. Prior to that time, the Christian Democratic party had promoted a labour union movement and hundreds of agrarian cooperatives during the 1960s in order to increase its base constituency.

Despite of the rapid proliferation in political parties, factions and coalitions in Guatemala in the 1970s and early 1980s, the military continued to control of the presidency through the rightist *Partido Institucional Democratica* (PID) and the *Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional* (MLN). As a result, reform oriented political parties of the Center and Left led by the Christian Democrats were denied election victories as the military regimes manipulated election results in 1974, 1978 and 1982. But all these measures of suppression and repression of the government failed to curb the growing opposition groups. In fact, it fueled the environment which was already charged with revolutionary spirit. It led to further escalation of the contest with large dislocation of the rural population and destruction of enormous economic resources.

Consequently, more than three and a half decades, Guatemala witnessed intermittent war between the leftist insurgent organisations which came under the banner of Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrillas in 1982 and the government forces. This confrontation led brutal violence and massive violation of human rights Likewise, in the late 70s and early 80s revolutionary movements struggled against the state power throughout Central America except in Nicaragua where it attained power in 1979.

II. United States and the Crisis in Central America.

Central America's small neighbouring nations have marked commonalities of history, global context, and political and economic development. These similarities in themselves suggest that much that affects Central America is likely to be part of larger world dynamics. Just as common forces led to Central American's rebellions, many of the same forces shaped the overall process of regime change and democratic evolution.¹⁴ This would indicate that US' involvement in Central America was never independent of the needs of her national interest. Traditionally, US involvement in the region was focused on protection and promotion of US economic interests and the means and tools employed by the US, to a varying degree controlled the political process of these countries. Moreover, the overpowering political and economic clout and cultural presence of US in the region essentially set the parameters and events in Central America were circumscribed within it.

The Monroe Doctrine formalised the hegemony of the US in the Western Hemisphere. But the doctrine was more vigorously in Central America and the Caribbean rather than the hemisphere as a whole. This arrangement of hemispheric hegemony was directly challenged by the Cuba and Nicaragua revolutions. Consequently these revolutions changed the pace of US involvement which led to the intensification of relationship, with military and economic aid pouring into Central America essentially to curb and defeat the revolutionary movements. Moreover the dynamics of the cold war dominated the international political climate in the 1970s and this set the context for US involvement in the geopolitics of Central America.

Moreover for reasons debatable, US policy in the region was preoccupied with the Soviet Union and its perceived threat to expand its influence in the Western Hemisphere. The US therefore regarded 'the region's political and economic reformist and the opponents of Central America's friendly, anti-communist, authoritarian regimes as

¹⁴ John, A. Booth, "Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context", *Journal InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2000, p. 61.

unacceptable political allies of pro-Soviet and pro-Cuban Communism. Those regimes themselves usually enjoyed US political, military, and economic support; civilian democracy, although an ideological preference of the US, remained secondary to security concerns in this tense world environment.¹⁵

In sum two driving forces acted as basis for US intervention in Central America. Firstly, the engagement was driven by the obligations to secure the property and economic interests of the US nationals and private capital in the region. Secondly, the perceived communist threat which largely a self construction. Thirdly, the foreign policy of the US administration especially under Carter was influenced by human rights concerns of the Americans. But, the garb of 'human rights' concern as a basis of the intervention remains a contentious issue as the interventions was concerned more on securing US geo-strategic interests in the region.

Some of the policy measures that the US administration employed in the region to secure its geopolitical interest are remarkable. Under Kennedy's administration, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was initiated to provide training to the Central American military in order to beef up the rising internal security needs, while at the same time also stay engaged in civic action programs like construction of road, schools, and hospitals. Subsequently, the '*Alliance for Progress*' became the centerpiece of Kennedy's Latin American policy. The US policy under Kennedy administration therefore followed two pronged strategy which at surface level looked genuinely congruent. This combination of humanitarian and military imperatives nonetheless led to militarisation of politics in the region.

The Carter's administration also more or less retained this two pronged strategy and human rights became a central component of US foreign policy in the region. Consequently, the US insisted on improvement of human rights as prerequisite conditions for economic and social assistance. The US even ceased to provide military aid to

¹⁵ John, A. Booth, "Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2000, p. 65-6.

Guatemala and El Salvador in 1977, but somehow this policy failed to lessen the level of human rights violations which worsened by 1980. The US policy under Carter administration also tried to replace Somoza with representatives from the conservative opposition and preserve the National Guard as an institution in order to prevent a victory of the revolutionary forces.

Therefore, the injection of US aid became a central element of this policy, aimed at strengthening the position of the conservative business and political organisations which were against the revolutionary triumph. It seems that Carter's foreign policy was caught in its own contradictions because promotion of human rights as a necessary condition for US assistance was pursued with questionable inconsistencies. Overall, the Carter administration with high sounding policies misjudged the depth of the problem and thereby the policies proved ineffective as a means to resolve the regional crisis.

By the second year of Carter's presidency it became clear that Washington's minimal effort to influence events by reprimanding Somoza and cutting back support and aid was not enough. And in 1978 'the US expanded its involvement to prevent the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) from achieving power, however, within six months its effort to find a democratic alternative to replace Somoza was acknowledged to have failed.'¹⁶ Moreover the policies were a major failure of US foreign policy as it failed to secure negotiations with the Sandinistas on the nature of the post Somoza government. Adding to the crisis in the foreign policy the problems in El Salvador also threatened to give birth to another Nicaragua with chances of others meeting the same fate.

The inauguration of Reagan administration completely changed the tone of US policy towards the region. The Reagan administration's policy was formulated within narrow parameters set by the paradigm of cold war. It perceived that the failure to act in her own backyard meant encouragement for Soviet Union to seek advantage elsewhere.

¹⁶ Mark, T. Berger, "The Reconquest of Central America: Latin American Studies and the Transition to Democracy 1979-1990", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 24, No.1, Liberalism's Revival and Latin American Studies, January, 1997, p. 14.

Therefore, Reagan administration steadfastly advocated militarisation of US foreign policy. The Administration's foremost objective in Central America was similar to what President Carter's had been but the approach were definitely more military in nature. It aimed to scuttle the Salvador revolutionary movement from realising power. As a result Reagan immediately embarked on a series of programs to destabilise the economies of the region especially of Nicaragua essentially to escalate the conflict and create conditions to justify direct military intervention.

Besides this the administration also actively pursued military means to counter the revolutions by providing training to the counter-insurgency group, the *Contras*. Consequently, as a requirement to augment this strategy, the conditionality of human rights record of Carter's administration was discarded and Guatemala again became eligible for military assistance. In fact, the Reagan administration instead of containment, were ready to roll back communism in the Third World – an agenda that gained considerable impetus in the second Reagan administration and it came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine:

Nations exist only in relation to each other. Foreign policy is the instrument by which peoples seek to assure their survival in a hostile world. War, not peace, is the norm in international affairs.

-The Committee of Santa Fe.¹⁷

The continuance of political and military stalemate in Central America by the beginning of 1981 had made the rhetoric of the administration's military approach to the region more and more unsustainable. Reagan resorted to the escalation of the regional conflict into global level to defend the administration's military approach. But 'by July 1983, the failure of the administration to generate support in Congress had led to the establishment of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, chaired by Henry Kissinger. The choice of Kissinger as chair was indicative of the administration's

¹⁷ Council of Inter-American Security, The Committee of Santa Fe, A New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties, 1980.

concern to build a new consensus around East- West understanding of the crisis. As far as Reagan and his advisers were concerned the US crisis of empire was a result of Soviet expansionism, and US military was the solution.’¹⁸

The Kissinger Commission in order to justify a military policy assigned a determining role to the external forces assisting the Central American insurgencies. It argued that although they had internal roots, the insurgencies in Central America depended on external support and possibly could not generate their own momentum. Furthermore, the report pointed out that regardless of their internal origins, upon victory they would create a totalitarian regime in the image of their sponsors’ ideology i.e. communism. In fact, United States actively used military interventions to promote democracy in Central America without giving a thought to its implications in the long run. ‘Unable to deal with the product of its own system, reconcile the contradiction between its professed ideals and its century-old foreign policy, or work with other powers to resolve this dilemmas, the US from Eisenhower to Reagan, resorted to force. The result was more revolution.’¹⁹

It can be argued that at the core, the US framed the Central American crisis of the 1980s as of national security and ideological terms, to justify its involvement. But the overall objective of the US imperial state continues to be the maintenance of a global and an inter-American system that supports the interests of the increasingly well integrated international capital elites. Consequently, the US tried to scuttle the peace process in the region initiated by the regional groups such as the Contadora and Arias plan and impose a military solution.

Thus, Reagan’s policy objective appeared no different than that of his predecessor since 1945 which read the local communist movements as an international communist

¹⁸ Mark, T. Berger, “The Reconquest of Central America: Latin American and the Transition to Democracy, 1979-1990”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 24, No. 1 Liberalism’s Revival and Latin American Studies, 1997, p.16

¹⁹ Walter, Lafeber, “The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 1, 1984, p. 25.

conspiracy that needed to be contained and, in case of Nicaragua reversed.²⁰ It can be argued that crisis of US foreign policy in Central America was of its own creation. “If Central America had suddenly become ‘the most important place in the world’ for US security, Washington officials had made it so through a century of North American involvement, particularly by their post-1945 military and economic policies.

The overwhelming number of Central Americans was in rebellion because their children starved, not because they knew or cared anything about Marxism.”²¹ It is clear that the most plausible reason for the revolutions were necessarily rooted in the domestic conditions (politics and economics), though US contributed in its own way to generate the conditions. But the American policy makers failed to acknowledge this fact and instead pointed its fingers at the ambitions of the Cuban-Soviet Axis for the turmoil in the region and trapped itself in the crisis.

Amidst these protracted conflict by the early 1980s, there emerged regional peace initiatives with aims to find a diplomatic resolution of the crisis in the region. The following discussion below critically examines the role of regional actor in the peace process.

III. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PEACE PROCESS.

Contadora Initiatives

The Nicaragua crisis by the early 1980s was threatening to engulf the entire region of Central America as a nascent armed movement began to appear in El Salvador as well. The Contadora Group was formed on January 8-9, 1983 by Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama. The main objective of the Contadora was to find a way to resolve the regional crisis at a regional level. Therefore, it provided a diplomatic platform to moderate the conflagration which had engulfed the region and ultimately find a political

²⁰ Thomas, M. Leonard, ‘“Search for Security: The United States and Central America in the Twentieth Century”, *The Americas*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1991, p. 490.

²¹ Walter, Lafeber, “The Reagan Administration and Revolutions in Central America”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99, No. 1, 1984, p. 1.

solution. Foremost among its agenda was to fend off unilateral US military action and at the same time to curb the influence of Cuba and Soviet Union in the region. Additionally, it also aimed to moderate and contain the spill-over effects of the revolutionary movements. Some US observers have been critical and complained that the Contadora have sidelined the US security concerns in Central America. But it is argued that the group was keenly aware of US' legitimate security concerns in the area and sought a negotiated peace settlement which more or less accommodated the US security concerns in the region.

Beyond these stated objectives the Contadora governments however disagreed fundamentally with the Reagan administration over both the strategies and tactics best suited to achieve these goals. 'The underlying differences are due to the differing diagnosis of the crisis. From the perspective of the Contadora countries, the basic reasons for the regional crisis were internal i.e. poverty injustice, and repression rather than external, Soviet-Cuban subversion as the Reagan administration claimed. Moreover, they blamed the US for supporting, or at least tolerating, repressive rightwing dictatorship in the region and thereby contributing to the long term instability which the Cubans and the Soviets sought to exploit.'²² Therefore, the Contadora saw the US hegemonic pattern of interventions and dependence on military means to solve the crisis as hurdles to quick resolution of the conflict which directly threatened to stability of Central America.

Firstly, as a conditionality of the negotiation the Contadora Group opposed unilateral US military action and advocated a comprehensive negotiated settlement, demilitarisation of the region and containment of the Sandinistas. Secondly, it disagreed with the US' version of these revolutions as an extension of East-West ideological battle. It implicitly questioned the hegemony of the US in the region and insisted on removal of all military presence from the region: Cuban-Soviet as well as that of the US. Finally, it aimed to avert military alliance between the Sandinistas and military alliance of Cuba-Soviet Union and insisted refrain on part of the Sandinistas from supporting the

²² Vaky, V, "Reagan Central American Policy: An Isthmus Restored", p. 233-58 in Robert Lieken (eds.) "Central America: Anatomy of Conflict",.....

revolutionary movements in El Salvador in return for guarantees of survival of the revolutionary government.

During the period of 1983-1986 the Contadora underwent through four basic phases. The *first*, from January to September 1983, produced the approval of a consensus Document of Objectives by the Contadora Four and all the five Central American governments. In mid-July 1983, at a meeting held in Cancun, Mexico, in an atmosphere of deepening concern over the Regan administration's intentions, the presidents of the four Contadora nations announced that an agreement has been achieved on the general guidelines of a peace program that would be submitted to the governments of Central America for their approval. Unanimous approval was given at a third Contadora ministerial meeting held in Panama in late July and a final consolidated 'Documents of Objectives' was subsequently signed at a fourth ministerial meeting held in early September.²³ This Document, commonly known as Contadora's 21 Points, had agenda to bring an end to the ever escalating Central American arms race and prohibition of foreign interference. It also urged the nations of the region to adopt pluralistic democratic systems with free elections and creation of mechanisms to verify the same.

The *second phase* lasted from mid-September 1983 to mid September 1984. It culminated with Nicaragua's acceptance to sign the Contadora's Revised Act. The *third phase* stretched from Oct 1984 through December 1985, characterised by the continuing stalemate which ended with Nicaragua's request for a six month suspension of the negotiation process. The *fourth phase* from January to June 1986 began with Contadora's Caraballeda declaration, intended to revitalise the negotiation but ended with the failure to meet the self-imposed deadline for the final passage of a treaty. Since then 'Contadora was sidelined by the U.S. House of Representatives' approval of funding for the *Contras* and the Reagan Administration's preparation for an escalation of its proxy war against Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government.'²⁴

²³ Bruce, Michael Bagley, "Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1986 p. 4-5.

²⁴ Bruce, Michael Bagley, "Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1986, pp. 4-5.



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A Reappraisal of Contadora

This regional initiative however was not free from conflicting political moorings and a seeming contradiction was embedded at the heart of the approach of the Contadora Group (Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela) towards the conflict in Central America. 'All four members oppose the proliferation of Soviet-style regimes in the Western Hemisphere; all four would prefer to see a more open political system in Nicaragua; and none would welcome a radical revolutionary triumph in El Salvador. Yet all not only steadfastly oppose US military intervention to achieve these goals, but also worry about the Reagan administration's depiction of Central America as one front in the global confrontation between East and the West. And they were frightened by the degree to which their back yards have already been militarised.'²⁵

On January 9, 1984, the Contadora Group celebrated its first anniversary with the announcement of a new accord on procedural norms. Contadora in obtaining these agreements was immediately overshadowed by the public release of the Kissinger Commission's findings. 'The report gave little credence to Contadora Group and was ambiguously described as constructive. It also contended that it was influenced by the interest of the individual country and cannot be a substitute for US policy. Moreover, the report concluded that, in case of failure by Nicaragua to change its internal affairs along the lines demanded by the Reagan Administration, force would remain an ultimate recourse of US policy. On June 9, the Contadora Group after consultation with Central American leaders submitted its first draft treaty- the Contadora Act for Peace and Cooperation in Central America for comments and amendments. Finally, a Revised Act was transmitted on September 7, 1984 to the Central Americans. The US reaction to the Revised Act was initially positive Secretary Shultz called the treaty an 'important step

²⁵ Tom J. Farer, "Contadora: Hidden Agenda", *Foreign Policy*, No. 59, 1985, p. 59.

forward'. On the other he accused Nicaragua for rejecting key elements of the draft on internal democratization and reduction of arms and troop levels.'²⁶

Nicaragua to everyone's surprise caught US on the back foot as the Sandinistas announced its readiness to sign the Revised Act, however with conditions of no further changes. Additionally, the Sandinistas asserted that US should abstain from supporting the *Contras* with arms and means to sabotage the revolution and must abide by the agreements. On its part, Nicaragua conceded to the expulsion of all Soviet-bloc military advisers, reduction of its 60,000-man army; cessation of all assistance to guerillas movements in the region and dialogue with the internal opposition groups. Moreover, the Sandinistas also had to allow the Contadora Verification Commission to conduct an on-site inspection. In return, the treaty required the US to end military maneuvers in the region within 30 days, to shut down all military installment in Central America within 6 months and to suspend military aid programs in Honduras and El Salvador.

These modalities put Reagan Administration on the defensive; it sought to buy time and resorted with complains that the provisions of the treaty were only tentative and were meant for further changes with consultation. Subsequently, Daniel Ortega criticized the Reagan administration as insincere and blamed the administration's policy of forcing a military solution to the crisis. Meanwhile, the Mexican also openly criticised the inflexible approach of the administration as a stumbling block to the speedy resolution of the crisis. Consequently, it resulted into an uneasy stalemate which the Sandinistas used as a propaganda tool to disclaim the Reagan administration's integrity to the Contadora's initiatives and the international community at large. The Reagan administration ended up with a negative point as it made the administration's policy of supporting *Contras* with aid more and more untenable in the congress.

²⁶ Bruce, Michael Bagley, "Contadora: The Failure of Diplomacy", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1986, p. 6.

The US in order to regain the lost ground devised the Tegucigalpa Draft, with its Central American allies. It is argued that the Tegucigalpa modifications constituted a major setback for Contadora as it tilted the agreements against Nicaragua which was obviously unacceptable to the Sandinistas. The Reagan Administration had clearly utilised its economic clout to pressure the Tegucigalpa Group to come up with these new demands. There is no doubt that they were susceptible to such pressures as the Central Americans were largely dependent on US economic and military assistance.

Indeed, one of the intrinsic weaknesses of the Contadora Group was its inability to provide an economic alternative to US support for the Central Americans and thereby free them to adopt foreign policies more independent of Washington.²⁷ However, it would be unsophisticated to conclude that these nations were merely acting as US proxies in the negotiation process. For instance, Honduras was dependent on US bases and joint military maneuvers, for it feared that without a visible US presence it would be vulnerable to Nicaragua's larger armed forces. On the other hand, El Salvador required continued US military aid to wage its war against the Frente Farabundo Marti Nacional Liberacion (FMLN). Whereas, Costa Rica perceived the increased authoritarianism of the Sandinistas' as potential source of cross-border subversion which could drag Costa Rica into the regional conflagration.

The complexities of these dynamics had perplexed the peace process and in an effort to save the faltering peace process, in July 1985 the Contadora backed the creation of Contadora Support Group, known as the *Lima Group* (Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Uruguay). This effort sought to forge Latin American solidarity with the Contadora which in turn would increase Contadora's leverage over the United States and its Central American allies. Consequently, on September 12, 1985 the Contadora Group finally revealed its revised treaty. It insisted on the necessity of removal of foreign bases and advisers, an end to the arms race, the prohibition of arms trafficking and promotion of democracy. However, this revised treaty refrained from outright condemnation of

²⁷ Purcell, S, "Demystifying Contadora", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 1985, p. 87-91.

military maneuvers and mellowed down to the regulation military exercises. Moreover, it compromised the Sandinistas position which required immediate cessation of US support for the *Contras*. As a result, the Sandinistas out rightly rejected the proposal of the Contadora nations and the peace process nose-dived into a stalemate.

The Central American nations and the Contadora Groups were also dependent on US economic aid. This is considered as one of the fundamental weakness of the Contadora Group, which many times made them vulnerable to manipulation. The US administration adroitly utilised this weaknesses to exact uncomfortable compromises from the group in the peace process. As a result it instilled an atmosphere of uncertainty and disorder and the Contadora Group suffered from lack of credibility. This state of affairs pushed the Sandinistas to temporarily suspend the negotiations.

Contadora received additional impetus when, on January 15, 1985, Guatemala's President Vinicio Cerezo seized upon the occasion of his inauguration to persuade the Central American government in attendance to endorse the Carabellada declaration.²⁸ This resurgence was followed by chains of events. As a result, the members Contadora and the Central Americans nations entered into negotiations on April 5-6, 1986, in Panama City. In the meantime, Mexico also proposed that all the countries involved in the Contadora process should jointly request the US to cease assistance to the *Contras* and give the Contadora nations enough time to complete negotiations and put a proposal on the table. But the Tegucigalpa Group toed a different line and advocated that the negotiations should proceed without condemnation of the US aid to the *Contras*. But this renewed effort did not materialise into anything concrete as it failed to convince the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas remained skeptical of these new developments and instead demanded a declaration from Contadora along the lines suggested by Mexico and refused to resume negotiations which left the peace process in complete disarray.

Any reasonable assessment would point out that over the course of four years, the Contadora Group juggled with the complex and diverse positions of all five countries of

²⁸ McCartney, R., "Contadora Peace Effort Revived", *Washington Post*, 1986, 16 January.

Central American nations, while at the same time protecting its own divergent interests. Consequently, a final consensus consistently eluded the Contadora group as it failed to rationalise the divergent interests in a setting of uncertainties induced by circumstances. Moreover, the Central American states never endowed the four members with any specific mandate. In addition to this, alternative solutions of different nature were frequently floated at the cost of Contadora's initiated peace process which weakened the commitment of the Contadora and their political will to find a negotiated solution. But overall, in spite of its failure to secure a peace treaty acceptable to all parties the Contadora Group served as a platform to vent out dissatisfaction from all the affected parties and it certainly helped in averting the crisis from spiraling out into unmanageable proportions.

While the Contadora fell short of its objectives, viewed within the larger peace process it was considerably more productive than would appear. Contadora created the bases on which Esquipulas could be build.²⁹ Therefore, the contributions of the Contadora Group can be best understood in their role of providing a diplomatic platform which mitigated the crisis and prevented it from becoming uncontrollable. Moreover, it also provided a comprehensive and accurate diagnosis of the region's conflicts. Most importantly perhaps, the Contadora set the stage for further efforts in this direction.

The Arias Plan

Costa Rica was the only country in the region with peace and democracy amidst the crisis in Central America. Nonetheless, the Nicaraguan crisis directly threatened the tranquility as refugees fleeing the conflict spilled into Costa Rican society which exerted pressure on the country's economy and the viability of its democratic institutions. These circumstances questioned the rationale of the policy of neutrality traditionally maintained by Costa Rica. But in the late 1970s keeping up with its democratic spirit the Costa Rican sided with the Sandinistas in their struggle to remove Somoza from power. For practical

²⁹ Paul, Wehr and John, Paul Lederach, "Mediating Conflict in Central America", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 28. No.1, Special Issue on International Mediation, 1991, p. 89.

reasons it also sided with the US to support the *Contras* as radicalism took charge of the Sandinista revolution. Oscar Arias, the then president of Costa Rica conceived that the regional crisis in Central America could potentially prove to create problems for Costa Rica in the long run. Therefore, under him the Costa Ricans reasserted the neutrality and pacifism of its foreign policy.

This bold initiative led to swift closure of bases of the *Contras* operating on Costa Rican territory. But these acts no doubt strained his relations with the Reagan administration and it did not improve until after the *Iran-Contra* scandal. Meanwhile, the US policy in Central America was in complete chaos and there was an urgent need to formulate a new approach. Therefore, the contingency of the situation brought Reagan and Arias together which resulted in a peace proposal known as the *Arias Plan*, in which Arias assured Reagan that Nicaragua could be convinced to democratise its political system. But the convergence of goals could not stir Reagan to accept the Arias proposal because Reagan saw it as an act of endorsing the existence of the Sandinista government as legitimate in the neighborhood.

The fundamental component of the Arias Plan stated democratisation as the only way of solving the internal crisis of Nicaragua and the regional crisis at large. It also contained provisions regarding regional security and aimed to bring an end to US aggression against Nicaragua. Arias recognised Nicaragua's primary objective to terminate the *Contra war* and to end US aggression. In an effort to persuade Ortega, Arias pointed that without co-operative clients the US would not be able to prop up the *Contras* and thereby make the war unsustainable for them. In due course of time 'the Arias Plan yielded to the Esquipulas II Accord in 1987. The document's primary focus was on the progressive democratisation of Central American states that would in turn contribute to national reconciliation.'³⁰

³⁰ Johanna, Oliver "The Esquipulas Process: A Central American Paradigm for Resolving Regional Conflict", *Ethnic Studies Report*, Vol. 17, No. 2, July 1999, p.161.

In sum these regional initiatives in peace process with limited success definitely helped in keeping the conflicts under reasonable control from disturbing the entire region. Moreover the by late 1980s and early 1990s, especially after the end of the cold war this protracted conflicts drew the attention of the international community in the region. Consequently the stage set the stage regional initiatives in peace process was expanded with the involvement of the international community in its first peace-building operation. The following chapter critically examines the role of United Nations and the Organisation of American States in the peace process.

CHAPTER II

Principal Actors in the Peace-Building Process

Introduction

Peace-Building by international community, especially by the United Nations (UN) became a widely practiced phenomenon after the end of Cold War. One plausible reason of this was the easing up in the environment of the international system after the Cold War, released the UN which was squashed in between super power rivalry. But this does not make peace-building any less challenging. There are contradictions in the UN Charter itself and therefore UN sponsored interventions are applied with reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter which means peace-building operations essentially circumvents Article 2.7 of UN Charter which enshrines the sanctity of sovereignty. Besides these, the neutrality dilemma is another issue which is tricky as it is almost impossible to devise an intervention which would not affect the balance of power among the warring factions. Although, the parameter of peace-building remains vague and ill defined in U.N. doctrines, in practice peace-building tend to share most, if not all of the following characteristics: '(1) they deal with conflicts within rather than between states, (2) the host government is one of the parties to the conflict, (3) this aim to develop and /or implement a political transition following or accompanying an end to military hostilities, and (4) a central component is the reform or establishment of basic state institutions.'¹

The basic premise of peace-building i.e. Liberal Internationalism advocates that the best way to attain peace is installation of democracy and application of economic measures driven by market forces as mode of development. The rationale of employing this two pronged strategy as a means of reconstruction of post-conflict society is not free from contradictions. It is argued that there are flaws in the strategy. The inter linkages between the process of democratisation, free market and peace-building are far from clear. Experts contend that structural adjustment programs and the stabilisation plans for dealing with

¹ Eva, Bertram, "Reinventing Governments: The Promise and Perils of United Nations Peace-Building", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1995 p. 388.

such complex situations can potentially aggravate the domestic problems. Nonetheless, at the heart of peace-building operations, lies the problem of coordination among the UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and the international NGOs.

For instance, ‘when the UN itself engaged in peace negotiations early in the 1990, it did not consult the IMF or the World Bank, notwithstanding the financial implications of post-war rehabilitation and construction of the Salvadoran economy. Not even during the negotiation of the economic and social portion of the peace accords in late December 1991, was participation of the Bretton Woods institutions sought. Likewise in the negotiation of the subsequent programs for transferring land to former combatants in October 1992, the UN went off on its own, largely oblivious of the financial pressures the peace agreements were bound to impose on the stabilisation program.’² This indicates that modalities and mandate of peace-building operations were not clear. In fact, it is still questionable whether peace-building operations are conducted with clearly stated mandate today.

The previous chapter has dealt with the role of regional initiatives in the Central American crisis. In this chapter we would examine how UN handled the peace-building operations in Central America. We would also attempt to assess the role of Organisation of American States (OAS). Further this study would attempt to evaluate the role of international organisations at large in the peace-building operations. What were the challenges for the actors involved in the process? Moreover, it would also explore the implications of the approaches adopted by these actors. A notable omission in this chapter would be the non inclusion of International Financial Institutions which would be dealt later under the chapter: Peace-Building Process and Economic Liberalisation.

I. The Role of the U.N. and the OAS in the Peace Process.

The platform created by the regional initiatives of Contadora and Esquipulas paved the way for OAS and UN participation in regional negotiations in both Nicaragua’s

² Alvaro, de Soto; Graciana del Castillo, “Obstacles to Peacebuilding”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 94. Spring, 1994, p. 72.

and El Salvador's peace talks. In Guatemala, President Ramiro de Leon Carpio requested U.N. participation in the dialogue between his government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). During 1989-1990 the Nicaraguan electoral process evolved with assistance from a broad array of external actors. The intervention proved strategic for overcoming the gridlock and repeated a long tradition in which Central American political actors enlisted different forms of external involvement in the handling domestic political conflicts.

The United Nations played a significant role in Central America. It launched its first peacekeeping operation in the hemisphere, monitored and verified elections, mediated peace negotiations and helped implement peace agreements. Moreover, the role of the UN in El Salvador is considered by many as an exemplary peace-building experience. On the other hand, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the largest intergovernmental organisation of the Americas, was designed to have and is perceived in general by member states as having chief competence over hemispheric matters. Therefore, no inter-American problem or dispute – and thus no Central American question – could have been taken to the UN without being previously handled by the OAS. This is not the case any more, as may be suggested by the UN's leading role in bringing peace to El Salvador and Guatemala. The OAS played an active role in monitoring elections in Nicaragua in the context of UN Observer Mission (ONUVEN) and in helping to disarm and reintegrate the *Contras* in the framework of the commission for International Support and Verification (CIAV-OAS).³

After a phase of being paralysed into inaction in Central America, OAS's credibility was in crisis, especially during the 1980s. Moreover, OAS was allegedly accused of being a foreign policy tool of the US. This fact is reinforced by the intervention of US in Guatemala in 1954 and the Dominican Republic in 1965 with sponsorship of the OAS. But during the 1990s it made significant headway, especially in the field of human rights and democracy. Despite lack of enforcement mechanisms, the OAS provided hemispheric leadership in the protection of democracy and human rights.

³ Joaquin Tacsan "Searching for OAS/ UN task-sharing opportunities in Central America and Haiti", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1997, p. 489.

Let us take a closer look at how both the organisation fared in the Central American peace-building operations.

United Nations

A decade ago, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali's seminal report, *An Agenda for Peace*, sketched out the contours of the concept of peace-building, describing it as a set of measures and actions that 'identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.'⁴ But the new breed of intra-state conflicts in the post-Cold War era has obliged the UN to reorient its traditional modes of intervention and revisit their political rationale and legal foundation. The UN supported Central American countries and have pioneered the organisation's involvement in the uncharted territory of post-conflict peace-building and in particular its engagement in democracy assistance and governance reform. Therefore a clear objective analysis of these peace-building operations were an indispensable exercise if one has to understand peace-building in proper perspectives and anticipate the possible future course it might hold out.

From Central America to the Western Sahara, the United Nations mounted missions to settle old and new conflicts and reconstruct shattered societies in the wake of the cold war. With UN guidance, Namibia has seen the development of a new and democratic political order. El Salvador has put behind it 12 years of civil war and negotiated settlement to establish the most inclusive political system the country has ever seen. Cambodia has witnessed the orderly withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the first fair election in two decades. Clear successes, however few and fragile; the stories of most recent UN peacekeeping mission are tangled, with uncertain endings at best.⁵ Therefore, it is evident that from this facts that we have not yet found a full proof method to deal with the complexities of peace-building operations. Moreover, the impact of the current method of conducting peace operations is still not very clear at best.

⁴ A/47/277-S/24111, 31 January 1992.

⁵ Eva, Bertram, "Reinventing Governments: The Promise and Perils of United Nations Peace-Building", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.39, No. 3, 1995, p. 387.

Broadly, UN peace operations can be clubbed into two phases: the first one focuses on cessation of the conflict and attainment of peace settlement, and the second on the consolidation of peace. The holding of democratic election often marks the transition from 'first' to 'second generation.' While the 'first phase' UN involvement has centered on peacemaking and peacekeeping which primarily involved UN peace and security mechanism and structures, the 'second generation' engagement centers on peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and requires the active involvement of UN development assistance institutions. In the course of the 1990s the strengthening of democratic governance has emerged as a critical area of intervention by the international community, in particular to prevent the recurrence of conflict in crisis-ridden countries. Most analysis of U.N. involvement in peacekeeping and peace-building tend to focus too narrowly on the political dimension of what could be termed 'first generation' UN engagement, including political mediation and extending to electoral assistance and observation.⁶

The involvement of UN in Central America beyond the peace settlements underlined the integration of development concerns in peace operations. The UN involvement in Central America indicated a shift from peace and security intervention to more traditional, more of developmental assistance. This means 'post-conflict peace-building encompasses actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.'⁷ Therefore, UN involvement was premised on the integration of three interrelated functions: peace-making through essentially political mediation and electoral observation; peace-building through monitoring and verification; and peace-building through the promotion of institutional reform and state modernisation.⁸ Promoting democracy and strengthening

⁶ Christopher, Joyner, "The United Nations and Democracy", *Global Governance*, Vol. 5 No. 3, 1999, p. 340-1.

⁷ IA/54/I, 1999

⁸ Carlos, Santiso, "Promoting Democratic Governance and Preventing the Recurrence of Conflict: The Role of the United Nations Development Programme in Post-Conflict Peace-Building", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, 2002, p. 558.

good governance have become core components of post-conflict peace-building initiatives of the United Nations.⁹

International assistance to democratisation can have only limited impact as it is dependent on existence of genuine political will and commitment to democracy within the country's ruling elite and society at large. Moreover, a reformist political attitude is needed on the part of the governing elite if changes are to occur. However, the Central American peace settlements did not change the underlying distribution of power in any significant way. Politics turn around again to old ways i.e. power play and domination by the elites. This would require UN efforts of promoting democracy to confront the underlying interests and power relations and thus entail intrusion to national sovereignty, an area considered inviolable according to UN Charter. Most experts following the region's events contend that the peace settlements brokered by the UN and the substantial progress of democracy is still too premature and must be treated with caution. The transition of Central American countries to democracy still remains in the midst of uncertainty and an unpredictable state.

The United Nations and Democracy

The UN effort is grounded on the conviction that peace, development and democracy are inextricably linked. Therefore, promotion of democracy and strengthening institutions in post-conflict countries has become a central component of the UN's efforts at building a sustainable peace. But we must keep in mind that building sustainable peace in a post-conflict society is a long and fragile process. The fundamental aim of creating a viable and sustainable political and institutional solution is a tedious project. Moreover, reconciliation, democratisation and economic reconstruction are seen as dimensions which mutually reinforce one another. Therefore, if mishandled it could well undermine peace and democracy. Consequently, sustainable peace, development and democracy have become inseparable elements of UN involvement in post-conflict situation. This would demand a greater coordination not only within the UN system but also within the

⁹ Ibid, p. 555-6.

entire aid community involved in the peace-building process. This means a more coherent and integrated approach by the UN organisations and the Bretton Woods institutions have to have essential preconditions for successful conclusion of peace-building operations. In following chapter deals with the above mentioned issue of coordination in a more detailed manner. But it is clear the international community have often been found not ready for this challenge.

The peace agreements in El Salvador in 1992 and in Guatemala in 1996 and the transitional elections in Nicaragua in 1990 were unique in the sense that they linked peace to development, thereby creating a key role for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In assessing its experience in supporting governance and reconciliation programs in post-conflict countries, UNDP notes that:

*‘The peace processes of Central America were the first instances of UNDP involvement in overtly political and diplomatic, as well as development activities. These experiences have profound impact on the development philosophy of UNDP and the stage at which the organisation becomes involved in the countries in special circumstances’.*¹⁰

El Salvador and Guatemala achieved peace settlements and Nicaragua initiated democratic transitions during the 1990s. They have produced positive experience in the peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, through international initiatives generated from within the region supported by the UN. Furthermore, in all three countries the UN played a decisive role in the resolution of their internal conflicts and their transition towards inclusive democracy. But in El Salvador, the peace agenda has been undermined by the competing neoliberal economic agenda and the prospect for peace in Guatemala continues to depend to a large extent on the adaptation of the neoliberal economic prescriptions. Moreover, Nicaragua’s democratic transition seems superficial and fragile. Therefore, a clear cut understanding between the UN and IFIs is a very vital necessity for effective peace-building operations.

¹⁰ UNDP, UNDP’s Experience in Supporting Governance and Reconciliation Programme in Countries in special Circumstances, Preliminary Findings, New York, 1999, p. 7.

Mediation for Peace

The ground work done initially by the regional initiatives of Contadora processes, the Esquipulas II Accord of 1987 set the framework for resolving the Central American crisis. It marked the first step towards the restoration of peace and democracy in the isthmus and it resulted to active involvement of the UN in the Central American peace-building processes. The regional initiatives established mechanisms to restore trust and build confidence; it included provisions for national dialogue and democratisation in each country and requested the UN to support region-wide effort at restoring peace. Consequently, in late 1988, the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) was established with the mandate to verify compliance with the security provisions of the Esquipulas II Accord. This was later extended to include overseeing the voluntary demobilisation of the *Contras*. While through ONUCA during 1989-1992, the U.N. engaged in what is usually described as a small peacekeeping operation to prevent the cross-border movement of irregular forces.

Likewise, the United Nation Verification Mission for the Nicaragua Election (ONUVEN) was dispatched in 1989 to ensure the fairness of the national elections while a joint U.N.-OAS International Verification and Support Commission (CIAV) was established to assist the implementation in the repatriation of Nicaraguan refugees. The 1990 elections resulted in a peaceful alteration of power with the defeat of incumbent revolutionary Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega. Moreover an important aspect of UN's involvement in Nicaragua was its 'task sharing' with the OAS. In Nicaragua the UN was primarily focused on elections as a means to resolve the conflict.

The fragility of the Nicaraguan peace stems in part from the failure of the international community to sustain its ostensible commitment to promoting liberal democracy after the 1990 elections. UN and OAS mediators who assisted with the 1989 peace did little if anything to encourage broader negotiations on institutional question. Efforts to foment democratisation were short-lived: the UN deployed and electoral observation missions (ONUVEN), accompanied by a smaller OAS effort from groups such as the Carter Center. But these mission all left after the elections, leaving no neutral

international presence to assist with ongoing mediation, institution building, or verification of peace related commitment. CIAV monitored security and social conditions for the *Contras*, but its partisan support for the *Contras* limited its effectiveness. By the time CIAV tried to develop local capacity of conflict resolution, rearmament had become an institutionalised practices.

The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) established in May 1991 widened the engagement of UN in peace-building operations. The El Salvador case marked the first UN effort to resolve an internal war with broad agenda of disarmament and military demobilisation, national reconciliation. In fact, it was the first UN mission to be established prior to a cease-fire arrangement. The ONUSAL was structured into 4 divisions- human rights, police, military and electoral- plus a political staff. Besides institutional strengthening and ushering democracy, the UN facilitated low-profile talks between the government and the Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) which led to the 1990 Geneva Agreement, which defined the framework for future peace talks and U.N. mediation in El Salvador.

The ensuing negotiations reaffirmed the central role of the UN in the corroboration of the peace accords. It was agreed that ONUSAL would facilitate the peace talks and subsequently its mandate was incorporated to oversee the overall compliance with the full range of future agreements. The Chapultepec agreements of January 1992 concluded the peace negotiations and opened the transition phase leading to the March 1994 election. Reforms to the electoral system were mandated in the Peace Accords. A new electoral code was approved in January, eight months behind schedule. The UN Mission in El Salvador opened an electoral office in July 1993. The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador was widely viewed as the arbiter of international legitimacy, so it was important for the Salvadoran government to maintain the approval of the UN. This means ONUSAL went much beyond the 'first generation' U.N. engagement in a conflict situation as it, on top of providing traditional diplomatic mediation and elections supervision also engaged itself in overseeing the implementation of the peace agreements reached between the parties.

The human rights verification mandate and its emphasis on police and judicial reform as well as socio-economic transformation, ONUSAL took a role unprecedented in UN history and moved peacekeeping further into the areas of peace-building and democratisation, including the establishment of a national civilian police force. UN involvement in El Salvador was fundamentally different from its involvement in Nicaragua, as in the Salvadoran context the UN pressed for a leading, almost monopolistic, role on peace-making, verification and peace-building.¹¹ But to what extent did the UN managed to monopolise the peace-building operation would be dealt latter. 'In El Salvador, human rights monitors were deployed before peacemaking and contributed to the confidence building that advanced the negotiations. Moreover, in El Salvador, 'ONUSAL helped to increase trust and transparency through the Ad Hoc Commission, which supervised demobilisation, and through Truth Commission, which investigated human rights violations and recommended reforms.'¹²

The success of the peace accords in El Salvador demonstrates that normative and institutional can substitute for security guarantees in helping to resolve civil war. The international community provided no forceful security guarantees to the combatants and actively discouraged them from adopting power sharing arrangement to resolve their security dilemmas. Instead international actors pursued a liberal strategy of the conflict resolution by promoting democracy. This strategy succeeded in part because Salvadoran elites had begun to adopt liberal norms during the 1980s in order to legitimate themselves to the international community.

Moreover the intensive UN-mediated peace negotiations helped the combatants to recognise that their adversaries have changed and could be trusted to honor their agreements. Then during the five years peace-building mission, the UN pushed the social reconstruction of El Salvador, strengthening political institutions and promoting dialogue,

¹¹ Tommie, Sue Montgomery, "Getting to Peace in El Salvador: the Roles of the United Nations Secretariat and ONUSAL", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1995, p. 139-73.

¹² Michael W. Doyle; Nicholas Sambanis, "*Building Peace: Challenges and Strategies after Civil War*" mwdoyle@princeton.edu; nsambanis@worldbank.org, Dec.27, 1999, p. 19.

compromise, and nonviolent conflict resolution, successfully diffusing liberal practices to state bureaucracies and a society that had lived by such norms in the past.

In Guatemala 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 be disarmed unilaterally without negotiating 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 of Nicaragua. By 1990, however, even army and the government spokesman 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 discussion to end it.¹³

In Guatemala the conclusion of Oslo Accord led to direct negotiation between the government and the (UNRG), beginning in 1991. These negotiations culminated with the signing of the Mexico and Queretaro Accords in 1991. However, the peace process had completely stalled its progress by May 1993 when President Serrono Elias attempted a 'self coup' suspending the constitution and illegally dissolving Congress and the Supreme Court. By 1994, continued UN mediation between the government and the UNRG led to renewed peace talks. The Framework Agreement for the Renewal of the Peace Talks of January 1994 gave a new impulse to the negotiations and the UN became an official mediator between the parties.

This was followed by the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights of March 1994 requested immediate international verification in Guatemala (MINUGUA) in July 1994. MINUGUA's mandate and structure was subsequently broadened to include the verification of additional accords once a final peace agreement had been signed. The whole process was concluded with the signing of Peace Accords in 1996.

¹³ Susanne, Jonas, "Democratisation Through Peace," *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 2000, p. 11.

The Organisation of American States (OAS)

The Pan-American conferences, which started in 1926 at the Conference of Panama culminated with the creation of the OAS in 1949, to promote hemispheric solidarity, to defense alliances and peaceful settlement procedures. The emphasis on peaceful settlement may somewhat explain the centrality of diplomacy and the subsidiarity of enforcement in the present OAS. The lack of enforcement mechanism to deal with members' hostility with one another and the long-standing efforts of Latin Americans to create the perfect peace system provoked a hemispheric attitude towards the complete regulation of continental affairs that has lasted until the present day. With the exception of the Inter-American Peace Committee, an informal instrument that was established in 1940 to provide mediation and good offices, all other mechanisms and treaties created by the American States were never used. The same pattern was repeated once again years later with regard to one of the main components of the Inter-American System, namely the 1949 American Treaty on Pacific Settlement of Disputes (Bogota Pact) - one of the most acclaimed instruments for conflict resolution that has never been applied to any inter-American dispute.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the connection between democratic values and regional governance institutions has become increasingly accepted. In the Western Hemisphere, this pattern is associated most closely with the revitalisation of Organisation of American States, in tandem with the emergence of what has been termed an inter-American 'paradigm of democratic solidarity.'¹⁵ In declaratory terms, a growing consensus for OAS members to pursue collective action to promote and defend democracy in the region has been enshrined in a cluster of inter-American legal documents, including the protocol of Cartagena de Indias (1985), the Santiago Commitment and Resolution 1080 (1991), the

¹⁴ Joaquin, Tacsan, "Searching for OAS/ UN task-sharing opportunities in Central America and Haiti", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1997, p. 492-3.

¹⁵ Gavaria, 1998a, b, c, cited in Andrew F. Cooper; Thomas Legler, "The OAS Democratic Solidarity Paradigm: Questions of Collective and National Leadership", *Latin America Politics and Society*, Vol. 43, No.1. Spring, 2001, p.1.

Washington Protocol (1992), the Managua Declaration (1993) and the Declarations and Plans of Action of the Miami and Santiago Summits of the Americas (1994, 1998).¹⁶

One of the most fundamental factors which reactivated the function-mechanism of the Organisation of American States in the area of conflict management, resolution, and prevention is the end of super power rivalry. Consequently conflict resolution has become a new priority for the OAS. However, the OAS have unproblematically identified the liberal paradigm (market-oriented reforms, representative democracy, civil society building and good governance) as the pre-eminently acceptable form of economic and political governance, and as the most promising approach to reduce societal tensions and prevent violent conflicts. The demise of Cold War was followed by the *third wave* of democratisation and OAS has embraced the promotion of democracy as one of its central purposes.

In fact, the first significant OAS involvement in the Central American peace process was the 1989-90 electoral observation missions to Nicaragua. The OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy in practice encompasses an impressive range of functional and geographical responsibilities. These tasks include furthering the peace process in Guatemala, reintegrating combatants in Nicaragua, training and shaping young democratic leaders, and promoting effective local government throughout the region.¹⁷ And OAS began to work in Guatemala just prior to the signing of the Peace Accords in order to help move the country toward peace.

The OAS's roles in Guatemala have chiefly focused on conflict prevention and resolution, strengthening the electoral system and modernising political parties and the party system. Moreover the Organisation of American States established a programme to

¹⁶ Andrew, F. Cooper; Thomas Legler, "The OAS Democratic Solidarity Paradigm: Questions of Collective and National Leadership", *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 43, No. 1, Spring, 2001, p. 103.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 107.

help Guatemalans address ongoing tensions and political disagreements, particularly implementations of the accords. The programme entitled Culture of Dialogue: Development of Resources for Peace-Building in Guatemala (PROPAZ) focused primarily on strengthening the capacities of governmental, civic, and community institutions to manage and resolve disputes in collaborative ways. PROPAZ recognised the unique opening which was being created for the Guatemalans and have supported the work of the commissions created by the Peace Agreements. In Guatemala, the OAS has addressed the land problem both directly and through PROPAZ programme, and indirectly through its adherence to a neoliberal development model. Less directly, but no less profoundly, the OAS has addressed the land problem through its support for market-based land reforms. Experts opine that the OAS adoption of neoliberal paradigm has neutralised its initiatives and has rather produced negative impact on the issues of land transfer in Guatemala.

Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations

In post-conflict context there is a marked difference in approaches employed by the grassroots organisations from that of donors, governments and UN organisations. The fundamental difference being in their approaches, governments and U.N. relies more on top-down approach and the NGOs on a bottom-up approach. Therefore it is argued that the ability and mode of working of NGOs at the ground level makes them more capable of understanding the ground realities and they should have a voice in the post-conflict stages of reconstruction and reconciliation. Nonetheless, it is also argued that the level of coordination among them is poor often leading to fragmentation due to varied interest, they are numerous as well. This means NGOs much create and develop channels to exchange experiences which would augment their capability on how to deal with the different international actors who appear on the stage. Only then can NGOs be equipped to apply much-needed critical thinking to reconstruction and reconciliation work.

The implementation of the peace accords in Nicaragua have been problematic, there were incidents of ex-combatants taking up arms again complaining the half hearted

implementation of the land distribution programme as envisaged in the Peace accord. Comparatively, in El Salvador the land distribution programme was managed somewhat better than in Nicaragua, but there are still complaints that the re-integration package has not addressed their needs and problems in any significant manner. The role of NGOs in these schemes of things has been focused on speedy integration of ex-combatants into the mainstream. The NGOs have helped training the ex-combatants to make them small entrepreneurs.

International NGOs most notably Save the Children, lobbied to clarify the fate of the disappeared in Central America. They supported a local NGO in El Salvador, Pro-Search (Pro- Busqueda), which tries to trace children who have disappeared during the civil war of the 1980s. Moreover, Save the Children also cooperates with the Olaf Palme Foundation, the University of Central America in San Salvador, and the Institute for Human Promotion (INPRHU) in Nicaragua to promote programs to rehabilitate children traumatized by violence. NGOs pressed Central American governments to incorporate a charter of children rights in the constitutions.¹⁸ Women's NGOs have played important roles in the investigations of human rights violations in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala. These efforts is significant because it helps in healing personal wounds, addressing impunity and compensation an can help restore confidence in authorities and regenerate a sense of community.

But the most fundamental problem of grassroots organisations is their financial dependence on governments and international funding agencies which many a times makes them vulnerable to manipulations. We would again deal with this issue below.

¹⁸ Jean, Grugel, "Romancing Civil Society: European NGOs in Latin America", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Special Issue: The European Union and Latin America: changing Relation, Summer,2000, p. 101.

II. Peace Agreements: Nature, Content and Objectives

Nicaragua

In Nicaragua Structural Adjustment Program was introduced during the revolutionary Sandinista government headed by Daniel Ortega. The peace settlement of 1990 followed by election formally installed democracy in Nicaragua. The peace settlement therefore was mainly concern with security concerns of both sides i.e. demobilisation, repatriation, disarmament and constitution of new national police. The agreements vaguely covered social and economic issues. Nonetheless, the Nicaraguan peace settlement made demobilisation partially premised on land distribution. It prevented the rebel leaders from having to face their bases empty-handed and thus averted the threat of rebellion from within the ranks that could derail the demobilisation process it also guaranteed formal rebel combatants as measure of physical and economic security.

For instance, ‘the Nicaraguan agrarian reform in the 1990s practically ignored demands from non combatants landless peasants, while efforts to pacify the rearmed groups that multiplied quickly in the postwar period relied on extending additional unrealistic promises of land distribution.’¹⁹ It is argued that the use of privatisation of state-owned enterprises as a way to satisfy the land demand for former combatants divided the elites from the bases within both the rebel and the official armies, as real and perceived inequalities in distribution shattered the solidarity needed for judge implementation of Agrarian Policy. There are instances of violent actions in opposition to the Agrarian Policy. El Salvador and Nicaragua under took land redistribution programs in the 1990s as part of the peace processes ending the civil wars. Both governments consider agrarian reforms efforts concluded. New agrarian codes have not yet been promulgated, however, and remain in contention.²⁰

¹⁹ Deena, I. Abu-Lughod, “Failed Buyout: Land Rights for Contra Veterans in Postwar Nicaragua”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Violence, Coercion, and Rights in the Americas. May, 2000, p. 33,

²⁰ Carmen Diana Deere; Magdalena Leon, “Institutional Reform of Agriculture under Neoliberalism: The Impact of the Women’s and Indigenous Movements”, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 2, 2001, p. 33.

El Salvador

The Salvadoran peace agreement was formally signed in Mexico on January 17, 1992. The main goals of the agreement were: (1) to end the armed struggle through political means, that is, through negotiations; (2) to promote democratization of the country; and (3) to guarantee respect for human rights and reunify and reintegrate Salvadoran Society.²¹

Broadly, besides the election, which was supposed to include guarantees that would allow full participation, the peace accords covered five other major areas: (1) human rights, with an international Truth Commission to investigate and redress the abuses of the past 12 years; (2) demilitarisation, including a phased relinquishing of arms by the FMLN as well as reform and reduction of armed forces; (3) police reform, replacing the old police and security apparatus with a new Civilian National Police; (4) judicial reform, which would overhaul the Supreme Court and establish a Human Rights Ombudsman office, and (5) land reform and other economic and social issues.

Firstly, the protracted nature of the conflict pushed both sides to concede to the rational to end the war. The fundamental reason for the revolution was to replace the system of political and economic exclusion with an inclusive one. Although each side had its own reasons, there was consensus that the war had to end. For the new government, ending war was an economic necessity in order to pursue a new scheme of development that was not based on agriculture production, but rather on attracting foreign investment. There could be no investment until the war ended. For their part, the guerrillas needed to end the war because they realised that a military victory was not at hand. Thus the stalemate finally resulted in a peace accord which was signed in 1992 in Mexico's Chapultepec Castle.

²¹Ricardo, Guillermo Casteneda, "El Salvador's Democratic Transition Ten Years after the Peace Accords", Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Latin American Program, 2003, p. 1.

Secondly, the negotiation and the peace agreement itself focused on the principle cause of the war: political exclusion. Both saw democracy as a way out of the previous situation. The Guatemalan elites in and outside the government wanted to end military domination and control of politics that had lasted over 60 years. As for the guerrillas, meanwhile, felt the need to abandon the armed struggle provided there were conditions for them to function in society without suppressing their own ideas. And only a democratic set up could have guaranteed them the conditions.

A third distinctive feature of the peace agreements was lack of clear agenda on ending the economic exclusion, which simply meant that the possibilities of addressing the causes of the conflict were sidelined. There was no consensus at all in the peace agreements between both the parties on what comprised the problem of economic exclusion. When the government talked about economic exclusion, it meant that the role of the state and state-spending were too large. The government favored neo-liberal recipes that the guerillas viewed as completely counter- productive. The guerilla saw economic exclusion as a function of the rich, the oligarchy. These people also happened to be the government at that time.

Guatemala

The Human Rights Accord, signed in March 1994 marked a significant cornerstone in the Guatemala Peace Process. The March 1995 Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples goes far beyond antidiscrimination protections to mandate a constitutional reform redefining Guatemala as a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual nation. This accord, together with different initiatives by variety of indigenous organizations, also created a new context for social and political interactions and for a more democratic political culture. But nonetheless the peace accords had its share of flaws and omissions. The most immediately visible being the weakness on issues of bringing justice to victims of the war.

Moreover Demilitarisation Accord of September 1996 was one of the linchpins of the entire peace settlement. It required far reaching constitutional reforms to limit the function of the army, which, since the 1960s had considered itself as the ‘spinal column’ of the Guatemalan state and had involved itself in everything from counter-insurgency and internal security to civic action and vaccinating babies. Henceforth, the accords stipulated a clear division in the civil military relations. According to the Peace Accords the role of the army was downsized to a single function: defense of Guatemala’s borders and its territorial integrity. The accord also eliminated the dreaded system of paramilitary Civilian Self-Defense Partrol (PACs) and other counter-insurgency security units. It also reduced the size and budget of the army to a considerable extent. The peace settlement also had provisions of a new civilian police force to guarantee citizen security and it also called for reforms in the judicial system to eliminate pervasive impunity.

The Guatemalan Peace Accords were substantive and comprehensive, covering democratisation, human rights, refugee resettlement, socioeconomic reforms, reform of the armed forces and historical clarification of human rights abuses. Various commissions established by the Peace Accords were expected to generate policy solutions to the problems which caused the conflict. One remarkable feature of the Peace Accords was inclusion of socioeconomic reforms but the modalities of implementation were unclear. Moreover, the issue of land distribution needed a substantive involvement on the part of the state and in fragile post-conflict political environment this would have been particularly difficult. This issue would be dealt further latter.

III. Implementation of Peace Agreements and its Challenges: Bilateral and Multilateral Initiatives

Peace implementation is the process of carrying out a specific agreement. It focuses on the narrow, relative short-time efforts to get warring parties to comply with their written commitments to peace. Success can measured in relation to the conclusion of the war on a self-enforcing basis. Therefore relevant evaluation criteria are much

narrower than parameters of successful peace-building which would call for amelioration of the root causes of conflict, and the promotion of justice, positive peace, harmony and reconciliation of enemies

Therefore peace-building can be a long and tedious process of elimination of the causes of the conflict which would demand meticulous planning and depend on availability and the will to commit resources on the part of the actors. Nonetheless peace accords, however, are generally negotiated as a package and may well include precisely such projects as key components in the national reconciliation process. Moreover as agreements between two parties, peace accords are not susceptible to piecemeal or selective implementation. The government has the ultimate responsibility for harmonising different needs and easing of conflicting interests. But as a party to the accords, it is also committed to giving the same priority to all aspects of peace agreements. It can favour some to which it agreed readily over those which it conceded reluctantly, lest it violate the carefully negotiated schedule and destroy the trust on which its implementation depends.

Monser argues that ‘measures of peace implementation are narrower than indicators of peace-building because good things like reconciliation, justice democracy, and the rule of law cannot be attained in the short-run inference. Moreover, measuring the effect of short term action by outcomes 10-15 years in the future is problematic because the passage of time is the enemy of inference.’²² Beside the criteria of time a clear cut distinction between implementation of peace agreements and peace-building is problematic as both the process seems to run in a criss-cross manner and moreover the actors involved remains more or less the same. It can be argued that peace-building has more to do with international community and the implementation and peace agreements have to do with the parties to the agreements. But the role of international community can not be overemphasized. Therefore hurdles in the implementation process of peace

²² Stedman, John Stedman, “Implementing Peace Agreement in Civil Wars: Lessons and Recommendations for Policymakers”, *IPA Policy Paper Series on Peace Implementation*, May, 2001, p. 7.

settlements in general and more specifically with the Central American case is discussed below.

Firstly, a clear consensus on the mandate of peace-building operation must be struck among the potential actors prior to the actual process's start. In case of emergency where the actors have to respond immediately, this consensus must be obtained at the earliest possible time. This consensus is vital, without it coordination of the operation itself becomes difficult if not questionable. The Central American case adequately proves that lack of coordination among the actors have hampered the peace process. For instance, 'El Salvador's dilemma foreshadows serious problems for international peace-building and reconstruction efforts. The basic flaw in the international community's mechanism for dealing with such situations has aggravated domestic problems. The structural adjustment programs and the stabilisation plan on the one hand, and the peace process, on the other counteracts each other. We would forward this argument latter.

Secondly, the Central American case again indicates that the issues of coordination among the actors have not been able to settle. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter there was a lack of proper coordination between the UN and IFIs which largely funded the peace-building process. Therefore, it must be identified who represents the international community.

Thirdly, the excessive dependence of peace-building process on international funds is not sustainable in the long run. Moreover, it makes the actors susceptible to manipulation by the lending agencies. For instance it is argued that international aid agencies have pushed through the agenda 'Washington Consensus' at the cost of immediate social concerns. It is further contested that donor countries will often agree to finance general reconstruction, particularly infrastructural and environmental projects and they are not inclined to help pay for specific actions in support of peace, such as the purchase of land and the creation of better police forces.

Fourthly, the presence of spoilers (factions or leaders who oppose the peace agreement can have negative impact on the peace process). In all the three Central American cases there was no section who was openly opposed to the peace settlement. One reasonable explanation would be that the society got tired of war. But challenges and problems opened up by the implementation process did produced sectors which press for proper implementation in Central America. And there have been cases of violence and rearming of ex-combatants. For instance, ‘the annual number of deaths due to crime during the 1990s exceeded the average due to war in the 1980s by over 40 percent.’²³ While in Guatemala the economic costs of crime were US\$565 million in 1999,²⁴ compared to annual US\$240 million loss to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the height of the civil war between 1981-85.²⁵ These reflects that peace process in Central America has failed to address the issues of extreme and apparent unequal patterns of wealth and consumption in the region which fuels frustration and poverty and it can easily be one of the reasons of crimes and continuation of crimes.

Fifthly, the lack of central authority to supervise the operation makes the operation free for all which means identification of the direction of the whole process becomes difficult. For instance, the United Nations Mission in El Salvador reported on the problem of electoral reform. The United Nations Development Program offered technical assistance, and tried coordinate donors to pressure the Salvadoran government. While the donor’s coordination was sporadic and rarely went beyond information sharing, the Salvadoran peace accords were sufficiently detailed to give donors, international agencies, NGOs and the Salvadoran population a ‘map’ to follow and a means of gauging achievements. The process was rocky from the start, and there were frequent disagreements among ONUSAL and other international actors as to the priorities and what constituted compliance, but the overall goals and general direction were never in question.

²³ Jenny, Pearce, “From civil war to ‘civil society’; has the end of the Cold War brought peace to Central America?”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, 1998, p. 590.

²⁴ C. Moser and A. Winton, “Violence in the Central America Region: Towards an Integrated Framework for Violence Reduction”, *Overseas Development Institute working paper*, No. 171, 2002, p. 33.

²⁵ United Nations Statistics Division’s online Common Database, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cdb/>

Finally, maintaining transparency and accountability has become a challenge, a factors which could potentially make the sincerity of the implementation of peace agreements questionable. Therefore Secretary-General Kofi Annan have urged a better synchronisation of the effort: ‘The plan must help to identify the ways in which different parts of the system might properly work together to devise country specific peace building strategies and to implement them together, in the context of the country team. Arrangements for peacebuilding must be coherent, flexible and field-driven, mobilising all relevant resources of the United Nations system and other international actors in support of national initiatives and building or reorienting ongoing activities so that they contribute to peace. What is required is a headquarters capacity to provide those resources necessary for the country team to propose those specific strategies and see them through. This capacity must help to identify best practices and lessons to be learned from within the system, provide knowledge of discussions and debate on peace building from external institutions and organisations and formulate systems-wide guidelines and generic methodologies.’²⁶ With these broad understanding of the problems in the process of peace-building operations the next chapter would critically examine the claim of promotion of democracy as a mechanism to foster peace.

²⁶ A/58/38219 September 2003.

CHAPTER III

Democratic Transition and Peace-Building

Introduction

A precise definition of democracy is no simple task. One of the reasons for this is the nature of democracy itself, which is in a constant flux. The meaning of the term itself changes with the increase in the number of conditionalities. A minimalist definition would just require periodic competitive elections which would certainly qualify all the Central American countries as democratic polity. But if the definition is expanded to include wider range of political conditions such as freedom of expression, absence of discrimination against particular political parties, freedom of association of all interest groups, civilian control over the military. Then these same countries with the exception of Costa Rica would become doubtful candidates to be classified as democracies.

Therefore, definitions are conditional on how the term itself is operationalised in a given state of democracy. This survey would employ the definition of democracy as a set of institutions that permits the entire adult population to act as citizens by choosing their leading decision makers in competitive, free and fair elections which are held on a regular basis in the context of the rule of law, guarantees of political freedom and limited military prerogatives. Nonetheless, democracy has become the most acceptable form of governance, if not the best, to mitigate the complexities of governance. This notion has gained even more currency with the '*third wave*' of democracy that swept the globe with the end of the cold war.

I. Democratic Transition

The whole debate of democratisation of Central America can be seen in two parts. First it can be treated as a part of the '*third wave*' of democracy. Secondly, it can be narrowly treated as a part of the peace-building efforts. In other words, it is a derivative

of the current paradigm of peace-building i.e. Liberal Internationalism which also promotes economic liberalisation as a means to achieve development. A clear cut distinction between these two parts is not feasible as it overlaps each other. But it must be kept in mind that impulses of a more inclusive political system were one of the foremost aspirations of the Central America Revolutions and there were democratic experiments prior to the one being witnessed at present in Central America.

Keeping in accord with the objective of the study, the effort would focus primarily on how democracy and peace-building are interlinked and actual contribution democracy towards peace in Central America in reality. It will also explore how other factors have impacted the process of democratic transition in Central America and how it has complemented and counteracted with each other. It will also explore the tensions between the two, as democracy can potentially aggravate the already polarised society, since electoral process is essentially a competitive process.

An exclusionary authoritarian political structure in Central America is a colonial legacy. As a consequence the small and poor countries of Central America were typically regarded as particularly poor candidates for democracy. Nevertheless, since the mid 1980s, a democratic transition has been realised throughout the region. Given the extreme negative economic conditions of the 1980s and 1990s and historical intractability of political instability in Central America, these transitions via peace processes can be seen as a remarkably positive trend in the region. But the process of democratic transition in the region has been so far an unwieldy process being hampered by factors both domestic and as well as external.

The Central American revolutionary cycle is now over. The insurgents did not achieve their objectives, but the traditional order underwent mutations that were far from irrelevant. The revolutionary surge involved an intense and far reaching activation of social actors which had in previous decades lacked a differentiated identity or whose identities had been expressed as subordinated to other protagonist of collective action: women, indigenous community, settlers in marginal neighborhood, church based

communities- an extensive array of actors which were frequently depicted as ‘new social subjects’. The revolutionary conflict afforded them social visibility, and they in turn added fuel to the bonfire of political confrontation. With uneven degrees of efficacy this variegated spectrum of actors and organisations brooded out the agenda both for social change and for democratisation from a predominately class perspective to a more plural one with open gender, ethnic and cultural extensions. It also expanded the institutional focus of democracy, while endowing it with explicitly social overtones.¹

Democracy was one of the core issues in the recent revolutionary cycle in Central America. As usual, different actors approached it from different perspectives, and with different projections. From the standpoint of insurgents, democracy was one of the dimensions of the struggles they waged against harsh dictatorships – such as *Somocismo* in Nicaragua, or against political regimes combining military rule, sustained electoral fraud, and repression – as in Guatemala or El Salvador. Democracy was viewed as encompassing far-reaching social and economic changes in addition to political institutional ones. It was envisaged as an overall shift in power relations supported by people’s direct participation. The revolutionary approach did not reject relations, but it either assigned them a secondary role or put them on hold until socio-economic change was achieved. This way of focusing on democracy was an outcome of both ideological definitions and historical experiences all over Central America---Costa Rica being the only exception.²

The revolutionary challenge in Central America was viewed by the elite as a direct threat to democracy. These revolutions were treated as an attempt to impose totalitarian regimes of a Castro-communist type committed to the crushing of the individual and economic freedoms. Moreover, the elite were worried of possible backlash against their interests in the event of revolutionary triumph. Logically as such convergence of both these views cannot be overlooked. But it is also evident that it is an

¹ Carlos, M. Vilas, “Prospects for Democratisation in a Post- Revolutionary Setting: Central America”, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, May, 1996, p. 482.

² Enrique, Baloyra, “Reactionary Despotism in Central America”, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol.15, November, 1983, pp. 295-319.

extension of the power struggle which still continues between the elite and the marginalised masses. As a result these tendencies have reduced democracy to a word previously alien to the public discourse of Central American polity until very recently. It is being basically reduced to its procedural dimension: electoral competition among the propertied classes supported by the clientelistic manipulation of the captive vote of the rural illiterate masses.

Despite the distinctiveness of the Nicaraguan regime of the 1980s current discussions of the status of Central American democratisation often highlight marked parallels among political developments in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Historically authoritarian oligarchic societies, wrecked by the upheaval and civil war during the 1970s and 1980s, now have passed through peace processes, pact-making, and 'foundational elections,' adding up to 'transitions to democracy.' Many discussions also note, however, that these countries face ongoing problems of democratic completion and consolidation. Steady progress toward full and stable democracy is absent. Instead of the transition from authoritarian to procedurally correct elections, leading smoothly into a 'second transition' toward full political democracy, these system exhibits erratic ups and downs and continuing democratic deficits.³

It is necessary to first identify some of the features of the democratic transition to critically examine process in Central America. One of the major concerns is the lack of credibility of the electoral procedures. The sanctity of electoral procedures has been severely harmed by manipulation, fraud, violence and repression of opposition parties. It has made political pluralism questionable at a functional level. Consequently, the promotion of social and political reforms through electoral means has become a difficult and unsafe task. Although the region's march towards democracy is considered irreversible it would be at the same time worthwhile to point out that the post-conflict democratic transition is not completely free from the historical dimension of democratic failures.

³ William, A. Barnes, "Incomplete Democracy in Central America: Polarization and Voter Turnout in Nicaragua and El Salvador", *Journal InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1998, p. 63

Another issue which has hampered the Central American democratisation is often attributed to the weakness of the political centre. The peace accord have not eliminated the persistence of fragmentation in the political centre and in Nicaragua and El Salvador party systems, electoral politics and political cultures continue to be characterised by left-right polarisation accompanied by the failure of effective institutionalisation of governance. Therefore these countries need to add to their party systems and political cultures a strong, organised centrism, so as to marginalise left- right polarisation once and for all, and mature beyond it.

Moreover, the Central American states display a persistent inability to monopolise the coercive power of the state. The weakness of the rule of law and lack of public accountability has been seriously threatening the recent democratic breakthrough. This state of affairs is reinforced by instances of government offices being turned into a source of perks and privileges for the incumbent. This scenario is further aggravated by the weakness of the judicial system which is plague-ridden with unskilled manpower and meagre resources which has made the judicial system ineffective and vulnerable to manipulation by sections of society who would not hesitate to bend the rules for safeguarding personal interest.

Therefore the diffusion of the coercive power of the state is another issue in the heart of democratic transition of the region. It can be treated as an after effect of the recent conflict which left a trail of suspicion and uncertainties. As a result the political process has been marred by a lack of trust confirmed by the reluctance of the former combatants from both the parties to lie down arms and weapons and integrate themselves under the civil rule. This situation is reinforced by the reappearance of 'death squads' with motives of achieving whatever be the goals through violence. Moreover the persistent use of private armies and the hiring of public ones for private purposes by the elite indicate the failure of the state to exercise its coercive power.

As a result, the initial optimism of the triumph of democracy by the mid 1990s gave way to withdrawn pessimism as the whole process of democratic transition started to show signs of dwindling confidence in the institution of the state. The major factor responsible for this is the fragmentation and instability of the party system marked by corruption in public administration. This has led to a sharp decline in public confidence in political parties, politicians and government institutions.

Therefore, the institutional vulnerability can be seen as the state's inability to impose the rule of law upon actual social conduct, giving rise to a cleavage between legality and legitimacy. The structural adjustment programme, a component of the peace-building process has led to economic hardship. This has been aggravated by diminished capacity of the government's extractive and allocative capacities. Moreover, implementation of the peace accords has been particularly tedious and it has led to frustration of unfulfilled promises and unrealised expectations. The extensive availability of weapons has also contributed to a notorious increase in daily violence in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Furthermore, the meager capacity of resource mobilisation points to the limited institutionalisation of Central American political processes (Costa Rica again being an exception). Although the division of power is an ingredient of every Central American constitution, there is no stable separation in actual practice. The vulnerability of the judiciary has hampered effective punishment for human rights violations and has become one of the most difficult questions in the post-revolutionary setting. In Nicaragua the relations between the executive and the legislature have been the source of institutional clashes since 1990. The Nicaraguan case points out the inability of Central American governments to function effectively where the opposition holds a relevant proportion of the seats in parliament. This has resulted in political negotiations and trade offs affecting the implementation of the peace accords.

Moreover, moving from guerilla warfare to representative politics has proved to be a difficult leap for both the FSLN and FMLN. Both the organisations experienced

internal splits. 'In El Salvador dissidents from the FMLN opted to build the new, tiny, Partido Democratico. They submitted a '*San Andres Pact*' to political parties and the government. Focusing on economic policy issues, the Pact reproduces the on-going government programme of macro-economic adjustment and has been repudiated by the entire opposition. The Pact was eventually signed by its proponents together with ARENA and the Executive, thus creating the political leadership of El Salvador's right wing hard-liners.'⁴

Above all, it can be argued that socio-economic conditions which precipitated the revolutionary movement remain virtually unchanged, and indeed in some respect are more pressing than was three decades ago. Even though Central America has left behind its traumatic experience of the recent past, large segments of population still live in poverty or are under unsatisfactory health, education and housing standards. There is a high level of unemployment, diminished earnings and disturbing level of violence.

II. Civil Military Relations

The military is no stranger in the political landscape of Latin America. In Central American countries the military, sometimes with reformist agendas and sometime in collusion with the oligarchy, had controlled the political process. Large sections of the society remain almost disconnected from the political arena. The revolutionary movements essentially entailed to bring an end to this exclusionary system. As a result the peace settlements which ushered democracy in the region logically required a clear cut separation of civil and military apparatus to sustain peace. Accordingly, demilitarisation was identified as one of the key area where reforms were needed.

Demilitarisation of politics means subordination of the military to civil government, an issue which would range from the effective observance of civil

⁴John, Williamson, "Democracy and the "Washington Consensus", *World Development*, Vol. 21, No. 8, 1993, pp. 1329-36.

supremacy to financial accountability. The process of demilitarisation of politics in Central America in spite of progress is still not clear conceptually or operationally. It poses a complex set of questions which involves revision of the underlying sources of the armed conflict. It would also mean a complete overhaul of the technical and political approaches of the past decades. The closing of the revolutionary cycle henceforth required a restatement of both the objectives and the function of the military and security forces, as well as their relation to political power. Therefore, it would involve much more than reshaping of the physical dimensions i.e. fire power and budgets of the military apparatus.

In both Nicaragua and El Salvador the demilitarisation of security forces has been conducted with uneven success. The renewed police bodies have reproduced the traditional repressive patterns when dealing with mass rallies or workers protests. In any case demilitarisation of security forces in both countries is in sharp contrast with the preservation of traditional patterns in Guatemala. The Central American countries are still struggling and are yet to achieve effective dismantling of the 'death squads'. In El Salvador it has remained still an unfulfilled item of the peace agreements. On the contrary, a number of new para-military squads have shown up, while in Guatemala political violence keeps going on as well as massive killings of peasants by the armed forces.

Police in many countries (Nicaragua and Costa Rica are exceptions) continue to patrol mainly in large groups in the back of pick-up trucks, rather than circulating and interacting with members of specific beat. High levels of violent crime together with extremely high on-duty death rates for police officers have contributed to a sense of distrust among Salvadoran, Guatemalan ... toward the population.⁵ This indicates the need of a complete change of mentality which is still deranged by the consequences of the conflicts. Therefore, demilitarisation of politics in the region would require more than

⁵ Charles, T. Call, "Sustainable Development in Central America: the Challenges of Violence, Injustice and Insecurity", Hamburg: Institut fur Iberoamerika-Kunde, CA 2020: Working Paper# 8, 2000 p.19.

laying framework and rules. The process would require a step by step augmentation of norms which are congruent with the democratic ethos.

Part of the complexity of demilitarisation derives also from the fact that within the framework of the recent conflict the armed forces in Central American republics have become front-line business actors... Taking advantage of policies of peasant land evictions, together with their privileged access to information and with the manipulation of government agencies and resources- such as credit- high ranking Guatemalan... officers have turned into large businessmen, landowner and financial investors. In Guatemala the personnel involvement of general and colonels has been combined with the institutional insertion of the army in the business world. It operates banks, pension funds, and airline and real estates projects, among other things.⁶

In El Salvador from 1991-1995 coincidence with the decline of armed hostilities and the immediate post-war period, the old security forces were dismantled and new ones created. Future oriented institutional reforms were rooted in the past, concerns especially with curbing the power of the armed forces in internal security and intelligence. By 1995 El Salvador's touted police reform showed significant achievements. The public security system was firmly under civilian control, significantly more accountable to elected authorities than any prior security force. The National Civilian Police (PNC) was perceived by the population as the principal source of public order, citizen security and criminal investigation in the country, and a principal defender of human rights. A poll conducted in 1995 showed that 49 percent of respondents believed that the PNC's conduct was better than that of the old National Police, whereas only 18 percent thought it was worse.⁷

Most experts contend that the police reform efforts in Central America, backed by international donor's programmes and policies have had a positive impact. The peace-

⁶ James Painter, *Guatemala: False Hope, False Freedom*, 1987, cited in. Robert Lieken *Central American Policy*, 1987, pp. 47-51.

⁷ Charles T. Call, "Democratisation, War and State-Building: Constructing the Rule of Law in El Salvador", *Journal of Latin American Study*, 2003, p. 847.

building efforts managed to reduce military influence and military characteristics of the police forces of the region. One source of optimism, for instance, is that all the police function in the region is under civilian ministries. And it is unlikely that this arrangement would be reversed.

II. Judicial Autonomy and Accountability

A strong and independent judiciary is considered a vital precondition for proper functioning of democracy. In Central America the picture is rather grim in this regard. The judicial system of Central American countries is notorious for inefficiency, corruption and manipulation. Therefore weakness of judiciary has become a source of constant worry in the process of democratisation since effective democracy can not be achieved without an independent and accountable judicial system. Central America during the conflict period had a weak if not defunct judiciary. The peace-building process required buttressing of the judicial system to meet the requirement of democracy.

The peace-building process brought in numerous international actors in the region concerned with the issue of reforming the judicial system. The whole process kick-started, 'largely with international funding (especially from USAID), reforms followed with assumptions (1) that existing codes were outdated by decades if not centuries, (2) that the selection of judges and operation of courts were highly politicised and not transparent, resulting in serious corruption and (3) that judicial processes were much delayed and lengthy, resulting in a high percentage of pre-trial detainees in prison systems, to the extent that pre-trial detention often exceeded the time which would have been served under a conviction.'⁸

Some of the features of the recent judicial reform in Central America are:

⁸ Martinez, Ventura 1997, Ibanez 1997, Hammergen 1997 and 1998a,b and c; Popkin 1997; Rowat, Malik and Dakolias 1995; Stotzky 1995, cited in Charles, T. Call, "Sustainable Development in Central America: the Challenges of Violence, Injustice and Insecurity", Hamburg: Institut für Iberoamerika-Kunde, CA 2020: Working Paper# 8, 2000, p.19.

- approval of revamped criminal procedures codes (in every country of the region except Nicaragua).
- additional code reform;
- increased professional career standards and protection for judges and other judicial functionaries;
- greater independence of judiciaries from executive and legislative influence; the adoption of laws to prevent intrafamilial violence;
- the creation of special jurisdictions for constitutional review and for special groups such as families and minor; and
- the introduction of new state mechanisms (ombudsman or their equivalent) for the protection of human rights.

The significance of a reformed judiciary can not be stretched further. Since, judicial performance is linked to legitimacy of the justice system and possibly to the very legitimacy of new democratic system. 'Indicators of low faith in democracy, such as high rates of electoral abstention, appear to correlate with low levels of confidence in the judiciary. Yet, these reforms have not fully redressed the serious problem of Central American judicial system. Public opinion polls in 1997 revealed that, in four of the six countries surveyed, at least half of respondents had no 'confidence' in the judiciary.'⁹

Therefore, judiciaries merit further modernisation and professionalisation, especially in Nicaragua where changes have been less dramatic. Any reform must reflect the international human rights standards. Moreover improvement in coordination among the different elements of the judicial system would merit additional efforts. In El Salvador for example, the Supreme Court continues to exercise inordinate influence over the selection and performance of lower court judges. According to Charles T. Call, judges have been among the most reticent to embrace updated legal and criminal procedures which require new and more demanding tasks of them. This mean that the task is far from

⁹ Nicaragua (51%), Guatemala (51%) Poll by N.Garita, Barometro Centroamerica 1997, internal PNUD document reported in PNUD 1999, 209, *cuadro*, 7, 13.

over and it would require a considerable time before changes sieve down and become a regular feature of judicial system in the region.

III. Civil Society, Education and Democratic Values.

Civil society is the arena of associations of individual and community agency. The term is used to designate the sphere of activity between the individual and the state. Civil society is seen to have attributes which contributes to democratisation by mediating between citizens and state. It can be employed as an important mechanism to aggregate citizens' interest and convey it to the government in non-violent manner. According to Robert Putnam, 'civil society... citizen activity in organisations... contributes to successful governance and democracy, which may be very important in the peaceful reconstruction of Central America.'¹⁰

Therefore it can constrain government behaviour by stimulating citizen activism and inculcating democratic values. Indeed many scholars have argued that citizen involvement in such organisations contributes directly or indirectly to political participation. In contemporary Central America, with its civil wars now having formally ended, it is of paramount importance to determine the role of civil societies. It is not clear what role does organised participation of citizens play in post-war societies, undergoing democracy transition and peace-building at the same time. Little is known on this subject in post-war settings, but among scholars of democratisation more broadly, one finds basic disagreement on this question.

On the positive, a successful transition to democracy enhances participation. Whereas authoritarian regimes are explicitly designed to close channels of political participation and to suppress political mobilisation and dissent, democratisation opens new opportunities for the articulation of citizens' demands. On the negative, it can also be

¹⁰ Robert, Putman, "Bowling alone: America's Declining Social Capital", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, 1995, pp. 65-78. cited in, John A Booth; Patricia Bayer Richard, "Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratisation in Central America", A paper presented at the XXI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997, p. 1.

argued that the long-awaited opening of political space may lead to an explosion of citizens' involvement and such an explosion could produce conflict between civil society and the state. By exerting too much pressure on the state and raising unrealistic expectations among citizens, this burgeoning may threaten the process of democratic transition.

But there exists a highly activated citizen, as without it, revolutions would not have happened at the first place. This means there is a mechanism to organise and manage them in proper channels. Moreover, there are chances of organisations like unions to be incorporated into political parties in order to reduce the number of actors competing for resources and access to the state. At the same time, it is also defensible that the post-conflict situation is not the same as it was during the conflict. But the case is seemingly weak at best.

Other analysts contend that transition to democracy may have a demobilising effect on the institution of civil society. They argued that after spending years struggling against oppressive government, organisations find it difficult to regroup and promote activity around new goals that are often nonpolitical. According to this perspective, organisational activity would diminish as groups functioning in a democracy for the first time find the emerging rules of the participatory game more confusing than those of the authoritarianism. Such a scenario in the first place could possibly lead to disillusionment with democracy; and secondly, to the eventual disbanding of organisations. This debate cannot be pursued further in this limited exercise.

Another condition which is considered essential for success of democracy is the nature of political culture. A pacific political culture is an important ingredient for consolidation of democracy. It is easy to import and export formal political institutions like parliament, elections, ombudsman, or any other. But this does not necessarily imply that these will operate in the new setting as in the original one. It is long drawn process as it takes time for institutions to meet the needs of society.

In terms of inculcating values which are congruent with democratic ethos the Central American governments have not made much progress. It is evident from the fact that ‘the Central American governments have not yet undertaken significant efforts to the media and the public education system as a means of preventing violence and developing non-aggressive conflict reduction methods in society. In societies where corporal punishment remains widely accepted, it is unsurprising that educational system have not introduced a curriculum which inculcates values decrying violence....’¹¹ Therefore the need to revamp the educational system can not be over emphasized. This would in turn help in developing political culture which is in harmony with the so-called democratic norms.

According to Booth and Patricia, civil society in Central America, contends intense activism in civil society in Central America instead of contributing to the process of democratisation has ‘in contrast, participation in civil society contributed to urban Central Americans’ political information somewhat, but did not increase their interpersonal trust not at all. Moreover, citizens’ interpersonal trust and political information bears less clearly and directly upon levels of democracy.’¹²

Nicaragua

The FSLN’s made a historic contribution to building a more democratic Nicaragua. The struggles to overthrow the Somocista dictatorship have reactivated the masses at least at the level of mobilisation if not on a conscious level i.e. participation based on clear and definite ideology. The FSLN laid the foundations for a constitutional regime otherwise the country could have remained a dictator’s playground. The signing of the peace accords and the election of 1990 is considered a landmark in Nicaraguan political history. It seemed to have provided the country with circumstances to instill a

¹¹ Charles, T. Call, “Sustainable Development in Central America: the Challenges of Violence, Injustice and Insecurity”, Hamburg: Institut fur Iberoamerika-Kunde, CA 2020: Working Paper# 8, 2000 p. 62.

¹² John, A Booth; Patricia Bayer Richard, “Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratisation in Central America”, A paper presented at the XXI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997, p. 8.

genuine democracy. But it is argued that the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas and the victory to the Conservatives have reversed these trends and reinforced the polarisation of the Nicaraguan politics.

On the other side, it can be argued that the Constitutional Liberal (PLC) after the peace settlement also contributed in the democratic transition by providing an alternative to Sandinistas. The Conservatives more or less have conceded to play the rules of electoral politics. But both have harmed the country's democratic potential. It must be kept in mind that the peace settlement and the democratic transition in Nicaragua is essentially a pacted product with compromises and accommodations which were done at the cost of the larger interests of the Nicaraguan. Thus, their role in the democratic future can hardly be positive.

One of the most pressing issues of Nicaraguan democratic transition is the lack of internal democratisation within the party. Nicaragua has two large, powerful, well organised political parties: the Constitutional Liberal (PLC) and the Sandinista (FSLN). But the organisational structures of these parties are hierarchical and decisions are made in a very highly centralised manner and the political parties have become an instrument of a Caudillo, a political boss for whom personal power takes precedence over institutions and the constitution. As a result, the parties remain unresponsive and unrepresentative to their voters. Consequently, the two big parties, which take over 90 percent of the vote between them, have done more to weaken democracy in Nicaragua than to strengthen it.

After 1996 elections, party politics in Nicaragua have become the politics of electoral manipulation. Therefore, the criteria of free and fair election which is a precondition of strengthening the democratic transition has been highly politicised and elections do not reflect the popular will of the citizens. This has led to serious weakening of the democratic process in Nicaragua. This state is further aggravated by the reluctance to change things on the part of the party leaders and the party in general. No doubt,

reform could still be a real possibility but the task would prove to be a big challenge ahead.

One of the most remarkable features of Nicaraguan democratic transition is the high level of participation. But political participation is not always positive. The high level of participation is due to the political climate which has led to fear that opposition's victory is not acceptable. This phenomenon is indicated from the fact that 'Nicaragua, moreover, had an equally high percentage of population reporting lack of confidence in political institutions, politicians, and political parties in the period 1993-1995, but achieved well over 73 percent turnout in 1996 nonetheless.'¹³

In recent years, privatisation have deepened economic differentiation among the members of the business community between those who, due to their links with government agencies, were able to secure opportunities of enrichment, and those who lack such links. Inside Sandinismo, the ability of a number of leaders to appropriate state assets before leaving office (either on behalf of themselves or the FSLN) - the so-called piñata- increased the distance separating them from the FSLN's rank-and-file.¹⁴ Therefore economic liberalisation which runs parallel to democratisation as a component of peace-building has undermined the democratic transition in Nicaragua.

In the words of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, *the major threat to democratic system in Nicaragua is not political conflict, but deterioration of living conditions and the consequent loss of faith in democracy and its institutions*. As long as parties in Nicaragua use electoral procedures as instruments, their contributions to democracy are likely to be sporadic. Things can hardly be otherwise in a system where established elites control the political process and define politics as a way for favored individuals and groups to get special benefits.

¹³ William, A. Barnes, "Incomplete Democracy in Central America: Polarization and Voter Turnout in Nicaragua and El Salvador", *Journal InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1998, p. 69.

¹⁴ Carlos, M. Vilas, "Prospects for Democratisation in a Post- Revolutionary Setting: Central America", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, May, 1996, p. 484.

Moreover the country has experienced an explosion in criminal violence. According to Nicaraguan National Police statistics, crime levels have risen by an average of ten percent per year since 1990, compared to just two percent during the 1980s. The absolute number of crimes against person- including violent crimes such as homicide, rapes and assaults-rising by over 460 percent.¹⁵ One of the possible reasons could be poverty induced by the process of economic liberalisation and non fulfillment of land distribution.

El Salvador

The wave of terror that engulfed El Salvador just before and after several years following the coup of 1979 led to suppression of organisations of *campesinos*, trade unionists, students, women, and non-governmental organisations that had emerged during the 1970s to confront an increasingly repressive state. Many of the constituent organisations were similarly dealt with and pushed to the sidelines. This entails that the citizen's activism in the system threatened to reform the extremely circumscribed political setup in El Salvador.

The existence of democratic inclinations is indicated by the electoral success in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But the existence of formal opposition political parties was not a feature at the national level until the late 1980s. By the beginning of the late 1980s, a complex series of factors shifted Salvadoran politics from civil war to negotiated peace. And in January 1992, the government and the Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) signed the peace accords brokered by the UN and in March 1994, the former guerrilla forces of the FMLN participated in elections for the first time. This development is seen as land marked towards democratisation. But 'the entire

¹⁵ A. Serbin and D. Ferreya (ed.) cited in Dennis, Rodgers, "Living in the Shadow of Death: Gangs Violence and Social Order in Urban Nicaragua 1996-2002", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 36, 2006, p. 270.

political spectrum did not participate freely in elections until 1994.’¹⁶ Implementation of the peace accord provisions on human rights was poor. Within days of publication of the Truth Commission report, the ruling ARENA party pushed through the legislature a sweeping, and apparently unconstitutional, amnesty law.

The Peace Accords of El Salvador signed in 1992 was predominantly done in the interest of the elite. Therefore, the peace settlement accords were lopsided. As a result the core interests of the FUSADES wing of the ARENA party were guaranteed, at least until the next election at the cost of the larger interest of the society. In fact, the organisations of civil society played no role in the negotiations. This shows that the peace settlement has limited the objective of the revolution with compromises being made as a part of the negotiation process. It reflects the undemocratic part in the foundation of the democratic transition.

The *Fundacion Salvadorena para el Desarrollo Economico y Social* (FUSADES) was created in 1983 by a group of wealthy Salvadoran business people. The explicit aim, particularly in creating FUSADES, was to promote a package of economic policies that the administration in the United States felt was needed to foster political stability and economic growth which FUSADES can be seen as one of the tools of pushing through the neoliberal agenda. Therefore the role of FUSADES in the democratic transition needs a critical appraisal. FUSADES with adequate resources floated civil society organisations essentially to shadow the contradictions that had surfaced in the political opening. This means it has manipulated the need of funds by the grassroots organisations for its narrow interest. On the other hand the ground for growth of civil society organisations linked to FMLN became fertile. But its close link with the FMLN made it susceptible to manipulation and repression from the state.

Therefore, multiplication of civil society organisations sometimes could have negative effect on democratic transition. As increased activism and expanded number of

¹⁶ Tracy, Fitzsimmons and Mark Anner, “Civil Society in a Postwar Period: Labor in the Salvadoran Democratic Transition”, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1999, p.108.

organisations could lead to blurring of the common interest of the society, as they are susceptible to manipulation. In accord with the arguments of pro-civil society, the Salvadoran democratic transition is said to be hampered by the weakness of civil society. 'The weakness of civil society means that in the transition, all the other contradictions and traditional ways of doing politics tends to reinforce themselves. Political parties continue to have an instrumentalist relationship with civil society. The problem in El Salvador is not the lack of relationship between civil society and political parties; on the contrary, there is a high degree of interaction between the two. The problem is the lack of respect that political parties have for civil society and the view that it is merely their instrument. When it is not used as an instrument, civil society tends to be ignored. This further weakens the civil society.'¹⁷

The transition to democracy in El Salvador mainly faces three fundamental problems. One is that clientilism still is the dominant way of doing politics in El Salvador. The second problem is patrimonialism. The third is the tension or separation between parties and civil society, as well as an instrumentalist mode of political parties relating to civil society organisations, the tendency has been for political parties to become a power in their own right. On top of this the structural adjustment programmes in the economy has created a large segment of marginalised citizens. This can be a potential threat to the stability of the system and hamper the democratic transition. All in all, El Salvador is moving in a positive direction, but certain root causes of the war have not been address.

Guatemala

In 1985, after two decades of military rule and civil war, the military permitted the re-introduction of a democratic political system in Guatemala to end the political violence; national elections were called to appoint the first civilian regime since 1996.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cynthia, J. Arnson, (ed), "El Salvador's Democratic Transition Ten Years after the Peace Accords", Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C. 2003, p. 9.

¹⁸ Dinorah, Azpura, "*Peace and Democratisation in Guatemala: Two parallel processes*", cited in Cynthia, J. Arnson, *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, 1998, pp. 97-125.

A decade later in 1995-1996, the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (UNRG) signed several agreements designed to end the civil war and bring peace to a nation torn apart by violence.¹⁹

Therefore democratic transition in this country meant dismantling of structures which support the perpetuation of exclusionary authoritarian system and adoption of norms of governance based on pacific rules. It is argued that, 'despite commitments made in the Peace Accords, the state has been unable or unwilling to undo the country's system of structural inequality; consequently, democracy in Guatemala is fraught with violence, corruption, racism and a deepening mistrust of political institutions and judicial solutions.'²⁰

Guatemala's democratic prospect is dependent on the nature of its accumulated social capital i.e. whether the attitudes and behavior of its citizens may support the civilian democratic regime. It does not necessarily mean that a progressive political culture could assure democracy. But it is considered important that the readiness of the nation's citizens to embrace democratic norms and rejection of authoritarian values would help in conducting politics in a non-violent manner and this would enhance the prospects of a successful democratic transition.

The political culture of the country is weak if not diffused to irrelevance. The consequences of the protracted conflict had a deep impact on the peoples' mentality. The political environment is still characterised by uncertainty, suspicion, mistrust and competitions which at times are not always peacefully settled. Moreover, the socio-economic condition of Guatemala, despite progress after the peace settlements is far from satisfactory. Many Guatemalans perceive that the country is still in a non-declared war. There are sections of people who are not satisfied with the implementation of the peace settlements. It is even claimed that the peace accords were manipulated.

¹⁹ Teresa Whitfield, *"The Role of the United Nations in El Salvador and Guatemala: A Preliminary Comparison"*, cited in Cynthia J. Arnson, (ed), *"Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America"*, 1998, pp. 257-290.

²⁰ Daniel, Wilkinson, "Democracy' Comes to Guatemala", *World Policy Journal* Vol.12, No. 4, 1995-96, pp. 71-81.

High levels of prosperity and economic growth if not accompanied by equal distribution can hamper the democratic consolidation. In Guatemala the economy was relatively poor, but considerably stronger than those of the two other newly democratic regimes in Nicaragua and El Salvador. But the structural adjustment in the economy had led to a continuous reduction in government spending on social issues. A successful democratic transition and its consolidation would require deployment of more resources on the part of the state in the public arena.

Although most Latin American democracies are moving away from authoritarian regimes and are in the process of constructing cultures of democracy, entrenched inequalities imply weak civil society. The persistence of conditions of inequalities is not considered conducive for democratic transition. In fact, any social process would require participation from the masses if it has to be inclusive. In this regard Guatemala's democratic transition is weakened by the fragile nature of the civil society. Many experts opine that the peace process which opened up the previously exclusionary system have exposed the tension within the army and the private sector. There was a constant pressure to end the political opening which emerged with the peace process.

The new democratic regime experienced another serious challenge- but also reached an important milestone- President Alvaro Arzu's term ended in 1999 and retired General Jose Efraim Rios Montt. Erstwhile leader of a de facto military government in the early 1980s, sought to become the presidential candidate of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG). This would have violated a constitutional ban on former coup participants' becoming president. The Supreme Court ultimately barred him from running. The FRG instead nominated Alfonso Portillo for President and Rios Montt for a seat in Congress. Portillo won the 1999 presidential election, and the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition victor represented a step forward from the democratic regime. Rios Montt however, also won his congressional seat and eventually became presiding officer of that body, leaving observers to wonder whether the old right-wing populist anti-democratic past portended future problems. Another worry is the future of the constitutional revision

needed to implement terms of the peace accords; they fail to pass in a very low turnout referendum in May 1999.²¹

Political participation constitutes a key element of democracy. Democracy in its essence consists of citizen participation in rule; so that a country's democratic prospects are depended on the levels of popular political activity. Urban Guatemala recorded the second lowest levels of voting and campaigning in the region in the early 1990s. This reinforces the lack of faith in the electoral process. It is quite evident from the fact that Guatemala ranks second lowest in the region in political participation, a finding consistent with the high level of repression.

The nature of democratic transition in Guatemala is still in a much premature state. The country's decision making process is still said to be highly centralised. So far, the process has been very reluctantly absorbed by the system. The high level of repression has sharply curtailed participation. Guatemala has had abysmal human right record for several decades and had been widely regarded as one of the hemisphere's most repressive regimes before the 1996 peace accord. Therefore generating citizen participation in Guatemala, as for democratic norms, political repression will has to be eradicated.

Moreover civil rights abuses continue unchecked in Guatemala despite the democratic transition. Groups targeted for torture and 'disappearance' included journalist, trade unionist, lawyers, judges, students, academics, lay workers, priest, party activist, and human rights campaigners. Until the mid-1990s, many leftist candidates could not run for office without fearing for their lives. The judicial system, moreover,

²¹ John, A. Booth, "Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42. No.4, Special Issue: Globalisation and Democratisation in Guatemala, 2000, p. 81.

systematically failed to bring guilty to justice (Krznaric1997, 64-65; Amnesty International 1980-1998; La Rue 1995, 76).²²

The question of the indigenous people in the process of democratic transition is another major concern for Guatemala. The indigenous populations had faced the brunt of the conflict and have seen the worst of military violence; they are still being further marginalised by the negative effect of Liberal Internationalist mode development imposed as a part of the peace-building process which recommends both democratisation and ideals of free market.

The Guatemalan indigenous movement emerged with the organisation and coordination of the Second Continental Meeting of the Indigenous and Popular Resistance in 1991(Santiago Batos; Manucla Camus).²³ They challenged the predominantly class-based discourse and goals of Guatemala's popular movements and sought to create organisations more responsive to indigenous communities and concerns. As indigenous organisations demand autonomy and respect for local form of governance, they also challenge the liberal democratic assumptions. Rather than delineating a single relationship between the state and the citizens, indigenous organisations demands multiple types of citizenship with boundaries that guarantee equal rights and representation at the national level and recognised corporate indigenous authority structures in the indigenous territory. They challenge policy makers and states to recognise both individual and communal rights in an ideologically meaningful, practically feasible, enduring way. Such recognition requires that the law be configured on the basis of universal claims to citizenship and differentiated claims to difference. This problem is not just philosophical but also practical, as politicians struggle to consolidate Latin Americas tenuous democracies.²⁴ As a consequence, addressing the issue of the

²² Krznaric1997, 64-65 and Amnesty International 1980-1998 and La Rue 1995, 76, cited in, Joe Foweraker and Roman Krznaric, "The Uneven Performance of Third Wave of Democracies: Electoral Politics and Imperfect Rule of Law in Latin America", *Latin America Politics and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 3, Autumn, 2002, pp. 36-37.

²³ Santiago, Batos and Manucla, Camus, cited in Deborah, J. Yashar, "Contesting Citizenship: Indigenous Movements and Democracy in Latin America", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Oct, 1998, p. 26.

²⁴ Deborah, J. Yashar, "Contesting Citizenship: Indigenous Movements and Democracy in Latin America", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No.1, Oct, 1998, p. 39.

indigenous people directly co-relates with the legitimacy of the democratic transition in Guatemala.

Conclusion

Central American democratic transition has been troubled by myriad issues which are very central to successful democratic transition and its consolidation. Among the three countries the progress of democratic transition has not been time bound. For instance, democratic prospect in El Salvador seems to be brighter than it is in Nicaragua. Therefore, the passage of time after the peace settlement has not accrued to better adaptation of democratic norms. Moreover, among the Central America countries poverty is still a major concern. It does not necessarily mean that the economic well being would amount to direct consolidation of democracy. But it is important at least in sustaining the faith of the people in the system. Moreover, Nicaragua has not moved much ahead in restructuring its judicial system. The case of El Salvador looks better but despite the evolution of two major political parties, and despite the existence of a pluralistic party system, El Salvador is still a polarized and fragmented society.

In Guatemala the nature of democratic transition is still far from clear. Despite of the peace settlement, political repression is still a regular feature of Guatemalan politics. Political participation is low; level of crime in the society is on the rise and the ability of the judicial system to enforce the rule of law is still weak. The economic barometers of Guatemala is better than that of Nicaragua but this cushion has to be put to better use with a added feature of distribution, if not it will evaporate soon.

The assumption that democracy promotes peace is not really clear. This view essentially corresponds to the paradigm of liberal democratic peace. At inter-state level this assumption seems to be more or less true. But at the intra-state level it often doubtful. For example, in Rwanda and Angola, political liberalisation contributed to the resurgence of violence and in Bosnia and Mozambique elections reinforced the separation of the parties rather than facilitating their reconciliation. Therefore before conceding to this

view we need to objectively settle whether peace comes first or democracy should precedes. Nonetheless this two, as symbiotic as it may seem endanger each other as can be evidently observed in the political overture that we have seen in democratic transition of Central American countries. The polarisation of politics during the time of the revolutions in case of Central America persisted with varying degree in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala which means the ushering of democracy has exposed the fissure in the polity again, further; cessation of overt violence essentially means that power struggles are resolved in the electoral arena which would validate that democracy has helped attain peace.

But the categorical failure of earlier democratic experiments prior to the peace settlements would mean existence of polarisation in the system could possibly roll back the democratic transitions of Central America. Therefore what degree of polarisation would lead to such scenario and how would we measure polarisation would determine the faith of Central American democratic transition. Following the rationale behind this problematique, democracy seems to be fragile in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador in relatively lesser order.

Overall democracy no doubt has managed to preserve the *contingent peace* (a peace that is dependent on the complete implementation of the provision of the peace accords) or the *contingent peace* has provided scope for democratisation in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala, only time would resolve the internal inconsistency of this problematique in Central America. Moreover the imposition of free market as mode of economic development currently in practice in Central America leads to further complications. As a means to stretch the problematique in other dimensions the following chapter would try to unravel the linkages between peace-building and economic liberalisation.

CHAPTER IV

Peace-Building and the Process of Economic Liberalisation

Introduction

The Central American countries going through democratic transition after the peace settlements is at the same time is being integrated to the global economy. These countries with weak institutions have kept up with pace of globalisation but this has hurried adaptation of free market norms which has produced negative repercussions in the system. Moreover this has led overcrowding of narrow range of economic and political interests which mainly affects the poor in these countries.

Under the imperative of neoliberal economic order it is unlikely that the private sector would have incentives to build an effective and coherent national state. Moreover as a continuation of traditional exclusionary economic system it has even more less incentive to support income redistribution and help generate local employment. In this circumstances with limited institutionalisation of government machineries mobilisation of resources through taxation that can be used to fund social welfare programs would be a challenge in itself.

Therefore the half-built nation-states on the periphery of the global economy, like those of Central America, it is international development and humanitarian agencies that are called upon to design and fund the task of minimal welfare to the impoverished section in the society. Therefore a meaningful peace-building effort essentially should focus on issues that that are of prime concern for the marginalised and put an end to this dependence on international funds. Moreover the application economic policies guided by the (IFIs) have instead focused more on achieving immediate macro economic stability at the cost of micro economic stability and this has been done at a huge social cost.

Although, the insurgent guerilla leaders and the radical middle class won political representation, there has not been a commensurate gain in their ability to influence the policy choices. As discussed earlier the peace agreements in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala have not really changed the axis of ownership of production significantly and politics and economy more or less still remain under the control of the elite and serves their interest.

The Central American peace agreements on paper were essentially progressive, 'it included many forward-looking provisions, including constitutional and electoral reforms, restructuring of the armed forces, and land distribution to war veterans and their civilian supporters. Since, all post war settlement involved compromises, injustices and, ironies, reconciliation, like revolution, has its losers. 'The parties to the peace agreements publicly answered the 'Who won?' question in uniformly brief terms- 'peace,' 'all of us,' or 'democracy'-that masked the enduring sources of social and political tension.'¹ Thereby this chapter would critically examine whether the peace-building process was compromised if not succumbed to the imperatives of the neoliberal economic paradigm which has been pursued as a mode of development in the region.

I. Conflicting Logic of Peace Agreement and Structural Economic Adjustment

Nicaragua

The peace accords and the election of 1990 brought the opposition leader, Violeta Chamorro, to power. The incumbent revolutionary government of the Sandinistas was surprisingly defeated. As a result, it again has reinforced the internal contradictions and the persistence of power tussle in the Nicaraguan political system. In these circumstances, at the behest of international financial institutions and U.S. AID the new government immediately embarked on the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes

¹ Deena, I. Abu-Lughod, "Failed Buyout: Land Rights for Contra Veterans in post war Nicaragua", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Violence, Coercion, and Rights in the Americas, 2000, p. 32.

(SAPs) as a part of the peace-building process. But, it must be noted that liberalisation of the economy in fact, started during the revolutionary government of the Sandinistas.

The Sandinistas experiment took charge of Nicaragua for little more than a decade, essentially running a war economy. This brief spell witnessed progress but in general it failed to meet the upbeat expectations of the citizens in a situation of revolutionary triumph. But with some extra time, there would have been a completely different scenario of possibilities. The premature death of the Sandinista experiment was rapidly followed by privatisation and liberalisation of the economy.

And thus, the post-war reconstruction process in Nicaragua revolved around liberalisation of the economy to spur quick development. How has this affected the peace process needs to be assessed critically. Instead of promotion of coherent policies for national development these policies have tried to do away the traces of Sandinismo. Moreover, the peace accords was seen by the private sector which is much weaker than in El Salvador as an opportunity to reassert its claim on power without clearly understanding the responsibility that the reconstruction process would require.

The UNO government embraced the neoliberal model in an effort to stabilise the economy. Consequently, 'a devaluation of the currency was instituted in March 1991, causing sharp socioeconomic dislocations as real wages fell and prices of many basic goods rose out of reach for the majority. That year, a Plan of Occupation Reconversion offered up to US\$ 2000 to state- sector workers who gave up their jobs. Thousands left, many begin selling food and other household items informally from their homes. In 1992, 'The Year of Reactivation', privatisation of industries and export-oriented production proceeded apace. Inflation was brought under control, yet all indicators showed that Nicaragua had never had a worse depression, with levels of unemployment and poverty unprecedented in the country's history. Between 1990 and 1992, formal-sector employment dropped 19 percent, with many workers leaving jobs in health, education and other public services. Unemployment rose to 19 percent and underemployment to 45 percent in 1992. (Envio, 1992a:18-20)

*AID officials didn't come to Nicaragua to build consensus or strengthen consensual policies. They came to give full support to a counter reform strategy, which necessarily involved them deeply in Nicaragua's internal politics right from the start....But the counter-reform isn't just economic, its total. AID's master plan covers virtually all areas: institutionalisation, reform of the state, legal reform, reforms to the Constitution, reforms to the police, economic reform, recomposition of business class hegemony, accelerated restoration of the market, etc.... AID official thought that if they could show economic successes Sandinismo would sink into an irreversible political crisis, into a definitive retreat.*²

The post- peace accords Nicaraguan politics was characterised by intense political conflict within political elite over constitutional and institutional reform, resulting in frequent crisis and ad hoc policy-making which almost made the Chamorro presidency ineffective accompanied with rise in the level of corruption. This obviously indicates that Nicaragua is still not free from power games and self-interested politics of pre-Sandinista period. The second round of elections in 1996 could not bring the Sandinistas back and it brought another conservative candidate at the helm of Nicaraguan polity. Even though peace prevailed among the major political parties, Nicaragua was racked by increasing levels of criminal and gang-related violence.

All these points that signing of peace accords has not led to genuine accommodation and the internal contradictions in Nicaraguan polity are still alive and it can potentially renew all wounds. Moreover the internationally acclaimed gains in literacy and health care and the more equal distribution of wealth that had been achieved during the 1980s has been steadily negated. Therefore this raises concern on the sustainability of the peace ushered by the peace-building effort. The peace can be just termed as '*Contingent Peace*'. And '*Contingent Peace*' would mean a peace that is dependent on factors such as the complete implementation of the provision of the peace accords. For example, the rearmed dissatisfied ex-combatants have even united on the

² "USAID's strategy in Nicaragua", Envio, May, 1993, p. 23-25.

issue of non-implementation of land distribution a provision in the peace accords based on demobilisation.

Nonetheless, 'the Sandinista played a significant role in ensuring some measure of governability in postwar Nicaragua, supporting the reforming wing of the UNO government which replaced them against the far right. This tactical alliance with the Chamorro/Lacayo wing of the UNO government gave the Sandinista little influence over its policies and meant that they had to share some responsibility for the policies of privatisation and liberalisation which impacted most upon their poor supporters.'³

The economic reforms succeeded in reducing the inflation to 12 per cent in 1994 – 'a remarkable success', in the estimation of the World Bank.⁴ While the economic adjustment and liberalisation measures designed by the International Financial Institutions did help to restore fiscal balance and economic stability to Nicaragua, the social costs of these adjustments appeared to be significant. 'As the resident representative of the UN Development Program in Nicaragua, Carmelo Angulo, communicated to his colleagues in the International Monetary Fund in 1997, the internationally sponsored economic programs has not succeeded in correcting the social imbalances, but instead have served to aggravate the living conditions of the majority of the population'.⁵

Therefore the economic liberalisation and structural adjustment programs in Nicaragua, which were designed to create conditions for the development of a prosperous market economy in the long run, in the short run has worsened the living standards of ordinary people, especially the poor. Several commentators have criticised the government's economic liberalisation policies for exacerbating the social ills. So economic progress came at an unaffordable cost, the deregulation of the country's economy and austerity measures of the government deepened the distributional

³ G.Prevoist, "The Nicaraguan revolution: six years after Sandinista electoral defeat", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 307-27.

⁴ World Bank, "Trends in Developing Economies", 1996, Washington DC: World Bank, p. 367.

⁵ Migual, Szekely and Marianne, Hilgert, "The 1990s in Latin America: Another Decade of Persistent Inequality", Working Capital No. 410, Washington, D.C: Inter-American Bank, 1999, p. 34.

inequalities in Nicaraguan society and contributed to an absolute decline in living conditions for many Nicaraguans, especially the poorer section of the society. This has resulted in deepening of the economic inequalities, which historically precipitated revolutionary movements. Therefore if large-scale violence does recur in Nicaragua, then economic liberalisation policies-central components of the prevailing peace-building paradigm will likely be the reasons.

For instance, ‘in early 1995, for example, the unemployment rate was double that of 1990 and ten times that of 1984, due partly to the elimination of some 30,000 public sector non-military jobs from 1990 to 1994, and partly to the general economic contraction that was a side-effect of errors to control inflation in the early 1990’s.’⁶ Although economic growth resumed in the mid-1990s, the problem of unemployment and underemployment in Nicaragua improved little between 1994 and 1998, with roughly half of the country’s workers still unemployed or underemployed, according to government figures released in spring of 1998.⁷

Reduction in redistributive social spending and massive public sector layoffs-all part of the internationally mandated economic restructuring programme- also contributed generally to a widening of the gap in living conditions between rich and poor, even after the return of economic growth in the mid-1990s. Indeed, during 1992-1997, while Nicaraguan involved in the newly deregulated export and financial sectors generally prospered, overall per capita income in the country fell from US\$920 to US\$340, meaning that most of the country’s inhabitants became poorer.⁸

The question of land reform is another issue which would determine the success of the peace process. But so far this issue has remained contentious. The liberalisation and privatisation of the economy had its own repercussion on the front of land

⁶ Mario, Arana, “General Economic Policy”, cited in Thomas, W. Walker (ed.), “Nicaragua Without Illussions: Regime Transition and Structural Adjustment in the 1990s”, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997, p. 83.

⁷ Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Profile: Nicaragua, Honduras, 1999-2000, London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1999, p.21.

⁸ Mark, Everingham, “Neoliberalism in a New Democracy: Elite Politics and State Reform in Nicaragua”, *Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1998, p. 51.

distribution, an agenda covered by the peace accords. The process of privatisation of land in the post-1990 period includes two phenomena. The whole process of land distribution was done in a haphazard manner. Firstly, the return of unlawful confiscated land to former owners was done in a rather uncontrolled and in some cases violent manner. Secondly, most state-owned properties, were rapidly privatised after the UNO government took office. This means land distribution programme has sidelined the concerns of the poor.

The horizon of the peace accords was set quite close: the Chamorro government issued unrealisable promises to the ex-Contras until they disarmed; it then abandoned them in relative isolation. At the same time, the requirements of reconstruction worked in contradiction to the requirements of the structural adjustment by the unleashing of the market economy. In Nicaragua, the land grant programme encouraged the reproduction of wartime identities while discouraging civil protest and divided the contenders of land among themselves. Combined with the free market and the absence of countervailing pressures, the land grant program undid itself in ways that presage a resurgence of rebellion.⁹

The consequences of economic liberalisation has been in positive in some aspect but when taken note of its negative repercussions, it has also reinforced the polarisation of the Nicaraguan society. 'The situation was particularly grave in the countryside, where some observers estimated that as much as 80 percent of the economically active population was out of work.'¹⁰ Therefore it is evident that 'the international community's efforts in the post-conflict situation have failed to coordinate the agendas of economic restructuring, institutional reform, peace-building and reconstruction. The emphasis on deregulation and minimal state intervention has discouraged state and nation-building in countries where these have been historically weak.

⁹ Deena, I. Abu-Lughod, "Failed Buyout: Land Rights for Contra Veterans in Postwar Nicaragua", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Violence, Coercion, and Rights in the Americas. May, 2000, pp. 32-62.

¹⁰ Jon, Jonakin, "Agrarian Policy", in Thomas, W. Walker (ed.), "Nicaragua without Illusions: Regime Translation and Structural Adjustment in the 1990s", Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997, p. 106.

As Argentine political scientist Carlos Vilas writes, the post conflict economic liberalisation policies pursued in Nicaragua, including deregulation and reductions in social spending, have offered ‘the same old mode of development against whose effects peasants, workers and middle sectors rebelled more than twenty years ago, sparking a revolutionary cycle that is coming to a close only now.’¹¹

El Salvador

*El Salvador now faces a very real dilemma: should it sacrifice economic stabilisation to proceed with implementing the accords, or should it strictly carry out its stabilisation and structural adjustment program, perhaps endangering the peace? Neither path is independently sustainable. There is an overriding need to harmonise the two processes so that they can support rather than counteract each other.*¹²

The Chapultepec peace agreement comprised broadly plans of demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants into civilian life, legalisation of opposition parties, free and fair elections, limited land reform, investigation of alleged human rights abuses, retraining and the professionalisation of the judiciary and national police, establishment of civilian control over the armed forces, and reconstruction of physical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, schools and clinics among other things. In addition to setting out a vision for political and economic life in El Salvador, Chapultepec also provided the blueprint for the subsequent peace-building process.

Shortly after taking office the then Salvadoran President Alfredo Cristiani in mid-1989 implemented economic stabilisation and structural adjustment policies. It eliminated price controls, increasing water, electricity and transportation fees, and restructuring of the tax system. These processes were deepened in 1991 simultaneously with the peace process. Despite delays in implementing various aspects of the peace accords, El

¹¹ Carlos, M. Vilas, “A Painful Peace: El Salvador After the Accords”, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 28, No. 6, May/June, 1995, p.186.

¹² Alvaro, de Soto and G, del Castillo, “Obstacles to peace-building”, *Foreign Policy*, 1994, p. 71.

Salvador, like Nicaragua, is widely regarded as a peace-building success by the international community. 'The government's liberal economic policy appears to have yielded relatively high levels of growth and low level of inflation. El Salvador real GDP for example expanded at a yearly average of 6.0 percent from 1992 to 1996.¹³ For instance, 'a record of World Bank deemed a remarkable success story.'¹⁴

At first glance, then, the experience of El Salvador to date suggests that peace-building have managed to secure political stability and have promoted lasting peace. But, widespread structural adjustment policy has resulted in micro-economic difficulties which exacerbate the initial social and economic causes of the conflict. But, widespread structural adjustment policy has resulted in micro-economic difficulties which exacerbate the initial social and economic causes of the conflict.¹⁵ Economic liberalisation policies in short, appear to have worked against consolidation of a stable and lasting peace in El Salvador. Indeed, as living standard for the bulk of the population have stagnated, the incidence of violent and non-violent crime in El Salvador.

Underlying these facts, it can be argued that in El Salvador, economic liberalisation seems to be fueling political instability. Nevertheless, it is warned that the 'proclamation of as peace-building 'success' in El Salvador may be premature.'¹⁶ The system is troubled by renewed political and social unrest with apparent return of the death squads made up of disgruntled former combatants from both sides. This rising level of crime problem has also induced the government to respond in a manner that raises concerns about future of El Salvador's new liberal democratic constitution.

All these would entail a critical examination of the claims of successful peace-building operation in El Salvador. The economic liberalisation has had a disproportionate detrimental effect on the less affluent members of the society; particularly the rural poor

¹³ Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Profile: El Salvador, 1997-98", London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997, p. 76.

¹⁴ World Bank, "El Salvador: Meeting the Challenges of Globalization", Washington, DC: World Bank, 1996, p.1.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Alvaro, de Soto and Graciana, del Castillo. "Implementation of Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Staying the Course in El Salvador", *Global Governance*, Vol.1, No. 2, 1995, p. 189-203.

and urban working class as living conditions for the bulk of the population has not improved significantly. It has no doubt stimulated economic growth, but it has failed to do away with the underlying sources of conflict in the society. It is observed that the current combination of endemic poverty, widening income inequalities, and pervasive criminal violence, suggest that liberal economic policies have, in several important ways impeded rather than facilitated the consolidation of peace and also democracy in El Salvador. Moreover, there are indications that the newly constituted national police force is adopting measure methods considered harsh. This has created doubts about the sustainability of the peace or *contingent peace*.

The austerity measures have largely impaired the peace process in two ways. 'Firstly, limitations on public expenditure have prevented the government of El Salvador from fully funding its peace-building programs, such as effort to reintegrate former combatants into civil life and to rebuild war-damaged infrastructures.¹⁷ Secondly, spending cuts have undone painstaking efforts to reestablished social services, including public health and schooling and have apparently contributed to an increase in El Salvador's poverty rate, which many observers link to the spread of violent crimes and insecurity.¹⁸

While there have been improvements in the areas of health and education, post war economic growth has primarily enriched a very narrow segment of the population, including urban elite that originally made their money from coffee and sugar and are involved in a wider range of export and financial enterprises. 'Parts of the countryside, by contrast, such as the province of Morazan, remain stuck at human development levels similar to those of sub-Saharan Africa.'¹⁹ In short, the problem of rampant crime is not only a symptom of persisted poverty, unequal economic growth and social decay but

¹⁷ Alvaro, de Soto and Graciana, del Castillo, "Implementation of Comprehensive Peace Agreement: Staying the Course in El Salvador", *Global Governance*, Vol.1, No. 2, 1995, p. 189-203.

¹⁸ Elisah, Wood and Alexander, Segovia, "Macroeconomic Policy and the Salvadoran Peace Accords", *World Development*, Vol. 29, No. 12, 1995, p. 2085.

¹⁹ Roberto, Rivera Campos, "La Economía Salvadoreña al Final de Siglo: Desafíos para la futuro", San Salvador: FLACSO, 2000, pp. 220-221.

more recently a product of economic liberalisation which are conditions that would threaten the long-term political stability of the country.

It can be further argued, the process of structural adjustment programs has led to the widening gulf between the rich and the poor in post-war El Salvador. These policies which emphasized micro-economic stability and it have affected programs of poverty reduction. It dangerously relies heavily on market forces as a strategy for development. In the short run, this is hardly a measure to address the long standing grievances of the poor majority of the Salvadorans.

‘Economic liberalisation policies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank may be in part is blamed for the renewed unrest in El Salvador. Structural adjustment programs- which in David Plank’s words, ‘seek to restore balance to a government’s domestic and international accounts, and thereby put development on a sustainable footing, by devaluing the currency, liberalising prices, reducing trade barriers, eliminating subsidies, and limiting public sector employment and expenditure.’²⁰ As the structural adjustment program that soon followed the peace settlement required El Salvador to accommodate the priority of the World Bank and other international financial institutions and sideline the pressing social problems of the country.

The issue of land reform was undertaken in El Salvador. The Program of Land Transfer (PTT) that emerged as a critical foundation of the peace accord. Specifically, it explores the role the role of the PTT, its structure and its impacts on the lives of its beneficiaries and on the nation of El Salvador. To understand the PTT is to gain a better insight into the past and future of El Salvador’s agrarian reforms, rural development faces a bleak future in El Salvador.²¹ The Process of implementing the land transfers was extremely complicated, a situation exacerbated by the constant politicising of nearly all activities. In the course of the process many of the original Chapultepec Peace Accord

²⁰ James, H. Weaver, “What is Structural Adjustment” cited in Daniel M. Schydrowsky, (ed.), *Structural Adjustment Retrospect and Prospect*, 1995, p. 3-17.

²¹ Mc, Reynolds and Samuel, A. McReynolds, “Land Reforms in El Salvador and the Chapultepec Peace Accord”, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 30, No.1, October, 2002, pp. 135- 169.

were modified, changed or simply ignored. Moreover, since the accord did not specify many aspect of the process, new agreement needed to be reached.²²

The 1992 Peace Accords, signed by the Salvadoran government and the insurgent forces (FMLN), reiterated both landowners' and the government's obligation regarding the *excedentes*. This gave the peasant organisations a basis for renewing their demand for land reform. Furthermore, land hunger had not subsided in El Salvador. At the time of the peace accords, 52 percent of the population employed in agriculture was landless, a drop of only 8 percent relative to the pre-1980 agrarian structure. The landless and land-poor together made up 83 percent of the farming population.²³

Jamie Garcia, a Democratic Peasants Alliance (ADC) leader, who alluded to an imminent renewal of mass-based protest:

The peace accord has been positive in some way, but there can't be peace while poverty is increasing, the constitution is violated, prices are increasing, and workers are being fired. The government is taking advantage of the lull in the activism in order to push through economic policies it would not have dared to do during the war. It's evident that the social forces must recover. The period of demobilization is going to be short. The prospect of remobilisation is opening ... Peasants at the base may make their own decisions and there will be nothing the leaders can do to hold them back. Already some of them blame the leaders for restraining them. (Interviewed, September 1995).²⁴

In fact overall, the FMLN's concern for land and other redistributive reforms had been declining since before the Peace Accords. After all, not even the 12-years civil war that ended in 1992 which was waged largely in the name of hungry peasants, could transform these basic structures. Furthermore, the party left the *excedentes* out of the reduced agenda of essential Peace Accords items it drew up with the government in 1994,

²² Ibid, p.147.

²³ Martin, Diskin, "Distilled Conclusions: The disappearance of the Agrarian Question in El Salvador", *Latin America Research Review*, Vol.31, No.2, 1996, p.122-3.

²⁴ Lisa, Kowalchuk, "Peasant Struggle, Political Opportunities, and the Unfinished Agrarian Reform in El Salvador", *Canadian Journal of Sociology/ Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2003, p. 322.

an omission which irritated ADC leaders and was considered an error by UN personnel.²⁵ The influence of the U.N. mission in El Salvador was certainly not as significant in 1995-1997 as it has been in the years immediately following the Peace Accords. What had started in 1991 as an entity with over 1,200 personnel (the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, or ONUSAL) had by May 1996 been reduced to an organisation of six, called the United Nations Offices for Verification (ONUSV). Further more the decline in international funding for the peace process by 1995 meant there were few resources for implementing outstanding issues in the peace accords.

It is evident that land reform has been largely affected and it still remains as a torn which constantly hurts the peace process. Some observers claim that the questions of land reforms have disappeared. 'Nevertheless, largely through the commitments and diligence of several individual who worked in the UN offices, it was effective in keeping the land investigation process alive. Though the Peace Accords brought an end to horrendous levels of state violence of the 1970 and 1980s, the attempt to challenge or even question agrarian structure in El Salvador was politically sensitive in the mid-1990s.'²⁶ There are instances of repression on the section of society especially peasants who have been insisting on complete implementation of land distribution.

In overall, El Salvador has not been able to formulate policies which could sustain a just and equitable development. The Salvadoran elite and the national state has passed the burden of financing the peace process and developing policy initiatives associated with it largely to the international community, while it concentrated on the process of adjustment and renewed accumulation. The national government has left poverty, development and responsibility of reconstruction of the country at the mercy of targeted international interventions.

The social and economic element of the peace accords in El Salvador was specifically left out and as the general orientation of the government's economic policy

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 330-331.

²⁶ Lisa, Kowalchuk, "Peasant Struggle, Political Opportunities, and the Unfinished Agrarian Reform in El Salvador", *Canadian Journal of Sociology/ Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2003, p. 335.

promoted liberalisation of the economy. Therefore lack of a wider agrarian reform still remains a major obstacle to poverty reduction, leaving thousands of land-poor and land-hungry men and women struggling with fragile, insecure livelihood, unable to improve their health and develop literacy and other skills essential to human capital formation in a country in throes of modernisation. This means in El Salvador economic liberalisation and peace-building counteracted against one another more than it complemented as claimed by the promoters of these policies.

Guatemala

Guatemala was dominated by the traditional agro export oligarchy which remained deeply entrenched, and it control the state-which administered directly by the military for much of the 1980s. Unlike El Salvador, where the insurgency actually came to dispute the state power and constitute a dual power, Guatemalan insurgency did not threaten the state. But the movement continued indefinitely and it made almost impossible to pacify the countryside. The peace agreement of 1996 brought an end to this protracted conflict.

In the area of economics, the provision of the Guatemalan peace settlement differed strikingly from the economic measures of the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran peace settlements. Three major international donors- the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Bank- were in close communication with U.N. mediators during the negotiation of the Guatemalan accords, and apparently resolved to correct some of the problems that had arisen from the economic adjustment process in El Salvador and Nicaragua.²⁷ Specifically, they passed agreements on so-called socio-economic accord, which emphasized liberalisation and macroeconomic stabilisation but also committed the Guatemalan governments to increased levels of social welfare spending.

This sharp turn in the approaches of the IFIs has been credited to the lessons that the donor agencies drew from the experiences of El Salvador and Nicaragua where

²⁷ Susanne, Jones, "Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process", 2000, p.167.

traditional structural adjustment policies emphasized rapid movement towards fiscal balance, law and economic liberalisation, but at the expense of distributional equity. The financial institution now even admits that lasting peace would not be possible without a reduction in Guatemala's sharp social and economic inequities and regarded the country as a new approach to 'Post Conflict Sustainable Development' in the fragile circumstances of war shattered states.²⁸ In spite of this reorientation in negotiation of peace accords among the IFIs and the UN and admission of the need of increasing public spending on the part of the government, reality seems to point otherwise.

According to Susanne Jonas the Guatemalan Peace Accords of 1996 had serious shortcoming, it circumvented issues related to agrarian reforms and socio-economic transformation. 'The accords sidestep the issue of land reform, however contains no measures to create job or address the alarming rate of employment and underemployment, which in the 1990s was 66 percent.'²⁹ Moreover, there may be limited time to address these problems. Persistent poverty, unemployment and easy access to weapons have contributed to an upsurge in violent crimes in Guatemala since 1996, including soaring rates of kidnapping, theft and homicide.³⁰ In the country side, a major source of violence and insecurity is dispute over land ownership, which reflects the government's failure to carry out its commitments in the peace settlement to address the country's long standing land tenure problem- over 70 percent of the arable land is still owned by less than three percent of the population.³¹

As a result implementation of the many reforms as envisaged in the peace accords has lagged. This failure partly reflects the fact that the accords included few specific, verifiable commitments by the government. Instead, they delegated the formulation of detailed plans on dozens of issues to a burgeoning set of civil society's commissions with

²⁸ Susanne, Jones, "Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process", 2000, pp.168-174.

²⁹ Susanne, Jonas, "Democratization through Peace: The Difficult Case of Guatemala", *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Special Issue: Globalization and Democratization in Guatemala, 2000, p. 37.

³⁰ Susanne, Jonas, "The Peace Accords: An end and a Beginning", *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 30 No. 6, 1997, p. 9.

³¹ Andrew Reding, "Guatemala: Hardship Considerations", Washington. DC: United States Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 2000, p. 21.

stated objectives of creating opportunities for the citizens. But these commissions have also diluted responsibility of implementation by months or years. The IFIs called on the Guatemalan authorities to fulfill their commitments under the socio-economic accords, but their actions were not as strong as their words, and they compromised with the government, allowing it to implement these commitments more slowly and over a longer period.

It can be argued that the peace accords in 1996 set the basis for consolidation transnational elite project in Guatemala. In 1997 the National Action Party (PAN) government committed itself to deepen and consolidate a long-term program of neoliberal transformation first launched in 1989 with little success. The Guatemalan elite's resistance to even the most minimal reform (such as tax system) hardly creates the image of the transnational project as progressive and obscures the essential polarising and pauperising consequences of neoliberalism. The transnational elite have therefore tried to stabilise its project in Guatemala, not to democratise and develop the country.

The election of President Alvaro Arzu in the late 1995 reinforced the liberalising coalition. Arzu, who positioned himself as a representative of the modernising sector of the business community, narrowly defeated rival Alfonso Portillo of the conservative Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG). Arzu's party, the National Action Party (PAN), also won a slim majority of the seats in the legislature. With this somewhat shaky mandate, Arzu moved quickly to intensify negotiations with the URNG. He met with URNG leaders before his inauguration and appointed a former member of one of the revolutionary groups, Gustavo Porras, as the government lead negotiator. Porras proceeded to complete the remaining issues on the negotiation agenda in less than a year. The accords from this final years prior to the peace accords included such delicate issues as socio-economic redistribution and the 'agrarian situation' strengthening civilian authorities and diminishing that of the military , constitutional and electoral reforms , the calendar for implementation, and a final accord implementing the accords previously reached.

But the tardiness of process of implementation of the accords points that the elite lack sincerity. By promoting, global capitalism in Guatemala, the transnational elite no doubt is anti-oligarchic, but this should not obscure the fact that they have pushed the construction a neoliberal order in Guatemala. The peace accord has been put in service by the transnational elite to push forward its agenda. Therefore Implementation of the accords, a prerequisite for stability, sets the entire stage for restructuring the Guatemalan state and society, including relation among dominant groups and fractions, for the larger project of constructing a neoliberal order as a part and parcel of the transition.

Moreover this trend has disassociated Indian cultural and socio-economic issues. This has made even implementation of limited objectives of the accord elusive and superficial. No doubt, the accords contributed to democratisation and development. But this development should be seen from the prism of what was agreed on the paper and to what extent the proposed changes are actually implemented and by how much they have affected or benefited the poor majority.

As in Nicaragua and El Salvador, failure to address the underlying sources of recurrent revolutionary violence in Guatemala- including profound social and economic equalities- poses a serious threat to the durability of peace settlement. Indeed there is widespread agreement among observers of Guatemalan politics that ‘the question of development remains central to the overall equation of building peace in the country.’³² Unemployment rate remain high (estimated at over 40 percent), half the population earns less than a dollar a day, more than a quarter of children below five years are moderately to severely underweight, and almost 90 percent of the indigenous population lives below poverty line.³³ In the countryside, a major source of violence and insecurity is dispute over land ownership, which reflects the government failure to carry out its commitment

³² Christopher, Louise, “MINUGUAS’s Peace-Building Mandate in Western Guatemala”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 1997, p. 54.

³³ Andrew, Reding, “Guatemala: Hardship Consideration”, Washington, DC: United States Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 2000, p. 1.

in the peace settlement to address the country's long standing land tenure problem- over 70 percent of the arable land is still owned by less than three percent of the population.³⁴

Therefore the overriding imperatives of economic development and austerity measures thus employed have made the poor and popular classes finance reconstruction of post-conflict Guatemalan society. As the neoliberal model specifically precludes policies, such as agrarian reform and redistributive measures that could ameliorate current social conditions. This new model of capital accumulation under neoliberalism might result in renewed growth in the region but the process of social transformation to empower the poor majorities to improve their material and cultural conditions or even in more narrow terms of a sustainable expansion of productive forces seems likely to be compromised. Thereby would nullify the claims of successful peace-building operation of the country.

One possible way to improve government spending of public arena would be to increase taxes. But in practice, however 'conservative business interests in Guatemala, spearheaded by the Coordination Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations, has put pressure on the government not to increase taxation levels or reform the tax system to the detriment of welfare of citizens of Guatemala.'³⁵ In the face of this resistance, the government has delayed full implementation of these elements of the socio-economic accords. In 2001, a year after the ratio of taxes, the GDP supposed to have been raised to 12% in order to pay for new social standings, the tax rate was still only 9 ¾ percent of GDP, one of the lowest in Latin America.³⁶

The government in other words, was fulfilling its commitments to privatisation and fuller liberalisation of the economy, apparently because these policies serve the interest of the Guatemalan business elite, but the government was dragging its feet in executing elements of socio-economic elements of accords that were intended to even out

³⁴ *ibid*, 2000, p. 21.

³⁵ Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Profile: Guatemala, El Salvador 1999-2000", London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1999, p. 18.

³⁶ International Monetary Fund, "IMF Concludes Article IV Consultation with Guatemala", Public Information Notice no. 01/56, 25 May, 2001.

the asymmetrical benefits of marketisation and redistribute resources from the wealthy to the poor.

Moreover, Guatemala has not yet promulgated a comprehensive new agrarian code to supersede its weak and ineffective Ley de Transformacion Agraria of 1964. Nonetheless, the government pledged to attend the agrarian question in the various peace accords signed in the mid 1990s. In 1999 legislation was finally passed to create a new land bank, FONTIERRA, to coordinate subsidised financing for land acquisition by the population displaced by the civil war and other peasant groups³⁷ As the UN secretary-general reported in Mid-2000, Guatemala does not see the peace process as having brought about any major, tangible improvement in their lives.³⁸

II. Imperatives of Economic Growth and Distribution.

Central America was a spotlight of world attention from the 1960s into the 1990s and a major site of revolutionary challenge to international order. The appearance of guerilla movements, the breakdown of the prevailing agro-export economic model and the mounting civil strife in the 1960s ushered in a period of dramatic change. By the 1980s the region was engulfed in a general crisis: full scale civil wars of revolutionary insurgency and US-organised counterinsurgency, the collapse of the regional economy and the demise of dictatorial forms of political authority.³⁹ As the region experienced globalisation it has undergone transitions reciprocal to recent changes that have taken place in the global system, new set of problems has also appeared.

In Nicaragua this economic strategy has placed two obstacles in the path of a consolidated peace. Firstly, reduced state expenditures were involved with dismantling

³⁷ Carmen, Diana Deere; Magdalena Leon, "Institutional Reform of Agriculture under Neoliberalism: The Impact of the Women's and Indigenous Movements", *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 2, 2001, p. 33.

³⁸ A/55/174, 26 July, 2000.

³⁹ Fred, Halliday, "State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda", *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol.16, No. 2, 1987, p. 215-29.

the socialist political economy the FSLN had erected during the 1980s. The fiscal austerity policy pushed by the international community seems to have affected the process of national reconciliation. Secondly, the failure of the Chamorro government to provide the land, inputs, loans and other financial and development assistance as promised to the *Contras* in the Peace Accords was a direct result of pressures from international donors to curb spending. To put it simply funds were available to support the structural adjustment of the economy but not for the process of societal transformation. In such a climate of shrinking governmental public expenditure imposed by fiscal austerity measures, the *Contras* resorted to military actions in order to obtain material concession from the state. This issue if not addressed to its logical conclusion would mean undermining of peace and also problems for the process of democratic transition.

The international community did provide considerable financial resources to the Chamorro government, but these resources were not targeted toward programs that would help consolidate democracy and peace in Nicaragua. Instead the bulk of the assistance was contingent on the implementation of austerity plan to control the hyperinflation inherited from the Sandinistas. Most international funds went to service Nicaragua's debt, and little went to direct reconstruction projects.

For instance, it can be argued that in El Salvador it has weakened the peace process. Firstly, the inflexibility of the policies recommended by the IFIs has put the governments into a fiscal straitjacket. This had enormous impact at the beginning of the reconstruction process, as implementation of peace agreement called for generous spending in social sector on the part of the government which defied the logic of IFIs. No doubt it led to negative repercussions in the peace-building process as this hampered the land transfer program and led to reductions in public investment. Moreover, the distributional issues was sidelined which was one of the fundamental reasons for the origin of the conflict. Additionally, there was no pressure on the national government to increase its mobilisation of domestic resources as it compromised the rational of shifting

public spending towards short term programmes as outlined in the peace agreements, as well as the long term investment essential if peace has to be consolidated.

Conclusion

These vast and open-ended transformations should be seen as an evolving outcome to the struggle among social forces in Central America as collective agents in dialectical interaction with changes in the global system. But it would be a mistake to assume that the old agro-export oligarchy has been displaced from dominance by this emergent paradigm of globalisation. The pre-globalisation strategy of accumulation in Central America and elsewhere could not bring about sustained development due to its internal contradictions. It is true that the agro-export oligarchy were in the past able to block social and economic reform that could have generated a more authentic process of development. These interests for instance, in collusion with transnational capital distort the process of development. Therefore it is not a break with the earlier export-led model; it can be seen as a deepening of those models.

Of the three Central American cases, Nicaraguan case illustrates the limitations of international security guarantees and power sharing arrangements for the creation of enduring peace. The Salvadoran case presents the clearest example of how liberal social reconstruction can lead to civil war resolution. In Guatemala the situation is even more tenuous than in El Salvador. It is not clear to what extent the 1996 Peace Accords have contributed to democratisation and development in Guatemala. Those accords could, alternatively, actually end up legitimating the emergent neoliberal order by preventing fundamental change in the socio-economic system and delegitimizing the opponents of the system (dispossessed *campesino* squatters, for instance) would implicate the future with problems.

This means that postwar reconstruction is not only about economic liberalisation but creation of all the necessary conditions in the system to stimulate development which covers every section of the society. The post-conflict Central America in desperate need

of economic assistance found that these were increasingly conditional upon political as well as economic liberalisation.

The principal weakness of peace-building in Central America is that it failed to address the underlying sources of violence in the region. As a New York Times editorial in March 1999 commented: Central America's warring nations have essentially return to conditions of misery and inequality that caused the wars to begin with. While El Salvador has experience steady economic growth, poverty in rural areas remains unchanged. In Nicaragua the poor are worse off than at its war's end... Even the local governments admit that the free-market changes have so far mainly served the urban wealthy and middle class.⁴⁰ The process of political and economical liberalisation in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala provided an opportunity to the former belligerents to pursue their respective political objectives through peaceful means. But the effects of economic liberalisation largely have threatened to reignite conflicts and undermine democracy.

At best liberal internationalist approach to peace-building has generated unforeseen problems. At worse, peace-building missions have had the 'perverse effect' of undermining the very peace they were meant to buttress.⁴¹ It does not necessarily mean that these are the only reasons that have hampered meaningful peace-building operations. The conditions are complex with each case posing different challenges. But regardless of the peculiarities of each case, political and economic liberalisation has been employed as principal tool of peace-building. As discussed earlier it has limited positive outcomes and has more intractable tensions. The last chapter of this study would attempt to relate some of the existing peace-building theories with practical experience from Central America and it also would further problematise the issue and try to identify future scope for research.

⁴⁰ Unsigned Editorial, 'Peace and Poverty in Central America', New York Time, 11 March.1999.

⁴¹ Albert, O. Hirschman, "Reactionary Rhetoric", *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 263, No. 5, 1989 p. 63-70.

CHAPTER V

A Critique of Peace-Building in Central America

Introduction

Peace-Building by the international community became a widely acceptable as a phenomenon especially after the end of the Cold War. The end of the ideological confrontation between the East and the West was soon followed by conflagration of civil conflicts which engulfed Bosnia, Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Congo, Mozambique, Rwanda, Cambodia, El Salvador and Guatemala etc. We have defined peace-building earlier but we shall refresh it again. In the words of former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, peace-building missions seek ‘to identify and support structures which will then to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.’¹

Since then, peace-building has become a catcall concept, encompassing multiple (and at times contradictory) perspectives and agenda. It is indiscriminately used to refer to preventive diplomacy, preventive development, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Currently, the concept is widely used in the UN and among private voluntary organisations. Peace-building is understood as an attempt after a peace has been negotiated or imposed, to remove sources of contentions and build local capacities for conflict resolution. It also seek to strengthen state institutions, broader political participation, land reforms, a deepening of civil society, and respect for ethnic identities as measures to improve the prospect for peaceful governance. The aim of peace-building thereby is to foster development in the social, economic, and political institutions and to inculcate attitudes of peaceful change.

¹ Roland, Paris, “Peace-Building and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism”, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1997, p. 55.

According to Kenneth, 'the principal aim of peace-building is to prevent violent civil conflict from reigniting after fighting has stopped.'² Therefore, peace-building in broad sense can be defined as a process of producing the necessary conditions for securing development in both political and economical term essentially with the consent of the national government. Thus, objectives of peace-building would be, creation of a stable legitimate government to overlook the progression of the society, at the same time to prevent a relapse to violence, backed by coercive power of state in a society that have just emerged out from violence.

Thereby defining what constitutes peace-building mandate is not easy in these circumstances. And there is every chance of contradictions in their approaches. These are problematised in this chapter with exploration of some possible alternatives to deal with these complex questions as concluding remarks of this study.

I. Some Major Theoretical Concepts in Peace-Building.

There has been a rapid increase in academic literature on peace operation and this has created wide range of theories of different orientations in other words, in spite of being a recent phenomena peace study does not lack in theory. But what is missing from these literatures, rather, is a serious effort to engage the central theoretical debates with the wider context of international relations. 'To date, most studies of peace operations have focused on the design, conduct, and outcome of the operations, while paying relatively little attention to the broader implications of peace missions for our understanding of international politics.'³

Experts have identified basically two approaches to the study of peace operations. Firstly, the 'micro' approaches and it focuses on identifying the circumstances in which peace operations are more or less likely to succeed. Secondly, the 'macro' approaches

² Kenneth, D. Bush, "Beyond Bungee Cord Humanitarianism: Towards a Developmental Agenda for Peacebuilding", *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Special issue, 1996, pp.75-92.

³ Cindy Collins and Thomas G. Weiss, "An Overview and Assessment of 1989-1996 Peace Operations Publications", Providence, R. I.: Watson Institute, Watson Institute Occasional Paper, No.28, 1997, p.13.

primarily revolves around issues to gain a better understanding of these operations as products of the international system. The study of peace operation is said, has generated a great deal of microtheory but very little macrotheory.

There are exceptions to this rule. Michael Barnett, for example, traces the relation between the shifting character on UN peacekeeping and changing ideas about international order- an analysis that emphasises the importance of constitutive norms in world politics and builds directly upon the ‘international society’ approach to IR theory.⁴ While William Robinson, uses a neo-Gramscian framework to make the case that peacekeeping in Nicaragua and Haiti involved the incorporation of these countries into the fundamentally unequal structure of the global political-economic system.⁵

William Stanley and Mark Paceny, by contrast, draw upon the neoliberal and constructivist theory to explain the effects of international peacekeeping operations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. They argue that neoliberalism elucidates the role that international institutions play in facilitating cooperation among the formally warring groups, while constructivist explains how domestic actors in these countries ‘internalised’ the liberal norms promulgated by international agencies.⁶ Whereas Francois Debrix takes a postmodern view of these operations, arguing that the visual symbols and the rhetoric of peacekeeping profoundly shape our understanding of both the local situations and international context in which such operation take place.⁷

In spite of these myriad theoretical perspectives which are quite sanguine and potentially are capable of proving an analytical framework to understand peace-building operations, there is more or less a general consensus among scholars of peace operations studies that the linkage between peace operations and the structures of the international

⁴ Michael, N. Barnett, “The New United Nations Politics of Peace: From Juridical Sovereignty to Empirical Sovereignty” *Global Governance*, Vol. 1, No. 1 1995, pp. 79-97.

⁵ William, I Robinson, “A Case Study of Globalisation Processes in the Third World: A Transnational Agenda in Nicaragua”, *Global Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1997, pp. 61-91.

⁶ William, Stanley and Mark, Paceny, ‘Liberal Social Reconstruction and Resolution of Civil Wars in Central America’, *International Organisations*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Winter, 2001, pp. 149-182.

⁷ Francois, Debrix, Re- Envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilisation of Ideology, pp 55-70.

system largely remain underdeveloped and is yet to be explored. In this section we would try to relate some of these existing theoretical frameworks and also attempt to establish which of these would be more apt in explaining the Central American case.

II. Drawbacks and Limitations of Liberal Internationalist Peace-Building.

The current method of peace-building has been guided by a single paradigm widely known as liberal internationalism. It is true that ‘there is no universally accepted definition of Liberal Internationalism. The concept contains two elements: liberalism and internationalism. The essence of liberalism, writes Stanley Hoffman, is ‘the protection of individual freedom, reduction of state power, and the conviction that power is legitimate only if it is based on consent and respect of basic freedoms’⁸ The central tenet of this paradigm is the assumption that peace could be realised, both within and between states with market democracy, that is, a liberal democratic polity and a market oriented economy. In fact, peace-building is in effect an enormous experiment in social engineering- an experiment that involves transplanting Western models of social, political and economic organisations into war shattered states in order to control civil conflict: in other words, pacification through political and economic liberalisation.⁹

It is argued that the principal flaw in the current approach to peace-building is the extrapolation Liberal Internationalist paradigm. This paradigm advocates prescription of market democracy as a solution for civil conflicts without adequately assessing and anticipating, or taking actions to limit the inherently destabilising side effects of the remedy. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the ground realities is needed before any prescription is implemented as policy measures to secure peace. In spite many similarities the Central American indicates distinctiveness and we shall discussed this below. Therefore it is obvious that we cannot have a standard solution for all situations as every

⁸ Stanley, Hoffman, “The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism”, *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 98, 1995, p. 160.

⁹ Roland, Paris, “Peace-Building and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism”, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1997, p. 56.

situation has its own uniqueness demands unique approach. This means policy measures have to be moderated according to the needs and particularities of the given case.

The modernisation theory of the 1950s and 1960s was based on the belief that the natural evolution, once initiated, is a self-perpetuating process and essentially progressive. In this sense, contemporary peace-building operations seem to be caught in a trap of its own design. Therefore it argued that a more realistic approach to peace-building operations would start from the opposite assumption: that creating a stable market democracy is a tumultuous, conflict-ridden and a lengthy process, particularly in a fragile polarized political environment of a war-shattered state.

Peace-building exposes the inherent conflicting character of democracy and capitalism, both of which paradoxically encourage societal competition as a means of achieving political stability and economic prosperity. The polarising after-effect of civil war makes management of societal competition induced by political and economic liberalisation not only difficult but potentially dangerous. Moreover, these states suffer from weak institutional structures which could not coordinate and handle the challenges posed by the transition. Therefore in such an environment, a hasty imposition of free model of development and democracy can serve to exacerbate rather than moderate societal conflicts which could potentially turn the societal conflicts into overt violence.

Therefore peace-building operations are full of complexities if not handled sensitively could overwhelm the actors. On top of the lack of firm commitment on implementation of the peace accords on part of the elites who dominate the national government, international agency also has its own baggage of flaws and weaknesses which makes the peace-building process cumbersome. Refer to the discussions in earlier section.

III. Lessons from Central American Experience.

‘The Central American case is illuminating because it is the first systematic international effort at peace building after civil war and considerable resources and creativity has been invested in the process’.¹⁰ The definition of peace-building that has been employed in this study would call for an overhaul of the entire system to remove all the factors which prevents the institutionalisation of peace. Additionally, in Central American conditions, a substantive land reform and institutional development to promote democracy would facilitate speedy progress of the reconstruction process as it was one of the principle reasons of the revolutions. But promotion of democracy and peace-building at the same times especially in fragile post-revolutionary environment runs into each other with contradictory implications this has been discussed earlier in detail in the section: peace-building and democratic transition.

Expert opines that ‘the Central American cases suggest that the transmission of liberal norms occurs in three phases. In the first phase, local actors adopt liberal practices as part of tactical efforts to legitimise themselves to the international community. Initially for show, these practices over time become institutionalised. In the second phase, the internationally mediated negotiations that led to peace accords demonstrate to combatants that their adversaries have changed their preferences and can be trusted to forgo violence and follow political rules established under the accords. Finally, in the wake of peace settlements, the U.N. and international actors engaged in concrete and direct efforts to support liberal social reconstruction. In this phase international actors worked to deepen the commitment to liberal ideals and institutions within the states and attempted to extent an elite commitment to liberal norms to the society as a whole.’¹¹

The state survived the Central American conflicts, but so did the power of the conservative elites; the rise of modernising elite has encouraged to embrace the neoliberal

¹⁰ Jenny, Pearce, “Peace-Building, Lessons from Central America”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1999, p. 55.

¹¹ Mark, Paceny and William Stanley, “Liberal Social Reconstruction of Civil Wars in Central America”, *International Organisations*, Vol. 1, 2000, p. 151

agendas promoted by the international financial community, but there has been no commensurate domestic commitment to democratisation of building effective and representative state institutions. Global economic imperatives have reduced any incentive to devote resources to state – and nation-building or even to the recovery of the marginal of each country which bore the brunt of the war.¹²

Therefore, ‘democracy’ one of the components of peace-building process is yet to function smoothly. It has been more than 15, 13 and 9 years since the peace settlement in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala were signed respectively. The UN has acknowledged that peace-building operations in Central America have been a successful effort by the international community. In fact, there is no doubt that the UN brokered peace settlement led to cessation of violence. But the larger question of effectiveness of peace-building operations is still remains unclear. The twin agenda of installation of democracy and ideology of free market as tools to consolidate peace has started to show signs of faltering. The rapid liberalisation of the economy, besides growth has left trails of negative repercussions as has been discussed earlier. The process of democratic transition seems to be happening in an indefinite time frame. These democracies can be called as ‘*democracy in a state of ever transition*’.

The people of the region have to take the responsibility for this state of affairs. Because, they have failed to incorporate the democratic norms and have been found not fit enough to adapt the agenda of neoliberalism in an equitable manner. Or were there flaws in the process of peace–building itself. It would be too extreme to put all the blame on the peace–building process itself but it would not be unreasonable to question the logical premise of employing democracy and free market as tools of achieving peace. In post-conflict situation, polarisation in the society still remains potent and both democracy and free market would augur competition as it is essentially competitive in nature. And it is doubtful whether this approach could stem polarisation of the society as electoral politics may well aggravate this fissure. Is there an alternative? The answer is no, at least

¹² Jenny, Pearce, “Peace-Building, Lessons from Central America”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No.1 1999, p. 56.

not within the current international structures. This means peace-building operations are circumscribed by the limits set by the international structure. What is the way out of this conundrum? One way would be to improve the peace-building process by making it more sensitive to the needs and requirements of the particular conflict.

This brings right back to the second approach i.e. macro approach: these operations as products of the international system. The recent involvement of the international community in peace-building operations in other parts of the globe has largely failed. The international community's efforts have not yielded favorable results in this direction as indicated by the problems faced by the UN in the Bosnia, especially where UN was reduced to a mute spectator. The African cases are even trickier; the UN has been stalled in participating in the peace-building operations due to limitations in the mandate. In Somalia, the UN withdrew after a dismal failure. This has seriously harmed the credibility of UN's competence in peace-building operations. In Congo, the UN is caught in the neutrality dilemma. It is even argued that the international community has become increasingly reluctant to commit armed troops to assist resolution of civil wars. And instead, international actors have increasingly relied on the promotion of liberal democratic institutions to resolve such conflicts. This shows that the international community have not learned much from the Central American cases. Therefore, the question arises whether the international community has failed to take cue from the Central America peace-building operations.

The Central American experience is treated as evidence of intervention by international community that can lead to a successful resolution of civil war. But, the assessment of the current state of democratic transition and economic progress belies this proposition. The UN in spite of involving itself for the first time was in the best circumstances to successfully carry out the operations, failed to coordinate the peace-building efforts. The end of cold war witnessed the expansion of UN's role in conflict resolutions. And this would again validate the macro approach: understanding of these operations as products of the international system. In fact UN had the opportunity to handle the process of peace-building and thereby setting precedence. Even though, UN's

ability to consolidate peace-building operations saw a progressive expansion of agendas in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala respectively. But this opportunity was lost and the current international scenario have become less favorable for conducting successful peace-building operations as nation-states have become reluctant to commit troops in peace-building efforts.

The increased number of actors in the peace-building operations led to serious problem of coordination in Central America. There was lack of communication between the IFIs and the UN, who were expected to play a key role in the whole process. This scenario was made even more complex by addition of both local and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Though this is not detrimental but it leads to a chaotic situation resulting in misleading the peace process. The Central American case indeed faced serious issues of coordination.

For instance, the lack of smooth cooperation among the economic policy-making institutions, notably the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Inter-American Development Bank and the humanitarian organisations, i.e. the UN had prevented discussions on modalities of budget cuts and trade liberalisation. This has affected the peace-building process at large, in the fragile war-torn society. Further, it resulted in sidelining of critical issues such as land reforms envisaged in the peace agreements. So, subsequent peace-building operations had to find new ways to tackle this problem.

Conclusion

The international community has failed in its attempts to rein in the conflicting parties to deliver the commitments they have made in the peace accords. As a consequence, the promise of bringing about a responsive political setup has floundered. Strengthening of institutional governance at all levels is an essential element in peace-building. Yet, international projects intended to reform justice systems that are defunct, corrupt, and politised have failed. The attempts to replace corrupt and over-centralised

public administration with transparent and responsive structures often have little to show as achievements.

So far the contradictions in the peace-building efforts through the paradigm of Liberal Internationalism have been exposed. This calls for novel approaches and efforts to undertake peace-building operations. The inconsistencies in the current method can be moderated by sequencing the process of economic liberalisation on the basis of priorities that accommodate the concerns of the marginalised section in the society. The means to convince the elite in a post-conflict society to finance peace-building operations have to be found. This situation arises as the dependence on international funding is not sustainable in the long run. But this is completely dependent of the good will of the elite. Therefore, in order to involve the elite in the funding efforts, their interests have to be accommodated in running the governments.

Therefore instead of immediate installation of democracy, an effective power sharing arrangement can be made. But power sharing arrangement could lead to a power tussle which could paralyse the government. One possible way out of this could be overseeing of complete implementation of peace accords by the international community. But a complete control of the process of governance by international community would compromise the sovereignty of the country. This would result in a stalemate.

In this scenario future course of research in this area may take multiple directions. Essentially peace-building operations are conducted by the international community. Despite all constrains, some self-made and some imposed by the international structures, UN still remains in a best possible position to carry out peace-building operations. This would require a clear mandate on the part of the international community to augment the capability of UN to deal with the issue. As a result, the question about the strengthening of the UN has to be pursued. However, the UN has to operate within the constrains imposed by the international structure. This demands a thorough exploration of the constraints imposed by the international structure. This could in turn open up avenues for

further research mainly in theoretical dimension. At this juncture, finding an effective peace-building method is like searching a needle in a hay stock.

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