CRISE: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity

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# Racism, Violence, and Inequality: An Overview of the Guatemalan Case

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## Abstract

This working paper was written for the first CRISE Latin American team meeting held in Lima in June 2004. The meeting provided an arena for presenting our case studies (Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia) and setting up our research agendas. This paper was designed as a broad general introduction to the 'Guatemalan case' for the purpose of research on ethnicity, horizontal inequalities and conflict. This 'background paper' attempts to provide a general overview of the issues of conflict and ethnicity in Guatemala.

CRISE research in Peru, Bolivia and Guatemala, focuses primarily on the indigenous/non-indigenous divide. In a first instance, this paper sets out to examine the emergence and evolution of Guatemala's key ethnic categories, highlighting a much greater ethnic diversity than a simple binary (indigenous/non indigenous) approach would suggest in a first place. Yet, whilst acknowledging Guatemala's ethnic diversity, pertaining to an indigenous or non-indigenous group in Guatemala remains an important phenomenon with important social, economic, political and cultural consequences. In a second instance, this paper traces out the general history and nature of inter-actions between indigenous and Ladino groups. Furthermore, this paper introduces some of the key debates surrounding the question of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations in Guatemala, notably those regarding the definitions and evaluations of the various populations which constitute Guatemala.

The latter sections of the paper provide a general review of Guatemala's armed conflict (1960-1996) examining its emergence, resolution and aftermath. Providing a general overview of the conflict allows us to map out the nature of violence and repression in Guatemala. This paper identifies the 1976-1985 period as being of particular relevance for CRISE research. Most of the conflict's casualties occurred during this period with indigenous people accounting for over 80% of the victims of violence. This paper summarises and reviews the main forms of violence and repression that were perpetrated against the indigenous victims of the conflict, leading to the conclusion that there was an 'ethnicisation' of violence in Guatemala.

Finally, to conclude our general overview of the Guatemalan case, the last sections of this paper review and evaluate the Guatemalan peace accords, paying particular attention to the agreement on indigenous rights.

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## Acronyms and Foreign Language Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| *Acción Catolica* | Catholic Action Network |
| *ACPD* | Asamblea Consultiva de las Poblaciones Desarraigadas |
| *AEU* | Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios |
| *AIDPI* | Acuerdo sobre la Identidad y los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas |
| *ALMG* | Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala |
| *ANC* | Asociación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas |
| *ANN* | Alianza Nueva Nación |
| *APM* | Asamblea Permanente del Pueblo Maya |
| *CACIF* | Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras |
| *CALDH* | Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos |
| *Campesinos* | Peasants |
| *Caudillos* | Overlords |
| *CCDA* | Comité Campesino del Altiplano |
| *CCPP* | Comisiones Permanentes de Refugiados |
| *CDHG* | Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala |
| *CEH* | Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico – The UN sponsored Guatemalan Truth Commission |
| *CERIGUA* | Centro Exterior de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala |
| *CERJ* | Consejo de Comunidades Etnicas - Runujel Junam |
| *CIA* | Central Intelligence Agency |
| *CLOC* | Congreso Latinoamericano de Organizaciones del Campo |
| *CNOC* | Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas |
| *CNPs* | Comisiones Nacionales Permanentes |
| *CNR* | Comisión Nacional de Reconciliación |
| *COCADI* | Coordinadora Cackchiquel para el Desarollo Indígena |
| *COCEI* | Coalición de Obreros y Campesinos del Istmo |
| *COCIPAZ* | Coordinadora Civil por la Paz |
| *COMG* | Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala |
| *Comisionados militares* | Civilians with links to the Guatemalan military |
| *Comisiones partidarias* | Joint commissions |
| *COMS* | Coordinación de Organizaciones Mayas de Sololá |
| *CONADEHGUA* | Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala |
| *CONAGRO* | Coordinadora Nacional Agropecuaria |
| *CONAMPRO* | Coordinadora Nacional de Pequeños y Medianos Productores |
| *CONAVIGUA* | Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala |
| *CONDEG* | Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala |
| *CONFECOOP* | Confederación Guatemalteca de Confederaciónes Cooperativas |
| *CONFREGUA* | Conferencia de Religiosos de Guatemala |
| *CONIC* | Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina |
| *CONTIERRA* | Oficina Presidencial para Asistencia Legal y Resolución de Conflictos de la Tierra |
| *COPAZ* | Comisión Gubernamental para la Paz |
| *COPAZ* | Comisión Presidencial de la Paz |

| | |
|---|---|
| *COPMAGUA* | Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala |
| *COPREDEH* | Comisión Presidencial de Derechos Humanos |
| *CPR* | Comunidades de Población en Resistencia |
| *Criollo* | Guatemalans of white European descent |
| *CSC* | Coordinadora de Sectores Civiles |
| *CSJ* | Corte Suprema de Justicia |
| *CTC* | Central de Trabajadores del Campo |
| *CUC* | Comité de Unidad Campesina – the first United Peasants Movement |
| *CUSG* | Confederación de Unidad Sindical de Guatemala |
| *CVDC* | Comités Voluntarios de Defensa Civil |
| *DCG* | Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca |
| *EGP* | Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres |
| *EIU* | Economist Intelligence Unit |
| *EMP* | Estado Mayor Presidencial – The Presidential High Command |
| *EU* | European Union |
| *FAMDEGUA* | Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos de Guatemala |
| *FAR* | Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes – Rebel Armed Forces |
| *FDNG* | Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala |
| *FEDECAMPO* | Federación Campesina y Popular |
| *FESOC* | Federación Sindical, Obrera y Campesina |
| *FM* | Foro Multi-Sectorial |
| *FMM* | Fundación Myrna Mack |
| *FMS* | Foro Multi-Sectorial Social |
| *FONAPAZ* | Fondo Nacional para la Paz |
| *FONATIERRA* | Fondo Nacional para la Tierra |
| *FRG* | Frente Republicano Guatemalteco |
| *G-2* | Inteligencia Militar |
| *GAM* | Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo |
| *GPP* | *Guerra Popular Prolongada* - Prolonged popular war |
| *Haciendas* | Farms |
| *IAHRC* | Inter-American Human Rights Court |
| *ILO* | International Labour Organisation |
| *IMF* | International Monetary Fund |
| *INC* | Instancia Nacional de Consenso |
| *INTA* | Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria |
| *IUCM* | Instancia de Unidad y Consenso Maya |
| *maquila* sector | Free-trade assembly and re-export zones |
| *MAS* | Movimiento de Acción Solidaria |
| *Meztizos* | Guatemalans of mixed Spanish and Indian parentage |
| *MINUGUA* | Misión de Naciones Unidas para la Verificación de los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala |
| *MLN* | Movimiento de Liberación Nacional – the National Liberation Movement |
| *MP* | Ministerio Público |
| *OAS* | Organisation of American States |
| *ODHA* | Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado |
| *ORPA* | Organización del Pueblo en Armas |

| | |
|---|---|
| *PACS* | Patrullas de la Autodefensa Civil – The self-defence civillian patrols |
| *PAN* | Partido de Avanzada Nacional |
| *PDH* | Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos |
| *PGT* | Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores – The Communist Party |
| *PMA* | Policía Militar Ambulante |
| *PN* | Policía Nacional |
| *PNC* | Policía Nacional Civil |
| *PNUD* | Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo |
| Policía Nacional | National police |
| *REMHI* | Proyecto Interdiocesano, Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica |
| *RUOG* | Representación Unitaria de la Oposición Guatemalteca |
| *S-5* | Military-Civilian Affairs Unit |
| *SEGEPLAN* | Secretaría General de Planificacón Económica |
| *TSE* | Tribunal Supremo Electoral |
| *UASP* | Unión de Acción Sindical y Popular |
| *UCN* | Unión del Centro Nacional |
| *UN* | United Nations |
| *UNAGRO* | Unión Nacional de Agricultores |
| *UNSITRAGUA* | Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala |
| *URNG* | Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca – the umbrella organisation which signed the Peace Accord in 1996, made up of PGT, ORPA, FAR and EGT. |
| *USAC* | Universidad de San Carlos – San Carlos University |
| *USAID* | United States Agency for International Development |
| *Usos y costumbres* | Customary law |

# Racism, Violence, and Inequality: An Overview of the Guatemalan Case

**By Corinne Caumartin**[1]

## 1. Introduction

This working paper introduces the case of Guatemala for CRISE[2] research on ethnicity, horizontal inequalities, and conflict. Guatemala experienced one of the longest running armed conflicts of the Americas, lasting between 1962 and 1996 when Peace Accords were signed between the umbrella guerrilla group URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) and the Guatemalan government. The ethnic undercurrents of the conflict were exposed by the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), the UN sponsored Guatemalan Truth Commission which established that the state carried out acts of genocide against the Mayan population during the course of the war.[3]

The main objectives of this working paper are to provide an overview of ethnicity, and interethnic relations in Guatemala as well as to map out the conflict. Since this paper reviews close to 180 years of history, a 36 years civil war and a peace process that involved 9 years of negotiations, it is clearly impossible to do justice to all these themes. Thus, this paper is designed as a preliminary step in CRISE research, to signal some main themes for discussion and comparative analysis, rather than as a comprehensive and definitive account of the (numerous) events and issues under consideration.

In Section 2 of this paper we examine a group of issues relating to ethnicity. First we define the main ethnic groups of Guatemala: the *ladino* and the indigenous. Second, we examine some of the issues and debates relating to the population census. In the final part of this section, we examine inter-ethnic relations and the consolidation of the *ladino*/indigenous divide in Guatemala since 1821.

In Section 3 of this paper we examine the origins of the Guatemalan civil war, where we identify the historical, domestic, and international factors that contributed to the emergence of armed conflict.

In Section 4, we examine the period of Civil War, focusing on the nature of violence, the actors involved and the changing nature of counterinsurgency campaigns. Some of the consequences of violence for inter-ethnic relations and ethnicity are also summarised in this section.

In the final section of this paper, we examine the Guatemalan Peace process, including the negotiation, content and implementation of the Accords.

## 2. Ethnic Identity in Contemporary Guatemala

Defining ethnicity and ethnic identity is a complex undertaking, which has long been debated in ethnology and anthropology (Assies, Haar and Hoekema 2000). The approach adopted here follows CRISE's general approach which is to understand

[1] This working paper was prepared for a CRISE workshop held in Lima from 30th June-2nd July 2004
[2] Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security, and Ethnicity – CRISE, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, www.crise.ox.ac.uk
[3] Genocide, as defined by the UN general assembly, 9th December 1948, CEH Volume one (1999).

ethnicity as a social construct rather than in a 'primordial' sense.[4] In most societies, ethnic identity is a phenomenon that involves a degree of self identification and ascription by other groups (Sieder 2002:2). Furthermore, the criteria and markers that signal and/or define identity tend to change over time. Aiming to determine the exact nature of ethnic groups and identifying with precision the boundaries between groups is thus a thankless task, especially when boundaries are contested, blurred, and fluid. However, our approach to examining and defining ethnic groups is driven by the occurrence of conflicts. Thus, what concerns us here is to identify groups involved in conflicts and gain a sense of how the identities of each of the main groups were constructed and changed over the course of the last 180 years in Guatemala.

The two key groups in Guatemala are the indigenous and the *ladinos*. It must be signalled however, that to conceive of Guatemala's ethnic make up simply in indigenous and *ladino* terms is deeply misleading. This is a common practice regarded as legitimate by some in Guatemala and abroad: the CIA World Fact Book for instance, only lists these two main categories in its Guatemala country profile.[5] Contemporary official categorisations in Guatemala contemplate at least four distinct groups: Mayan/Indigenous, Ladinos, Garifunas and Xinca but the two later ones comprises only few people.[6] Guatemala's ethnic make up is diverse, and both the indigenous and *ladino* categories are a composite of various sub-ethnic groups. Furthermore, there is a degree of fluidity between these two key ethnic groups of Guatemala. Under certain circumstances, an individual can be born indigenous and 'become' a *ladino* during the course of his or her life.

### *2.1 Indigenous Identity*

How to conceive of and define indigenous peoples has been the source of controversy, with some approaches focusing on modes of political or economic organisations and others on strictly cultural aspects (Assies, Haar and Hoekema 2000). All these approaches can be problematic as they tend to reflect a conception of indigenous peoples bound to certain 'traditional' lifestyles and modes of production which become deeply unsatisfactory when indigenous people move away from such 'traditional' spheres and still claim indigenous identity (ibid). José Martinez Cobo, Special Rapporteur for the UN Commission on Human Rights formulated an often quoted definition of what constitutes an indigenous people:

> "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the society now prevailing in those territories or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural pattern, social institutions and legal systems.
>
> Martinéz Cobo, cited in (Assies, Haar and Hoekema 2000:5)

[4] For a good summary of the theoretical debates surrounding ethnicity, see Donna Lee Van Cott, (2000) *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past : The Politics of Diversity in Latin America*, Pitt Latin American Series Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press

[5] CIA, (2004) *World Fact Book*, Available: http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gt.html, 2 April 2004.

[6] Guatemala population Census 2002, Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

Arguably, the latter part of the statement on the 'transmitting' of ancestral territory seems to relate more to the demands articulated by organised indigenous groups, rather than to specific features of what constitutes indigenous peoples. Nonetheless, Cobo's approach identifies fundamental aspects of contemporary indigenous identity: the notions of shared history and continuity with pre-colonial times. The indigenous peoples of Guatemala are descended from aboriginal populations at the time of the Spanish conquest, specifically those groups descended from the Mayan civilisation and Xinca peoples.[7] The 'non-dominant' nature of indigenous groups is also disputable, but it is a notion that is used with increased frequency. For instance, the black Garifuna communities of Guatemala are often considered as belonging to 'indigenous' groups (CEH 1999c).[8] In this case, it appears that it is the non-white and non-dominant status of Garifunas that plays a role in the ascription of identity.

The task of finding 'objective' criteria that permit one to identify indigenous people has long preoccupied researchers and census authorities alike. It is important to give consideration to two key traditional cultural markers of identity in Guatemala, wearing indigenous clothing and speaking indigenous languages (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003: 62). These two markers have long been used for the ascription of ethnic identity, not in the least by population census officials.[9] To a degree these two attributes are still strong markers of identity, in the sense that individuals wearing traditional indigenous clothing and those whose first language is an indigenous language will frequently self-identify as indigenous. However, the reverse is not true and individuals who have ceased to speak indigenous languages, or who no longer wear traditional clothing may still self-identify as indigenous. Table 1 which was elaborated by Adams, R. and Bastos (2003: 439) on the basis of the 1994 census clearly shows this trend. Fewer and fewer indigenous people (especially men) wear traditional indigenous clothing on a daily basis, not in the least because of the expense incurred in purchasing such items of clothing. Similarly, languages are important for indigenous cultural identity but the loss of indigenous language does not necessarily lead to a loss of indigenous identity. This is especially true for the eastern and coastal regions of Guatemala, where indigenous languages have been disappearing but communities still self-identify as indigenous (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003: 76-80).[10] According to figures provided by Adams, R. and Bastos (2003: 79), the 1994 population census indicates that 28.65% of the total indigenous population is monolingual in Spanish (that is, no longer speaks an indigenous language). Table 1 summarises these findings:

[7] The National Census in 1994 recorded 337,733 Xinca people.

[8] In the detailed census, Garifunas have their own category. However, there is a host of material available that only uses the Indigenous/*Ladino* categories. In these cases, Garifunas tend to be considered indigenous (see for instance the 2000 Household Survey ENCOVI). Indigenous groups and movements seem to be accepting this approach/definition, but Garifunas' views on the matter are as yet unrecorded.

[9] The definition of ethnicity was left to census officials, overwhelmingly '*ladino*s' until the 1994 census where self definition was supposedly adopted. It is unclear whether in practice census officials currently respect the norm of self definition of ethnicity or whether ascription still takes place (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003).

[10] This is especially the case for the Ch'orti' and Poqomam group in the eastern regions of Guatemala. Similarly, the census records over three hundred thousand Xinca but only a few hundred Xinca speakers remain (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003:77). Indeed, Xinca language is considered extinct in the 'catalogue of the languages of the world The Ethnologue, (2004) *The Ethnologue: Catalogue of the Languages of the World*, Available: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Guatemala, 3 April 2004.

**Table 1. Use of traditional clothing and use of indigenous languages amongst population of Guatemala that self-defines as indigenous (1994)**

| | Do not Use Traditional Clothing | | | Use Traditional Clothing | | | No Data and Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Indigenous Language | Indigenous Language | Sub-Total | No Indigenous Language | Indigenous Language | Sub-Total | No Data | Total |
| Men | 30.2% | 54.90% | 85.10% | 1.6% | 8.10% | 9.7% | 5.2% | 100% |
| Women | 22.80% | 11.20% | 34% | 7.80% | 53.40% | 61.2% | 4.80% | 100% |

*Source*: Adams, R. and Bastos (2003: 439), data derived from 1994 census

If languages are becoming increasingly unreliable as sole markers of indigenous identity, they nonetheless provide good indicators of diversity within Guatemala. There are 24 officially recognised languages in Guatemala: Spanish (spoken as first or main language by approximately 60% of the population), 21 Mayan languages (spoken by approximately 40% of the population) as well as Xinca (a non Maya indigenous group) and Garifuna (the language spoken by black communities on the Atlantic coast of Guatemala).[11]

Thus the 'indigenous' or Mayan categories encompass a diversity of groups that are differentiated on the basis of language and whose population tend to be concentrated in specific geographical areas.[12] The main ethno-linguistic indigenous groups in Guatemala (that is, spoken by more that 100,000 people) are K'ichee' (over a million speakers), Mam (almost three quarter of a million speakers), Kakqchikel (over four hundred thousand speakers) and Q'eqchi' (just under four hundred thousand speakers).[13] Thus, it is important to acknowledge both the coherence in 'indigenous' or 'Mayan' identity which is rooted in shared history and a degree of cultural affinities, as well as the diversity within the indigenous category which mitigates against the emergence of a united indigenous-based movement and leadership.

### *2.2 Ladino Identity*

The *ladino* category is also a composite group. The meaning of *ladino* changed drastically during the course of the 19th century. Up until then, the *ladino* category related to '*meztizos*' (individuals of mixed Indian-Spanish parentage). Thus, the definition had clear racial undertones. Towards the end of the 19th century, *ladino*s gradually came to include 'assimilated' indigenous peoples who adopted western clothing and spoke Spanish. The latter reflected the fact that integrating into the *ladino* ranks was not accessible to all, but presumed access to (Spanish) language or education and a degree of interaction with the *ladino* world. Over the years, the meaning of '*ladino*' gradually evolved from a racial concept to one rooted both in class and in anti-indigenous sentiment (Taracena et al. 2002). To be *ladino* now denoted until recently an essentially 'non-indigenous' identity of individuals. Groups that were once clearly distinct from *meztizos* and indigenous peoples such as the white Criollo elite (of white European descent) now barely seem to register on the ethnic scales of the country. This group, which is unlikely to self define as *ladino,* tends to be ascribed by

[11] According to the catalogue of languages compiled in 'The Ethnologue', there is approximately 16,000 Garifuna speakers concentrated in the towns of Puerto Barrios and Livingston Ethnologue, *The Ethnologue: Catalogue of the Languages of the World*

[12] See Appendix 1

[13] Odilio Jiménez Ajb'ee, (1997) *Tensión Entre Idiomas: Situación Actual De Los Idiomas Mayas Y El Español En Guatemala. Paper Presented at Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, México Abril 17-19 De 1997*, Available: 136.142.158.105/LASA97/ajbee.pdf2 April 2004.

default a '*ladino*' identity by virtue of their non-indigenous status. It must be noted however that in the past decade important cracks are appearing in the bi-polar Guatemalan model. Many Indigenous movement and organisations distance themselves from the 'indigenous' category with its pejorative and colonial connotations, opting instead for a more positive 'Mayan' category.[14] On the other hand many individuals no longer feel comfortable with a Ladino label that some associate with negative connotations of racism, violence and exploitation, opting instead for a more positive 'mestizo' category. [15]

This is a complicated state of affairs and it is clear that there exists a multiplicity of ethnic and social identities in Guatemala that are obfuscated by the present use of the '*ladino*' and 'indigenous' labels. Physical appearance and skin colour, region of origins, culture, class and lifestyle all play a part in the processes of ascription and self-definition of identity. The motives for bundling together *Criollos*, *meztizos* and assimilated indigenous peoples is not altogether obvious and in section three of this paper, we examine some of the historical processes that underpinned the building of such a category.

Numbers and Identity: Trends and Issues Surrounding the Guatemalan Census

As elsewhere in Latin America, population censuses in Guatemala have become extremely polemical.[16] The central issue relates to the estimates of the number of indigenous people. Table 2 (below) provides a summary of some of the population census affected between 1893 and 1994.

**Table 2. Official population census: indigenous and non indigenous peoples 1880-2002.**

| Year | Total | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous | Indigenous Peoples as a Percentage of Total Population |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1893 | 1,364,678 | 882,733 | 481,945 | 64.68% |
| 1921 | 2,004,900 | 1,299,927 | 704,973 | 64.84% |
| 1950 | 2,790,868 | 1,491,725 | 1,299,143 | 53,45% |
| 1964 | 4,287,997 | 1,808,942 | 2,479,055 | 42,19% |
| 1973 | 5,160,221 | 2,260,024 | 2,900,197 | 43,80% |
| 1981 | 6,054,227 | 2,536,523 | 3,517,704 | 41,90% |
| 1994 | 8,321,067 | 3,554,756 | 4,766,311 | 42,72% |
| 2002 | 11,237,196 | 4,411,964 | 6,750,170 | 39,26% |

*Source*: Official census data (Adams, R. and Bastos, 2003: 64; World Bank/GUAPA, 2003 and INE).[17]

The first point to be made is that there has been a record of indigenous and non-indigenous categories since the first official population census was undertaken in the late 19th century. Table 2 indicates a steady increase in the absolute number of indigenous peoples, but also a constant decrease in the number of indigenous peoples

[14] The extent to which a Mayan identity or even category is understood and adopted by many who still identify themselves as indigenous is open to question. The investigation on 'Mayanisación y Vida cotidiana' lead by Santiago Bastos promises to shed much light on the matter.

[15] The latter is particularly rife amongst foreign cooperation workers, leading in cases to a romanticisation of all that is indigenous and a demonisation of all that is ladino.

[16] For a summary of the debates in Guatemala see: Adams, R. and Bastos (2003), Adams (1998). For an overview of debates elsewhere in Latin America see: Sieder (2002), Assies (2000) as well as reports by international organisations: Charo Quesada, (2001) *Census Politics: Invisible Citizens*, IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), Available: http://www.iadb.org/idbamerica/index.cfm?thisid=865, 3 December 2003; HRO DISSEMINATION NOTES and Human Resources Development and Operations Policy, (1993) *Indigenous People in Latin America*, Number 8, June 7, 1993, Available: http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/hnp/hddflash/hcnote/hrn007.html, 3 December 2003.).

[17] The 2002 population census figures given here do not include the Xinca and Garifuna group.

relative to the rest of the population. Thus, since the early 1960s, indigenous peoples no longer constitute the majority. The period between the 1920s and the 1960s was when most of the relative decrease of indigenous peoples took place, with estimates then stabilising near the 43%.[18]

For indigenous leaders and activists, the population censuses have consistently underestimated the number of indigenous peoples. This is variously attributed to a lack of recognition of indigenous peoples: 'En la práctica interna del país se ha desconocido la existencia de la cultura Maya ...por los mismo ha existido poco interés de cuantificar realmente a la población India'[19] (Tzian cited in Adams, 1998:1). More controversially Mayan intellectual Demetrio Cotjí states:

> "En la sociedad colonial Guatemalteca, los Censos Oficiales de Población no son actividades políticamente neutrales sino operaciones sesgados para concretar la política del colonialismo *ladino*: eliminar al indígena."[20] .
>
> (Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil, cited in Adams, 1998:1).

Cojtí further elaborates that the under-estimates of the number of Mayan people occurs at distinct stages of the census: during data gathering (with problematic definitions of Mayan identity) and after data gathering through an outright disguise and manipulation of the figures (ibid).

The methodology used to define identity has changed over time, but has often been poor and biased (see Table 3 below). Census interviewers (overwhelmingly *ladino*s) until 1994 refrained from directly asking individuals their identity, on the grounds that this could create embarrassing situations and individuals would tend to claim *ladino* identity (World Bank 2003). In 1950, the 'local standards' methodology was introduced, based on the understanding that the criteria for defining indigenous status varied from one community to another (dress code in one place, language in another). The intent was to hire interviewers from a wide array of communities to ensure that they possessed an awareness of local perception of identity; ultimately however the categorization was still left to the interviewer (Arias Jorge 1961: 6-7). This methodology was broadened to include 'objective' criteria such as whether individuals ate a wheat-based or corn-based diet. The census carried out during the height of the military dictatorship and repression (1973 and 1981) simply reverted to the method of the discretion of the interviewer. Finally, since 1994 self-identification of identity is becoming the norm.

Provided that the interviewers do comply with these new criteria then contemporary censuses are less likely to reflect the prejudices of *ladino* interviewers. However, self-identification itself is problematic. In the context of countries where there are long standing practices within indigenous groups of avoiding being counted where indigenous identities carry negative connotations (to escape tribute amongst others), there is a clear danger that many might avoid self-identifying as indigenous. It must be noted however, that the introduction of self –identification with the 1994 census did not lead to an immediately notable fall or increase in the recorded number of indigenous population, but there are some remarkable and as yet unexplained dramatic changes with the 2002

[18] The dip below 42% in 1981 corresponds to the height of violence and repression during the Guatemalan Civil War.
[19] Translation: "In home affairs of the country the existence of the Mayan culture has been ignored…for this reason there has been little interest in actually quantifying the indigenous population"
[20] Translation: "In Colonial society of Guatemala, the Official Censuses of Population are not politically neutral activities but biased activities to sum up the policy of *ladino* colonialism: eliminating indigenous people".

population census.[21] As yet, there has not been any entirely satisfactory methodology devised to account for the number of indigenous peoples.

**Table 3. Methodology used for recording ethnicity**

| Year | Census Criteria for Categorization |
|---|---|
| 1893 | Interviewer's discretion |
| 1921 | Interviewer's discretion |
| 1950 | Local standards methodology |
| 1964 | Cross-checking local standards with 'objective criteria' (dress, language, dietary habits) |
| 1973 | Interviewer discretion |
| 1981 | Interviewer discretion |
| 1994 | Self identification-Indigenous+record of clothing criteria |
| 2002 | Self identification-Indigenous |

*Source*: World Bank / GUAPA (2003), INE

In addition to these methodological weaknesses, there has been a generally cavalier attitude towards the population census in Guatemala. As shown in Table 2, they have been held extremely irregularly, consistently under-funded, and often staffed with ill trained interviewers (Adams 1998, Adams, R. and Bastos 2003).[22] Overall, many observers (in academia and international organisations but also public officials including those working for the national statistical office) agree that the number of indigenous people is indeed underestimated but few support Cotjí's statement that there has been a systematic underestimation of the number of indigenous peoples with the intention of 'eliminating' indigenous people.[23]

First, until the official elimination of the forced labour of indigenous people in the 1940s, it was clearly much more in the interest of indigenous people to evade such categorisation, with public officials tending to identify as many potential sources of cheap labour as they could rather than to 'eliminate' them (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003: 61). Systematic under-counting of indigenous people is unlikely to have been consolidated until after the abolition of forced labour in 1945. Other factors likely to have had a negative impact on the official record of the number of indigenous people are fear of repression, especially during the period of mass killings of indigenous peoples in the early 1980s. Adams, R. and Bastos (2003: 62) argue that it is not until after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 that many indigenous communities have felt secure enough to self-identify as indigenous, but again this does not equate with a systematic under-counting by officials.

Overall, population censuses in Guatemala are clearly not entirely reliable. It is important, therefore, to attempt to evaluate the degree to which the indigenous

[21] See appendix for a table recording changes in the indigenous population between 1994 and 2002 which is dramatic in some departments such as San Marcos , Chiquimula or Zacapa . The 1994 census introduced self-identification but retained the recording of criteria such as the wearing of indigenous clothing. The 2002 census also relied on self-identification but no longer records the wearing of indigenous clothing. It had been mentioned to this author that the 2002 census used the word 'Maya' rather than indigenous in processes of self-identification, thus providing a potential explanation for the dramatic fall in the record of the indigenous population in some department. Whilst the census results indeed use the work 'Maya', the questionnaire itself does not (2002 census questionnaire, INE).

[22] Note: Richard N. Adams (1998) and Richard Adams (with Bastos) are two distinct scholars.

[23] Staff from the national statistical office estimated that Indigenous people in Guatemala account for approximately 55% of the population. Interview with INE staff (MENCOVI and Population Census), January 2005.

population has been under-estimated in the past and the extent to which it is still being under-estimated today. Mayan organisations and activists consistently argue that indigenous peoples constitute a majority of the Guatemalan population and figures upwards of 60% are often quoted.[24] It is evident that it is in the interest of Mayan organisations and activists to claim that the indigenous population constitutes a majority of the population, but there is little empirical evidence at hand to back up these claims (Richard N. Adams 1998). There are few sets of alternative estimates outside the official census. John D. Early has worked since the 1970s on formulating alternative figures, using projections derived from birth and mortality rates. His findings are summarised in Table 4 alongside household survey data concerning ethnicity (Early 1975; World Bank/GUAPA 2003).[25]

**Table 4. Estimates of indigenous peoples as percentage of the total population: 1950, 1964 and 1973 Census**

| Year | Census | Early | ENCOVI* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1950 | 53.45% | 55.79% | |
| 1964 | 42.19% | 50.37% | |
| 1973 | 43.80% | 47.95% | |
| 1994 | 41.7% | | |
| 2000 | | | 42.6% |
| 2002 | 39.26% | | |

*Source*: Adams, R. and Bastos (2003:64), World Bank (2003); INE (2002)
* The ENCOVI (household survey) data contains important information relating to ethnicity (languages, languages of ancestors) but the figure cited here rely solely upon self identification (World Bank/GUAPA 2003)

Early's figures do suggest that undercounting took place during the census, but his study also reveals that there was a general undercounting of *all* rural dwellers, including *ladino*s. This, according to Adams (1998:5), suggests: '…it is more reasonable to argue that counting rural peoples is difficult rather than census takers hate Indians'. The revised estimates and alternative data summarised in Table 4 do not constitute conclusive evidence, but appear to confirm the tendency to under-count indigenous peoples, although not to the degree claimed by indigenous organisations.

### *2.3 The Construction of Ethnic Categories and Inter-ethnic Relations: 1821-1944*

This section reviews the main processes of indigenous and *ladino* categories construction and inter-ethnic relations during two key periods:

1. 1821-1871: the aftermath of independence from Spain; and
2. 1871-1944: the liberal regime and the emergence of the coffee state.

#### 2.3.1 Colonialism and the Post-Colonial Order: 1821-1871

The process of ethnic categories formation in Guatemala has been deeply influenced by several factors: the colonial legacy, the process of independence and the building and development of the republic (Taracena et al. 2002). As with elsewhere in the Americas, European colonialism was a brutal, often deadly and extraordinarily exploitative experience for aboriginal populations. Colonial society was segregated between the republic of the Indians and the republic of the Spanish, the latter comprising the

[24] See for instance 'Indigenous People in Latin America: a Political Awakening', The Economist, 19th February 2003. For a thorough and critical examination of the elaboration of the 60% figure see Adams (1998) and Adams, R. and Bastos (2003).
[25] See Adams (1998) for a review of Early's projection and estimates.

dominant group (Spanish and Criollo elite). This system denoted much more than social differentiation, but also corresponded to distinct geographic and legal orders. It was prohibited for Indigenous and Spanish groups to share residency, even if in practice the prescription slowly fell into disuse (CEH 1999).[26]

The legal status of indigenous peoples was that of 'free vassals of the crown': allowing the Spanish dominion over indigenous people and the capacity to extract a tribute. In order for the tribute to be successfully extracted, a modicum of protection and recognition of indigenous communities' land rights was afforded, notably in the recognition of the inalienability of communal and *ejídal* (municipal commons available to all members of a settlement) land.[27] The counterpoint to this modicum of protection was that the subordinate status of indigenous people was maintained by conferring indigenous people the status of minors.[28]

Indigenous people's resistance to the brutal regime of the colonies took several forms. First there were occurrences of localised mutinies and wider uprisings (CEH 1999: 88). Consistently, over the centuries of Spanish rule, Indian protests, mutinies and uprisings were met by extreme violence (Gosner 1996). Less overt forms of resistance took the form of civil disobedience and 'dragging of the feet' through tax avoidance, ignoring the attempts to impose the Spanish language, reproducing forbidden culture, and practising Mayan religious ceremonies (CEH 1999:89; Gosner 1996).

The ideological constructs that underpinned the colonial order played a self serving function to legitimise a brutal order of exploitation. According to the Guatemalan Truth Commission, 'This ideology insisted that Indians lacked faculties of understanding and reasoning, preventing them from governing themselves or understanding natural law. The Spanish as 'older brothers' had the task to teach [Indians] the laws and limit the 'barbaric' customs of indigenous peoples' (CEH 1999: 88). However, the capacity of the state to rule and control local communities was far from omnipotent. In practice, colonial authorities recognised indigenous authorities and sets of customary law ('*usos y costumbres*) as long as these did not prejudice against the laws and interest of the crown or the (Catholic) church. Local indigenous leaders held certain judicial and public order functions for minor cases, or for conflict resolution within the communities.[29] The isolation and existence of separate legal status and institutions for indigenous peoples were important in as far as it permitted the recuperation of a certain political space and a degree of autonomy in the running of their own affairs. This permitted the maintenance of a degree of cohesion and the survival of important cultural traits and customs (CEH 1999:88, Smith 1990:13-15).[30]

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[26] Local and regional histories highlight a surprising degree of differences from one community to another; as well as providing insights into the nature of relations within indigenous communities and between indigenous peoples, their leaders, and state officials. For some of the best work produced in this vein, see Carol A. Smith, ed., (1990) *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988*, Austin: University of Texas Press; and Greg Grandin, (2000) *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation,* Durham and London: Duke University Press

[27] The emphasis here is very much on a 'degree' of protection; land invasion and disputes were frequent throughout the colonial period. For an examination of the changes in legal status from '*encomederos*' to tributary, see Palma, Arriola and Oyarzun (2002:15-18).

[28] In practice this status meant that indigenous people were exempt from certain duties and obligations such as military service and payment of the tithe and sale tax (but they paid tribute to the crown). The same status prohibited indigenous peoples from carrying firearms, ride horses and move away from their communities bar for (forced) labour tasks in mines or haciendas (CEH 1999).

[29] Graver cases were sent to the Spanish *corregidores*. The origin and evolution of indigenous local power structures, from the Spanish conquest to the twentieth century is summarised in Barrios (2001).

[30] Syncretism played an important part there too.

For most of the colonial period, the population of mixed descent had an uncertain status, notably because individuals of mixed parentage were considered to be the product of illegitimate unions (Taracena 2002). By the late 18th century, the population of mixed descent was becoming sizeable, and was increasingly being referred to as '*ladino*'. There was a clear process of social differentiation within the *ladino* group, some joining the ranks of the economically privileged and others of the poor (CEH 1999; Taracena 2002).

Independence from Spain in 1821 signified substantial gains for the white Criollo elite which had been accountable and subordinated to the Spanish crown and its officials. However, the aftermath of independence was characterised by deep divisions within the elite, between liberals and conservatives (Dunkerley 1988). The adoption of liberalism in the immediate aftermath of independence did bring some important changes to Guatemala. One key area of change was the principle of equality before the law, which led to the eradication of the separate regime of the Spanish and Indian republics. This meant an end to the legal restrictions that had constricted settlement in indigenous communities and to the inalienability of communal and *ejídal* land.[31] The conservative dictatorship of Rafael Carrera (1839-1871) reversed many of the liberal reforms, but if encroachment on community land was slow during conservative rule, there was no restoration of the principle of inalienability of communal land holdings.

### 2.3.2 Liberal State and Ethnic Identity: 1871-1944

Liberals became the hegemonic power in late 19th century Guatemala (1871-1944), marking the ascendancy of the upper echelons of the *ladino* group. The better off *ladino*s started challenging the Criollo elite for a greater share of power and opportunities (notably in coffee plantations) and at a local level, *ladino*s were also gradually displacing indigenous peoples from municipal power (Barrios 2001). Better off *ladino*s forged alliances and sought power sharing arrangements with the Criollo elite rather than strip them of their power or privileges. The victory of the liberals in 1871 heralded the birth of the modern Guatemalan state, where increasingly, being '*ladino*' became synonymous with being 'Guatemalan'. The Guatemalan nation state was conceived and construed as a single nation, a single culture, a single judicial system and (at the time) as having a sole religion (Taracena et al. 2002). In effect, there was little room for indigenous participation in this vision. The liberals eliminated the legal segregationist framework but reproduced the *practices* of separateness of indigenous people which translated in social, political, cultural and economic exclusions. From 1871 onwards, the Guatemalan state elaborated an official discourse that promoted the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the '*ladino*' mainstream. Incorporation into the modern national state and the acquisition of full citizenship rights presupposed a non-indigenous identity (CEH 1999, Adams, R. and Bastos 2003). The tension between assimilation and segregation became one of the defining characteristics of inter-ethnic relations during the liberal period.

The position and presence of indigenous people, euphemistically referred to as 'the Indian question' was clearly viewed as problematic, as an impediment to development and modernisation which provided a push for assimilation. This led to numerous laws and declaration of intent about integration and assimilation (Taracena 2002). This official discourse however rarely translated into actual policies that permitted the

[31] Ejidal land corresponded to municipal commons available to all inhabitants of a settlement, communal land belonged solely to indigenous communities (Dunkerley 1988:17). The eradication of some key protection afforded by the colonial order is important to explain widespread opposition to liberal reform from disparate sectors who each sought to protect interests that were threatened by the overhaul of the colonial order: conservative elites, the church but also *ladino* and indigenous rural dwellers (Dunkerley 1988:13-17)

incorporation of indigenous peoples. Education policy was central in circumscribing the rights and opportunities of indigenous peoples, illustrating the gap between official discourse and actual policies. Thus (Spanish) education was supposed to be free and compulsory to all, but there were no budgets made available to develop school networks in indigenous areas. There are two obvious consequences to this state of affairs. First, this restricted assimilation where the acquisition of Spanish language is a minimum requirement. Second, literacy rates amongst the indigenous population were minimal, which translated into little or no voting rights. The disenfranchisement of indigenous people meant that there was little indigenous political participation and representation within the political mainstream, which tended to reproduce the cycle of dominance and separateness.

Racism and racist ideologies have been pervasive in Guatemala. Both the solidity and durability of such ideologies amongst Guatemala's elite and amongst large (but not all) sectors of the *ladino* population appear to originate in an extraordinarily exploitative socio-economic order. Indigenous people provided both the colonial and liberal state with important sources of cheap labour. Dunkerley (1988) and the CEH (1999) both emphasize the importance of the development of coffee agriculture during the liberal period. Introduced in the 1850s, coffee production entered a period of spectacular growth in Guatemala between 1880 and 1920 (Palma 2002; Dunkerley 1988). Guatemala has been an export led economy since the 19th century where coffee has occupied a central position.[32] Unquestionably, the liberal regimes of the 1870s, invested heavily in facilitating and promoting the development of coffee production which necessitated improvement in the financial system, internal transportation and access to seasonal labour (Bulmer-Thomas 1987: 3-8). The latter was a key point for indigenous peoples who were subjected - as much as they had been since the colonial period - to various regimes of forced labour. The measures devised to compel indigenous people to work on the coffee plantations comprised:

- Obligatory service (on *haciendas -f*arms*)* or for public work in villages, often in lieu of military service).
- Vagrancy laws which replaced obligatory service: where indigenous people who had no full time employment were forced to work 100-150 days a year on plantations (abolished in 1945).
- Debt peonage (abolished in the 1930s), a private contractual tie between landlord and workers whereby debt (often inherited) was repaid by work. This system was enforced with the assistance of public authorities (Dunkerley 1988: 26-28)

Operating the system of forced labour was a coercive operation that relied both on force (by local militias and the armed forces) and on mechanisms of social control that registered the identity, status, and movement of indigenous peoples. Indigenous able bodied men had to carry proof of their status (debt free, employed, or having complied with military service duties) or risked being forcefully recruited in work gangs. Thus, the emergence of the modern nation state in late 19th century Guatemala also refers to development of the state apparatus: the civil service and the modern armed forces (Richard N Adams 1995). In his comparative political history of Central America, Dunkerley (1988: 30) notes that by 1944: 'the Guatemalan state was more advanced, especially in mechanisms of control than any other in the rest of the region'.

[32] Coffee accounted for 96% of earnings of export earnings in 1889 and after the introductions of Bananas, still accounted for close to 90% in 1916. Victor Bulmer-Thomas, (1987) *The Political Economy of Central America since 1920*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

### *2.4 Overview of Inter-ethnic Relations 1821-1944: Concluding remarks*

On the eve of Guatemala's democratic 'spring' in 1944, the contemporary shape of Guatemalan inter-ethnic relations expressed in the dual indigenous/*ladino* identities had become consolidated. The segregationist socio-economic order inherited from the colonial period was not eradicated either by independence or by the emergence of the liberal republic. The position and interests of the white Criollo elite were largely maintained, even if by the end of the 19th century they could no longer claim a monopoly on political power or over the economy.[33] The *ladino* group underwent an inordinate number of changes, first through a process of social differentiation within *mestizo* ranks from the late 18th century onwards. Second, the upper echelons of *ladino*s successfully challenged the Criollo elite for a share of power and opportunities. Finally, the *ladino* ranks, no longer solely defined in racial terms started to swell considerably by becoming synonymous with non-indigenous identity. For indigenous peoples, the 1821-1944 period had a much less clear significance. Some of the most overt forms of segregation and paternalism of the colonial order were removed (geographical exclusion and the status of minor). These however, were accompanied by the gradual loss of recognition of indigenous institutions as well as the removal of protection for communal and *ejídal* land. Furthermore, some of the practices of exclusion, separateness and exploitation of indigenous peoples (such as forced labour) legitimated by a pervasive racist ideology were maintained. By the 1950's the construction of identity clearly revolved around the indigenous-non indigenous status of individuals and for the first time since census began to be carried out, only the *ladino* and indigenous categories remained.

## 3. The Origins of the Guatemalan Civil War

Repression, violence, and conflicts have characterised Guatemalan history for most of the second half of the 20th century. However, for the purpose of this paper the focus will lie with the long period of civil war. The Guatemalan civil war is a complex phenomenon where both the *origins* and the *length* of the conflict need to be accounted for. The Guatemalan Truth Commission acknowledged that neither the origins, nor the length of the conflict, are attributable to any single factor (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico) CEH 1999.[34] Rather, a series of long term structural features of Guatemalan society, in addition to more immediate domestic and international factors, led to one of the longest civil wars in Latin America. The CEH identified a series of broad historical causes as well as 'immediate' factors that contributed to the war. First, we review the 'historical' causes of the Civil War, identified by the CEH as follows:

1. Racism, exclusion and subordination of indigenous peoples
2. Economic exclusions and agrarian structures
3. Authoritarianism and dictatorship

Second we review the more immediate cause of the conflict: the overthrow of the Arbenz government and the onset of the Cold War inspired anti-Communist regime that followed it.

### *3.1 The Historical Causes of the Conflict*

The historical root causes of the conflict relate to the 'exclusionary, racist, authoritarian and centralist' characteristics of the state, economy, and Guatemalan society (CEH,

[33] The Criollo's elite monopoly was challenged by the upper echelons of the *ladino* group as well as by foreign interests. The late 19th century Germans settled and invested heavily in the coffee sector. US interests became prominent in the development of Banana plantations (Bulmer-Thomas 1987).
[34] Volume I of the CEH report (1999) focuses on the origins and unfolding of the Civil War.

1999:81).[35] Racism and the subordination of indigenous peoples borne out of colonial inheritance the emergence of the liberal states in the 19th century were depicted at length in the preceding section and will not be reiterated here. Instead, this section focuses on economic exclusion and agrarian structures which continue to this day, and on the authoritarian legacy of the Guatemalan state.

### 3.1.1 Economic Exclusion and Agrarian Structures

The Guatemalan economy is slowly changing and diversifying. Over the past decade the *maquila* sector (free-trade assembly and re-export zones), mining, energy, commerce, and services have all grown fairly rapidly (Sieder 2002: 42-48). Tourism has strengthened in the 1990s (especially once the Civil War started to wane in earnest) and now exceeds coffee or sugar as the main source of foreign exchange, whilst remittances have also become an important source of income (ibid). Despite these recent changes, the agrarian sector still dominates the economy. Agriculture accounts for a quarter of the GDP, employs over 36% of all workers, and the economy is still heavily dependent on exports of coffee and sugar, notwithstanding some success in promoting non-traditional exports (World Bank/GUAPA 2003). In spite of the current crises and a sharp fall in international prices, coffee still accounts for over 25% of export earnings. Sugar, bananas and cardamom follow as the principal cash crops and all of the main export crops require large inputs of seasonal labour for harvest (ibid).

According to the CEH (1999), poverty and inequalities are long standing characteristics of Guatemalan society, derived from unequal distribution of economic wealth, unequal access to education, and from the inability of the state to formulate social policies that even attempt to address these issues.[36] Guatemala is a mid-range ranking country (using GDP per capita measures), but has a wider, deeper and more severe incidence of poverty than any other Central American country (including Nicaragua and Honduras with considerably smaller economies, GUAPA 2003:8). In 2000, over half of all Guatemalans – 56% (about 6.4 million people) – lived in poverty and approximately 16% lived in extreme poverty (ibid). Poverty is predominantly rural and extreme poverty is almost exclusively rural: over 81% of the poor and 93% of the extreme poor live in the countryside. Although indigenous peoples officially represent about 43% of the national population, they account for 58% of the poor and 72% of the extreme poor. Over three-quarters of the indigenous population live in poverty, as compared with 41% of the non-indigenous.[37]

To this day, over 60% of the population lives in rural areas and agrarian questions remain important. Issues of access to land are a key to explaining ongoing poverty and remain both an important source of discontent and political mobilisation (CEH 1999: 85). Unequal land distribution is the end result of slow processes of dispossession that started during the colonial period, increased towards the late 19th century and accelerated during the post war period (Palma Murga 2002, Brockett 1990). By the 1950s, 2.1% of holdings accounted for 62.5% of agrarian land, a figure that increased to 64.5% by 1979 when the last agrarian census was carried out in Guatemala (PNUD

[35] Note: all CEH references in this paper relate to Volume I of the report.
[36] For a thorough analysis of poverty in Guatemala see: World Bank/GUAPA, (2003) *Guatemala Poverty Assessment Program: Poverty in Guatemala, Report No. 24221-Gu,* 2003, Available: http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/external/lac/lac.nsf/Countries/Guatemala, 3 December 2003..
[37] According to the GUAPA report (2003:10) there are important inequalities within indigenous populations, with the Q'ech'i (based in the Verapaces) and the Mam (based in Huehuetenango) groups who experience worse poverty rates than any another groups.

2000: 32). In the early 1980s, CEPAL estimated that only 16.9% of the rural population could satisfy basic needs and that over 51.5% could not satisfy food requirements.[38]

One distinctive feature of the Guatemalan case has been the extreme reluctance of the state to formulate social policy to challenge the exclusionary nature of the social and economic structure, with the exception of the 1944-1954 reformist experiment (CEH 1999: 86). In Guatemala, the state has not assumed a mediating role between various social and economic interests; it has produced a vacuum that led to a direct confrontation between the beneficiaries of this socio-economic order (the elite), those that defended it (the security forces) and those that aspired to increase their share and participation.

The state has been oriented primarily towards servicing and defending the interests of the narrow sections of the population that dominate the economy. The latter include a domestic elite and foreign interests. The state has protected foreign investors in the country (primarily from the US), granting generous concessions and providing tax free havens (Dunkerley 1988). The domestic elite are composed of Criollos, German migrants and the upper echelons of the *ladino* groups who derived their wealth from coffee plantations (Dunkerley 1988).

The domestic elite have been extraordinarily inflexible and sanguine in maintaining an unjust socio-economic order which provides it with both with wealth and status. This has translated in a refusal to accept that investing in a modicum of social spending would be a sensible course of action. This is perhaps best illustrated by the elite resistance to the notion of taxation (whether direct or indirect). Since 1978, international financial institutions have insisted that Guatemala must *increase* social spending and tax revenues (Sieder 2002:42). By 1996, Guatemala's 1996 tax coefficient was by far the lowest of Latin America, standing at 7% of GDP. The World Bank, the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) were influential in getting agreement on provisions for increases in tax revenues within the Peace Accords (to raise to 12% of GDP, still below regional averages but considered the most minimum rate to provide for health and education reform). Despite this amount of leverage, the dominant private sector has successfully opposed and resisted increases, and the tax coefficient as percentage of GDP barely reaches double figures.

### 3.1.2 Authoritarianism and Dictatorship

Undoubtedly, Guatemalan politics has both reflected and helped maintain the exclusionary nature of the socio-economic order. Throughout time, power has been concentrated in the hands of a few groups and individuals with little or no legal restrictions. Between 1821-1944, one of the key characteristics of Guatemalan politics was the prominent role played by individual autocrats, liberal and conservative *caudillo*s (overlords) who ruled the country with an iron first over long periods of time:

- 1839-1871: Rafael Carrera (conservative)
- 1872-1885: Justo Rufino Barrios (liberal)
- 1889-1920: Manuel Estrada Cabrera (liberal) [39]
- 1833-1944: Jorge Ubico (liberal).

[38] Comisión Económica para América Latina, CEPAL, *Satisfacción de necesidades en el istmo centroamericano,*1982, cited in CER (1999:85).

[39] Manuel Estrada Cabrera was *the* archetypal Latin American autocrat, providing the inspiration for Miguel Angel Asturias' literary classic '*El Señor Presidente'*.

Both the Estrada Cabrera and Ubico regimes repressed the formation of meaningful opposition groups (political parties, but also mass organisations such as trade unions) and repression and control were constantly increased (CEH 1999; Dunkerley 1988). Thus, the autocratic regimes may have given the appearance of 'stability', but the increasing use of repressive measures also indicates that pressure from 'below' was simultaneously steadily increasing.[40] Autocracy put a lid on social and political organisation, but this was far from a comfortable form of rule for the Guatemalan elite which had been quite shaken by the Mexican revolution (1910-1920) just over the border. The Mexican revolution revived longstanding fears of an 'indigenous and peasants uprising'. In addition, the rise of communism in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution (1917) became another source of anxiety for elites bend upon maintaining their socio-economic status as well as their hold on political power.

The CEH (1999: 95) drew two important conclusions with regards to the legacy of autocratic rule in Guatemala. First, for the dominant group it has meant the unchecked exercise of power as a personal or small group attribute, the rejection of criticism, and of the notion of opposition. Second, for the governed, the Guatemalan political culture is that of a model of authoritarianism that has sought to impose the passive acceptance of arbitrariness, servility, and the complicity of silence.

### *3.2 Immediate Causes of the Conflict*

The overthrow of Ubico in 1944 marked a turning point in Guatemala's political history.[41] The period of personalist autocratic rule came to an end. Over the next ten years, Guatemala experienced a democratic opening that saw the first real challenge to the exclusionary socio-economic order. Democracy flourished, allowing social organisations as well as political parties to develop. Yet, opposition to the reformist government was stiff and signalled the emergence of a broad alliance between the armed forces, the US and the socio-economic elite.[42] The interplay between these domestic and international actors - at times nearing breaking point - and the general framework of the Cold War were an essential feature of post-Ubico Guatemalan politics.

#### 3.2.1 1944-1954: The Reformist Experiment

The fall of the Ubico regime was followed by a decade of reformist experiments which emphasised democratic values, social justice, nationalism and a development project which identified the '*campesino*' (peasants) as fundamental actors (CEH 1999). The democratic opening comprised the drafting of a new constitution which introduced universal suffrage, extending participation to all Guatemalans regardless of gender, status or ethnic origins.[43] Two consecutive 'free and fair' general elections were held (1945 and 1950) with two peaceful handovers of power. At municipal level, the system of (unelected) 'intendants' brought in by Ubico was dismantled and local elections took

[40] The 1920s for instance, remain an understudied period of about which little is known beyond the fact that it was marked by political instability, increasing labour organisation, and protest.
[41] The fall of the Ubico regime is probably best examined within the general context of the end of World War II (1944-1948). The latter was accompanied by a short period of democratic opening throughout Latin America, prior to the onset of the Cold War and the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes (Bethell and Roxborough 1992).
[42] The elite in the post war era was constituted by civilian actors dominating the economy and emerged from groups already defined here. However, due to a degree of diversification in the Guatemalan economy following World War II saw the expansion of industry and services; the terminology used to depict this important actor is the private sector.
[43] Literacy restrictions had prevented the majority of Guatemalans from voting. The latter particularly affected indigenous people amongst whom illiteracy was at the highest.

place in 1946, marking increasing indigenous participation (Dunkerley 1988: 139). Furthermore, the ban on leftist political parties and organisation was lifted, leading to the legalisation of the PGT (*Partido Guatemalteco de los Trabajadores* or communist party) in 1949.[44] Key social reforms related to the promotion of education (increased budget), the drafting of a labour code (1947) that eliminated forced labour and vagrancy laws, the setting up of the social security institute (1945) and an agrarian reform law (1952).

The reform program antagonised powerful actors, both among the Guatemalan elite, whose access to cheap labour was suddenly curtailed by the labour law, and among foreign investors, notably the United Fruit Company (UFCO) which was barely compensated when 65% of its total holdings were nationalised and distributed.[45] Thus, opposition to the regime was strong and broadening, whilst its bases of support were not yet consolidated: political parties and social organisations in the urban and rural areas had only slowly and recently emerged (Dunkerley 1988). In the first 6 years of the reformist period, 32 plots to overthrow the Arévalo presidency were foisted (CEH 1999: 100). The weakness and instability of the regime led to two processes. First, there was a move towards enlisting the support of the armed forces (viewed as essential for the survival of the regime) which translated into a process of strengthening and professionalisation of the armed forces. The power, budgets and responsibilities of the institution were increased, including a heightened political role. There was a clear split in the armed forces between those that supported alliances with conservative sectors and those sensitive to the discourse of nationalism and development promoted by the reformist governments. Second, there was a move towards polarization and radicalisation following the election of Defence Minister Jacobo Arbenz to the Presidency in 1951. Arbenz had won a clean electoral contest and he had the support of the army, but his base of support was firmly in the incipient popular movement and in the left.

The lurch to the left experienced with the election of Arbenz produced a degree of anxiety within the ruling coalition and broadened the opposition group to include key actors such as the Catholic Church, the media, and Washington (CEH 1999: 104). Washington appeared convinced that Guatemala was falling into the net of 'soviet communism' and that the tiny isthmian country constituted a threat to the free world (ibid).[46] The CIA was allocated a budget of $3 millions to set up a covert operation destined to overthrow Arbenz.[47] The overthrow of Arbenz was a carefully staged campaign both in Guatemala and in the US, starting with campaigns of disinformation in the media and anticommunist propaganda, followed by a Honduras based invasion led by Carlos Castillo Armas in June 1954. Within a few days, Arbenz opted to resign principally to avoid splitting up the wavering armed forces and left the country.

### 3.2.2 1954-1962: Anti-Communism, Counter-revolution, and the Onset of Armed Conflict

The aftermath of the overthrow of Arbenz is important in explaining the emergence of the armed conflict in Guatemala. Castillo Armas proceeded to establish an anti-communist government that reversed most of the reforms introduced during the preceding period. Anti-Communist fervour swept the country, expanding to include mild reformism or any

[44] The Guatemalan communist party was set up at a time where other Latin American states opted to make them illegal (Bethell and Roxborough 1992).

[45] Famously, the base for compensation of nationalised holdings in Guatemala were that of value declared in tax returns, which were notoriously undervalued, see Piero Gleijeses, (1991) *Shattered Hope : The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

[46] The latter point is debatable: Gleijeses (1991) argues along similar lines but Schlesinger (1999) provides an alternative interpretation that emphasises the alignment of interests between the CIA and UFCO.

[47] Even if the US motives in the overthrow of Arbenz are still debated, the role played by the US is now well established and recorded (see Gleijeses 1991; Shclesinger 1999, CEH 1999).

form of opposition to the government. The government and public institutions (including schools and universities) were purged of any suspected supporters of Arbenz, whilst 'communist' suspects were exiled, jailed and executed.[48] Networks of spies were set up and fear of denunciations became endemic.

The post-Arbenz environment however, did not constitute a return to the previous status quo. On the one hand, the armed forces did not return to the barracks in the aftermath of the coup, but became a prominent political actor until 1996. However, although various states of exceptions were declared between 1954-1996, there was no direct military takeover of the kind witnessed in South America, where legislature were suspended and political parties banned.[49] Instead, elections took place on a regular basis throughout the Civil War, but only a few chosen political parties were allowed to remain registered (such as Castillo Armas's party: the *Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional* – the National Liberation Movement, the Christian Democrats who supported the anti-communist policy, and later the armed forces' own political vehicles).

Nonetheless, with the exception of the Menendez Montenegro government (1966-1970) only representatives of the armed forces were allowed to win elections until 1985.[50] For a time, this provided the post-Arbenz governments with a veneer of legitimacy and also permitted the cooptation of centre–right parties, despite clear evidence that they would not wrench substantive power from the armed forces. It became apparent to most that elections were a meaningless exercise, but one of the offshoots of this state of affairs was that the transition to democracy in the mid 1980s was viewed with extraordinary suspicion and cynicism by Guatemalans, precisely because there was no 'clean break' between 'authoritarianism' and democracy.

The 1954 events had a profound and deeply divisive effect on Guatemalans: it was a collective form of trauma that left an imprint on the country that is still perceptible today. On the one hand, the success of the coup, emboldened and further strengthened anti-reformism, endorsed by the US support for the coup. On the other hand, it also meant that legal and formal channels of participation were now curtailed with socio-economic issues left largely unaddressed. This is the environment which permitted the guerrilla insurgency to flourish.

The 1954-1963 period was characterised by instability, which included the assassination of Castillo Armas in 1957 (still unresolved), attempts to depose his successor (which eventually succeeded in 1963) and the explosion of mass protests in 1962 which led to further repression and violence. One essential source of instability during this period was the armed forces, which had been left badly divided by the overthrow of Arbenz. Following a failed coup attempt in 1961, disgruntled members of the armed forces went on to found Guatemala's first guerrilla movement, the FAR *(Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* – Rebel Armed Forces).

## 4. Civil War, Violence, and Genocide

In this section of the paper, we examine the civil war itself. We begin by providing a general summary of the conflict in its entirety. Subsequently, we focus more narrowly on the 1975-1985 period which corresponds to the worse episodes of violence. We

[48] The CEH has no exact figures, estimates range from two to ten thousand executions in the aftermath of the coup.
[49] State of exception (state of siege and the like) refers to procedures that permit the suspension or curtailing of constitutional rights for 'limited' period of time.
[50] The Salvadorean Armed Forces operated a similar system in the post World War II era (Sieder 1996).

examine the strategy and ideologies of the main protagonists, paying particular attention to the evolution of the army's counterinsurgency campaigns.

### *4.1 Historical Overview of the Conflict (1962-1996)*

The first armed groups emerged in Guatemala in the early 1960s, marking the beginning of a Civil War that ended in 1996. A series of small armed groups composed of rebel army officers radicalised by the experience of exile and communist militants, started to appear during the course of 1962, a year when political frustration and political protests were on the increase (CEH 1999: 123-127). The influence of Cuba in these early stages of guerrilla activities was unequivocal. Following several formative visits to Cuba in 1961 and 1962, leaders of the Guatemalan communist party, the PGT, succeeded in uniting the various fronts that had emerged, setting up the FAR. The FAR sought to take power through a revolutionary war integrating workers, peasants and the urban middle classes.

The FAR were concentrated in the eastern provinces of Izabal and Zacapa where US banana plantations were concentrated and where there was a majority non-indigenous population. The first wave of guerrillas constituted small groups with limited geographical coverage and support. By the end of the 1960s, these groups had largely been destroyed. A lesson learned for the second wave of guerrilla organisations was that winning support from the rural heartland of Guatemala was essential for a strategy of *Guerra Popular Prolongada* – the prolonged popular war. From the state perspective, the first wave of guerrillas meant increasing the process of militarization and strengthening the security apparatus. Political party activity independent of the army was increasingly difficult by the late 1960s, even for close allies of the army. The army control over the executive was also increasingly pervasive and the armed forces tightened their hold over the state apparatus. Furthermore, fifteen of the thirty five paramilitary networks or death squads known to have operated in Guatemala were set up in 1966 (CEH 1999: 143). The basis of the apparatus that unleashed terror in Guatemala in the early 1980s was already established in the late 1960s.

The 1970s were a period of rapid economic growth and of army controlled developmentalist projects, with the armed forces enjoying augmenting their profile and power base. The army devised national plans of development, designed to: attract foreign and domestic investment, diversify the economy, as well as improve and reinforce public administration. The military took a direct interest in national development, acquiring banks, telecommunications, and electricity companies. Individual members of the armed forces benefited from the increased profile of the military, notably with the distribution of land from national purchases amongst the officers. These activities were resented by the economic elite that opposed state intervention in the economy on principle, as well as resenting the unfair competition of army led gas and oil prospecting activities. The increased political and economic profile of the armed forces was viewed with great suspicion by the private sector, but as social disorder grew and the guerrilla threat became more pronounced, the army and private sector closed ranks again. In rural areas, the army oversaw civic action programmes sponsored by the alliance for progress. Road and school building, the setting up of rural cooperatives (notably to channel credit), the promotion of the 'Green Revolution' (thought to increase productivity and reduce the pressure for land reform), and diversification (cotton, meat and cardamom) all featured heavily in the army-sponsored rural development programmes (CEH 1999: 137).

Quite independently from the guerrillas at this stage, social mobilisation and social organisations started to emerge in Guatemala in the 1960s. The progressive wings of the Catholic Church played a key role there in setting up social movements amongst

students, workers, and peasants (CEH 1999: 140). The *Acción Catolica* (Catholic Action) network in particular began to work in the countryside to 'raise consciousness', setting up discussion groups and organisations around key themes of poverty and rural development. Social mobilisation increased dramatically during the early 1970s with the emergence of militant trade unions, cooperative movements, Mayan organisations (chiefly preoccupied with language and cultural matters) and peasant leagues. Convinced that the guerrilla groups had been vanquished, military regimes in the 1970s (especially 1970-1974) tolerated the emergence of non-Marxist organisations. Increased mobilisation was derived in part from political factors (political opening that permitted participation and the emergence of new leadership) and socio-economic factors. The foundational work undertaken by *Acción Catolica* in the 1960s was clearly influential as were leftist ideologies spreading fast amongst sectors of the middle classes (notably amongst university students and lecturers).

Socio-economic change played a part too with increased pressure on land, the swelling numbers of rural proletariat, and with higher numbers of workers in urban centres. Rapid increase in urban organisation and mobilisation was underpinned by a process of industrial expansion, diversification and modernisation, which saw the number of workers in the manufacturing sector enlarge by 50% between 1965 and 1975 (CEH 1999: 149). In rural areas, local isolation was starting to diminish in earnest with large numbers of Guatemalans moving around the country facilitating mobilisation processes. Seasonal migration to the coastal plantations were increasingly frequent for the department of Huehuetenago and Quiché (Richard N. Adams 1970).

It is important not to paint all rural mobilisation processes with the same brush. There were key differences in peasant leagues demands, depending on geographical areas and local conditions: in some cases issues of access to basic services dominated (access to school, water, electricity, road and bridges), elsewhere demands centred around access to land, land reform and land disputes, and yet other demands were about labour rights, work conditions and wages (CEH 1999: 137). Some of the peasant leagues retained a local outlook; others encouraged by the Christian democrat party grew at a national level. Transcending the local was an important step in the emergence of a '*campesino*' movement.

The fast GDP growth registered in the 1970s (constantly above 7% in the early 1970s) was of limited benefit to the Guatemalan masses, especially as inflationary pressure grew (reaching 26% in 1975, CEH 1999: 158). Urban population were particularly hit with industrial wages barely recording a rise. In rural areas, the process of diversification resulted in more land dispossession (the introduction of cattle led to a notable increase in land disputes in Guatemala and Nicaragua, see Dunkerley 1988). Each year, hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers recruited in the indigenous highlands went to work in exploitative plantations to ensure the subsistence of their families.[51] Theses changes, contributed to qualitative and quantitative changes in the patterns of indigenous participation in rural movements. Indigenous participation took mass proportion but in sharp contrast to previous patterns of resistance, collective action in the 1970s took on a unitary and wide character, superseding 'traditional' local isolation, regional, and language barriers (CEH 1999: 166).

The combination of raised expectations through development programs, the dissemination of new ideas, worsening economic conditions (especially inflation and land scarcity), limited channels of formal political participation, and increased mobilisation capacity with the development of movements and leadership was explosive.

[51] The working conditions of seasonal labour were savagely exploitative, poorly paid, and provided little in the way of food and sanitation.

By the mid 1970s, new increasingly militant organisations such as the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (The United Peasants Movement - CUC, the first peasant organisation with a Mayan leadership) started to consolidate and trade union activity was on the rise. In the midst of this general climate of political and economic frustration, in 1976 there was a devastating earthquake which killed 27,000 and made a million people homeless in the central regions of Guatemala (Dunkerley 1988: 142). State response to the disaster was poor (the army led state was not geared or trained to deal with humanitarian emergencies) adding to economic woes and to the general sense of dissatisfaction, but also creating various networks of support and solidarity between communities.[52] Protest, strikes, and repression in the shape of assassinations of leaders marked the beginning of a process of polarisation leading up to the explosion of mass violence between 1978 and 1984.

During the course of the 1970s, the FAR-PGT guerrilla structures were revived whilst two new guerrilla organisations appeared in the early 1970s: the *Ejericto Guerillero de los Pobres* (EGP), and the *Organización del Pueblo en Armas* (ORPA). The guerrilla organisations of the 1970s were distinct from those that operated in the 1960s. Some old leaders and militants integrated the rebel groups, but by and large, it was a new generation that led or was recruited into the guerrilla groups. Once again, Cuba played an important role in providing ideological and strategic guidance as well as military training (CEH 1999: 172).

ORPA and the EGP had a *ladino* cadre and leadership but were clearly conscious that in order to overthrow the state, the rebels needed to build bases of support in the countryside and specifically from amongst the indigenous population. The geographical areas of activity of the EGP and ORPA corresponded to zones of high indigenous presence (see Table 7 below). Whilst all the guerrilla groups understood the importance of indigenous support in the struggle, the logic of class war and class alliances prevailed.

However, ORPA considered racism and the subordinated position of indigenous peoples to take precedence over class issues, both in terms of mobilising support and in programmatic terms. ORPA remained a secret operation for most of the 1970s, working in close contact with civilian populations where it set up networks of support. ORPA also spent a long time training small but highly effective combatants, refraining from engaging in open military activities until 1979. Another aspect that set ORPA apart from the remaining guerrilla organisations was it insisted that social movements and organisations should remain autonomous from the guerrilla group, where they could function in parallel but needed to remain independent.

FAR, the PGT, but especially the EGP had different ideas, seeking to establish strong links and eventually the domination of the social movement and organisations, thus coordinating mass political mobilisation with armed uprising. According to the CEH, mass organisations in Guatemala emerged independently from the Guerrilla groups (1975-1978) but became closely associated with the rebels from 1978 onwards. The consequences for thousands of activists were lethal; the campaign of repression undertaken by the state was of unprecedented violence.

The nature of violence in Guatemala is examined in detail below, but it is important to note here that the increase of guerrilla activities in the late 1970s (inspired in part by events in Nicaragua and El Salvador) was met with a campaign of state terror. The

[52] Poor state response contributed to the proliferation of US based Protestant churches in Guatemala, where the latter were very active in organising economic and spiritual aid and relief. The opening pages of Annis (1987) provides a memorable illustration of this state of affair. Sheldon Annis, (1987) *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town*, Texas Pan American Series, Austin: University of Texas Press

worst episodes of violence took place during the regimes of General Romero Lucas Garcia (1978-1982) and his successor General Efraín Rios Montt (1982-1983). Violence persisted in a less indiscriminate fashion after 1983, but counterinsurgency activities designed to bring rural areas under the direct control of the armed forces persisted. Communities were subjected to a regime of fear, control, and unequivocal submission. By the mid 1980s, the guerrilla movement was strategically defeated (in the sense that they had lost the capacity to overthrow the state), where over one hundred thousand lay dead and the social movement leadership had been decimated. For instance, of the 75 founding members of the CUC, only five survived the repression.

The Guatemalan armed forces policy of mass brutality was met by widespread international condemnation. The Reagan Administration's support for the army's counterinsurgency policies was kept in check by the US Congress, which scrutinised military and economic assistance.[53] International opprobrium combined with a deepening economic crisis (war and recession hit Guatemala very hard) and the army's apparent defeat of the rebels all contributed to weaken the military's claim to govern. The pressure to bring into effect a transfer to civilian rule was growing, including from the army's civilian allies, sidelined from power since the beginning of the 1970s.

By 1986, Guatemala had a new constitution and a newly elected Christian Democrat president. The period between the re-emergence of civilian political actors (1986) and the signing of the final peace agreement (December 1996) consisted of a limited and highly contested transition to civilian rule. Behind closed doors, a power struggle between 'constitutional' and hard-line factions in the army was clearly going on, but the armed forces still succeeded in maintaining a public façade of unity. The secretive and inaccessible nature of the institution makes it difficult to know the intimate detail of military politics. However, up until then, internal divisions between the armed forces had tended to relate to power struggle, or in the case of Rios Montt's coup, dislodging a General whose corrupt practices were such as to sully the 'good' name of the army and lower the morale of the troops (unacceptable in the midst of a counterinsurgency campaign). New divisions and debates were emerging within the armed forces relating to the nature of civil military relations, with key factions of the institution rejecting the notion of sharing power with civilians. However, coups attempts were unsuccessful and very gradually the army started to become a less prominent actor. Throughout the 1980s however, the stepping back of the army often appeared cosmetic and constituted more of a power sharing agreement with civilians than a substantive process of transition to democracy.

### *4.2 Violence: Actors, Ideology, and Counterinsurgency Campaigns*

#### 4.2.1 State Actors

> "La guerrilla se ha traído muchos colaboradores indios, por lo tanto los indios son subversivos. ¿Y cómo combatir la subversión? Evidentemente matando a los indios".[54]
>
> *Francisco Bianchi, vocero del Gobierno de Ríos Montt, cited in CEH (1999b:182)*

[53] The Carter Administration (1977-1981) suspended military assistance and sales but Argentina and Israel took over the supply networks from the US. The US provided Guatemala with some economic and military assistance, but the abysmal human rights record of the Guatemalan army, which included the murder of US AID staff in 1983, led to regular suspensions and close monitoring by Congress. Thus, there was no unrestrained US support and assistance to Guatemala but restrictions, even on military aid and supplies had a limited impact.

[54] Translation: The guerrillas have collaborated extensively with the Indians, because of this the Indians are subversives. And how do we combat such subversion? Obviously, by killing the Indians.

In this section of the paper, we turn towards the nature of the civil war and violence. The main focus here is on identifying the nature of the acts of violence which took place, and the actors mobilised to carry out these acts. A lot of attention is paid to the use of violence by the state, but the process of bringing rural areas under the control of the armed forces is also examined. Some questions relating to the guerrilla organisations are also raised. In the final part of this section, we identify some of the consequences of the Civil War. It is beyond the remit of the present work to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the conflict, these are too numerous to be given justice here. Rather, we summarise some of the existing findings, focusing in particular on the ethnic dimensions of war and its consequences.

The army developed counterinsurgency strategies during the course of the 1960s and 1970s. These were influenced by the US inspired strategic planning for meeting the 'international communist threat'.[55] The US funded and supported dual approaches to combat communism, combining repression and development. Developmentalist projects were set up under the 'alliance for progress' umbrella, whilst the US promoted the growth and increased role of armed forces through national security doctrines. The core of these Cold War doctrines was to argue that the main threats to national security stemmed from 'internal' rather than external enemies and that armies needed to reorder their role and mandate to face this internal enemy. In the Latin American context, the Cold War scenario read that states were more likely to face a communist challenge from within rather than an invasion from Cuba or the USSR and that security apparatuses needed to adapt to meet this challenge. By extension, the re-orienting of armed forces towards internal security also promoted increased participation in all aspect of politics, government and state policies. It is a matter of historical record that the US supported technically, morally, diplomatically and in many cases, financially the rightist military regimes that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s.

The counterinsurgency campaigns devised within the wider framework of national security doctrines amounted to giving *carte blanche* to the army to identify, find, and eliminate internal enemies. The key issue raised here relates to the question of how to define the 'enemy'. The 'internal enemy' were not only guerrilla organisations, but all individuals who sympathised with communist ideology; those who belonged to certain organisations (trade unions, social, students and progressive church groups) or those who opposed the regime. The norms and criteria for identifying the 'internal enemy' were arbitrarily defined by state agents, changed over time, and could be applied to any citizens (CEH 1999: 21). In many cases the enemy included large sectors of the civilian population guilty of nothing more than harbouring the 'wrong beliefs', the 'wrong thoughts', or as the war went on, those from Mayan background.

National security doctrines that identified 'internal enemies' of the state, served as the ideological basis for a process of militarization of Guatemala and for the development of counterinsurgency strategies that legitimized mass human rights abuses (CEH, 1999: 20). As the preceding sections highlighted, authoritarianism, violence, and racism have long shaped the contours of Guatemalan state and society. If these characteristics were prominent during peace times, the civil war made such traits even more salient (Carmack 1988). One of the changes that took place during the war was in the state use of force. The change was both qualitative and quantitative and unmistakably, Guatemalan state actors were responsible for the overwhelming majority of the violence and abuses which took place. The Guatemalan Truth Commission examination of the civil war published a thirteen volume report where 93% of the human rights abuses

[55] In turn, the military and repressive aspects of counterinsurgency were deeply influenced by the 'lessons learned' during the US Vietnam and French Algerian War experiences.

recorded by the commission are attributed to the armed forces and their allies (CEH 1999c: 42). Violence was present throughout the conflict in Guatemala, but it varied in its shape, form and intensity according to time and geographical location. The worse violence took place between 1978-1984, when 91% of known cases of human rights violations took place (ibid) and the worse cases of violence took place in the areas of Quiché, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz and Chimaltennago (CEH 1999b).

The central, declared objective of counterinsurgency was to destroy the 'communist' threat in Guatemala. What this actually meant and how to achieve it changed during the conflict. Undoubtedly, this included defeating insurgent groups, combatants but also civilian supporters and sympathisers. This loose conception of who or what constituted the enemy covered an ever increasing number of 'suspects'. Over time, large sections of the population were brought under the control of the army and their allies, with constant monitoring of movement, behaviour, and activities. The army's methods were violence, brutality and repression. This included the denial of political and legal rights (right of association, freedom of expression and such likes as well judicial protection and recourses), forced disappearances, arbitrary executions, torture, campaigns of intimidation, sexual violence, acts of extreme cruelty, forced recruitment, displacing population and scorched earth policy including massacres of entire communities.

The army developed its fighting and fire capacity (notably by increasing personnel through forced recruitment), but also developed important networks of intelligence to monitor and control the population. These networks were set up both within the security apparatus and also amongst supporters in the civilian population. Counterinsurgency campaigns thus mobilised an extensive security apparatus which included a variety of actors: the armed forces, but also a series of adjuncts civilians in various legal and illegal guises.

- **The armed forces** (the regular forces in the army and air forces and special task forces set up in the 1970s). Special units played key role in the terror, such as the ultra violent Kaibil or the Mobile Military Police deployed in rural areas.[56]
- **Intelligence services**, (especially the G-2 and the *Estado Mayor Presidencial* famed for organizing intimidation campaigns, disappearances and extra-judicial killings).
- **Police forces,** the National police (Policía Nacional) in urban zones and Guardia de Hacienda in rural areas.
- **Death squads,** (comprising security personnel and committed civilian supporters carrying out illegal terror campaigns).
- **Civilians** (military commissioners with administrative power) and the self-defence civilian patrols (the *Patrullas de Autodefensa civil* - PACS).

The use of state violence in Guatemala took two distinct forms: selective and indiscriminate violence. Selective violence involved incidents where opponents of the regime were 'disappeared' (kidnapped and killed), occurring throughout the territory and throughout the period of conflict. Death squad activities were a central feature of this aspect of prolonged terror in Guatemala. Although present throughout the country, they were of particular importance in urban areas, notably in Guatemala City.[57] Death squads and intelligence services coordinated operations to terrorise and assassinate loosely defined 'enemies' (political and social activists, but also local leaders such as

[56] For details of how the armed forces developed its strategy and structure for counterinsurgency purposes see CEH (1999b:48-69).

[57] All forms of terror were present in some of the rural areas (both targeted and indiscriminate mass killings). Violence was widespread, sustained and substantial in urban areas but did not take on the genocidal character which was present in some areas of the countryside.

priests, teachers and mayors). The first death squads appeared in 1966, funded by businessmen associated with the extreme right, but they were controlled by the armed forces (CEH 1999b:112). Death squads were led and staffed by security forces staff (intelligence, army and police forces) alongside militant extreme right-wing civilians as well as criminals recruited by the security forces.

By acting clandestinely, security institutions could deny participating in killings civilians, thus muddying the waters and maintaining appearances. The latter was important for keeping international condemnations at bay and became even more important after the transition to civilian rule in 1986 when minimising overt human right abuse become a real concern. The death squads' *modus operandi* was to threaten those it regarded as undesirable, namely political or trade union leaders but also students, university lecturers or activists that dared to oppose the dominant sector. Threats often took the form of publishing lists of names of the 'undesirables' who then faced a choice: cease their activities, go into exile, or the possibility of death. These were not idle threats and many of those who received threats were executed.[58]

In the late 1970s, increasing social unrest and increasing guerrilla activities was met by unrestrained, indiscriminate and generalised state violence. Once the army established a connection between geographical areas, guerrilla groups, and Mayan groups, communities then became a target. Using Mao Zedong's famous metaphor, Rios Mont is often quoted for having said: "The guerrillas are the fish; the people are the sea. If you want to catch the fish, you have to drain the sea."[59] Massacres, scorched earth policies, and forcing displacement were how the policy of 'draining the sea' was put in practice. Generalised violence culminated in 1982-1983 when entire communities were tortured, raped and killed by the armed forces. The CEH registered over 620 cases of massacres attributed to the armed forces (CEH 1999d: 43).[60]

The savagery of the acts committed should not be mistaken for gratuitous violence, the cold logic of counterinsurgency planning was still at play. What requires examination is the ease with which the army labelled entire civilian communities as enemies of the state and ordered their destruction with no apparent regard for the human cost of such operations. This is the point where Guatemala's ethnic divisions rooted in racism, unequal power relations, mistrust, suspicion, and fear played a part. On the one hand, fears of Indian revolts have been prominent amongst non-indigenous sectors of the population in Guatemala since colonial times and extreme violence has long characterised disproportionate state responses to protest and uprising of indigenous communities (Carmack 1988). This suggests that mass violence would better be understood within a tradition of intense repression of 'Indian revolts'. Thus, the suspicion of indigenous peoples as potential threats and enemies was latent, already present and re-kindled and increased by the emergence of a communist threat.[61]

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[58] Amnesty International recorded over 3,200 death squad killings between January and November 1979 and 41 members of the University of San Carlos faculty were assassinated within eight months in 1980 (Dunkerley 1988: 478).

[59] See for instance the Texas Observer, 7th June 2002.

[60] The CEH devised a definition of massacres whereby massacres were deemed to have taken place when no less than five individuals were killed in the same locality by the same actors (i.e. PACS or army). In addition to killings, massacres in Guatemala were characterised by the accumulation of other human rights abuses such as torture, cruelty, rapes and the destruction of property (CEH 199b:250-251).

[61] Armed struggle and Guerrilla challenges have taken place in many countries in Latin America, including three Central American countries. It is unlikely to be coincidental that the worse repression has come in countries with substantial indigenous populations (with the notable exception of Mexico). Notably too, the human rights abuses committed in Brazil, Argentina and Chile are known the world over but few in Europe, the US and even Latin America are aware of the extent of abuse in Peru and Guatemala. Both Dunkerley (1988) and Jonas (2000) suggest that racism plays an important part there too.

Generalised violence grew from the same logic as selective violence where operations that sought to neutralise 'insurgents' developed into full blown scorched earth policies (CEH 1999b: 23-24). Scorched earth policies involved the systematic destruction of communities, killing inhabitants as well as ensuring that villages became inhabitable (that is, the demolition of houses and buildings, as well as the burning of furniture and crops). The violence took a collective and extreme character, affecting men, women and children regardless of involvement in the armed struggle. The killings and violence recorded by the CEH in the course of its thirteen volumes report are truly abhorrent. The cruelty is indeed so intense as almost to provoke disbelief. Massacres and scorched earth policies erupted in areas of guerrilla presence (especially the EGP). Massacres were ordered where the armed forces suspected communities of supporting the guerrillas, but also in order to 'clean' up key geographical areas of civilians population, to facilitate army operations (CEH, 1999b: 28-29). Table 5 below indicates that although not all areas with a high indigenous presence suffered massacres (Totonicapan being the obvious exception), all the major sites of massacres took place in areas with a high number of indigenous inhabitants.

**Table 5. Number of massacres committed by state actors, by department**

| Department | Number of massacres recorded by CEH | Percentage of Indigenous population (1994) |
|---|---|---|
| El Quiché | 327 | 85.70 |
| Huehuetenango | 83 | 66.10 |
| Chimaltenango | 63 | 79.40 |
| Alta Verapaz | 56 | 90.80 |
| Baja Verapaz | 26 | 56.70 |
| San Marcos | 15 | 43.3 |
| Solola | 14 | 95.20 |
| El Peten | 12 | 27.00 |
| Chiquimula | 8 | 30.10 |
| Quetzaltenango | 5 | 60.60 |
| Guatemala | 3 | 12.80 |
| Izabal | 2 | 23.20 |
| Escuintla | 2 | 10.30 |
| Suchitepequez | 2 | 58.00 |
| Retalhuleu | 1 | 33.90 |
| Zacapa | 1 | 16.00 |
| Totonicapán | 0 | 96.90 |
| Sacatepequez | 0 | 42.60 |
| Jalapa | 0 | 38.5 |
| Jutlapa | 0 | 5.20 |
| Santa Rosa | 0 | 2.7 |
| El Progreso | 0 | 2.1 |

*Source*: CEH (1999c: Appendix 1), National Census statistical data cited in Adams, R. and Bastos (2003:66).

An integral part of counterinsurgency strategy was to bring rural populations (long ignored) under the control of the state. Intelligence monitoring through telephone tapping and the infiltration of groups and activities by state agents became commonplace, both in rural and urban areas (CEH, 1999b: 30).

Formal mechanisms to control the movement of people and supplies were instituted throughout Guatemala, including through the creation of civilian patrols at local level, frequent road blocks, and ID checks. Networks of informants (*orejas* or 'ears') were recruited amongst the civilian population for the continuous supply of information.

The mobilisation of networks of supporters amongst civilians, especially the *comisionados militares*, played an important part in effecting control at local level. The *comisionados* were generally civilians who had links with the armed forces, either though having worked for the army or spent time in the armed forces (national service). In some cases they were retired army officers and in others militants of the extreme right whose loyalty to the army was not in question. The post of *comisionados*, set up in the late 1930s, was conceived as a 'bridge' between civilians and the armed forces. During the War, the importance and authority of these men increased drastically. The *comisionados* acted as representatives of the armed forces at local level, displacing civil or traditional authorities. They monitored activities in communities, identified young men for forced recruitment into the army, participated in death squad activities and, in the 1980s, oversaw the running of the civilian patrols (CEH 1999b: 158-181).[62] *Comisionados* introduced high levels of violence in communities on a daily basis. Official data has estimated that the number of *comisionados* (excluding their numerous auxiliaries) oscillated between four to six thousand in the 1970s, then rising to twelve thousand by the end of the 1980s (CEH 1999b: 168).

From 1981, the armed forces started to develop the civil patrols (PACs). In theory, civil patrols were supposed to be voluntary organisations to prevent the incursion of guerrillas into villages. Originally, PACs members were indeed army supporters keen to receive arms and training. By 1982 however, increasing number of boys and men were coerced into patrolling duties as part of the army plan to establish control over civilian communities.[63] As the role and profile of the PACs increased, enrolment became compulsory. Those who refused to patrol became suspects and those whose patrolling efforts were not deemed convincing enough by the armed forces risked being executed.

> "*Depués de la masacre llega el Ejercito a obligarlos a organizarse en las patrullas; como la gente se asusta todos se organizan rápidamente*"[64]
>
> Testimony C 2210, CEH 1999b:197

> *"Si alguien se negaba a patrullar a los dos días ya no estaba, si hubiera sido voluntario nadie se hubiera metido. Estuvimos dos años sin poder salir a trabajar a las parcelas*"[65]
>
> Testimony C11018. CEH 1999b:197

The PACs became institutionalised during General Efraín Ríos Montt's regime as part of the 'Guns and Beans' programme and played a key part in bringing rural communities under the control of the armed forces. PAC activities consisted of controlling the movements of local populations, maintaining curfews, identifying suspects and also in participating in counterinsurgency activities (ambush, tracking guerrillas, burying the

[62] The position of head of civil patrol was distinct from that of *comisionado* but in practice the two often overlapped (CEH 1999b: 162). The activities of the *comisionados* were many, including participating in assassination, torture, and burying victims in clandestine cemeteries.

[63] Age was no impediment to forced enrolment in the PACs, the CEH recorded cases of people of 12 and 70 years old being forced to patrol (CEH 1999b: 201).

[64] Translation: "After the massacre comes the militars forcing them to get organised into patrols; as peopleget scared they all get quickly organised".

[65] Translation: "If anyone refused to patrol, that person disappeared within two days, if that person would have been a voluntary none would have intervened. We spent two years without working the land".

dead, rape, torture and assassination). Most cases of abuses by PAC members reported to the Truth Commission occurred in Quiché, Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz, Chimaltenango and Totonicapán. Table 6 below outlines the five most frequent types of human rights abuse committed by PACs (1981-1994), as reported by the truth commission.

**Table 6. Five most common cases of abuses committed by PACs (1981-1994)**

| Type of abuse | Percentage of abuse committed by PACs, amongst the 5 most frequent types of abuse |
|---|---|
| Arbitrary executions | 44 |
| Torture, cruelty, inhuman or degrading treatment | 27 |
| Illegal detention | 18 |
| Forced disappearance | 7 |
| Rape | 2 |

*Source*: CEH 1999b:230

By 1983, the army started to implement a pacification campaign in rural areas, to institutionalise control over rural dwellers. This included rounding up civilian populations from conflict areas into purpose built 'model' villages where they were 're-educated' and forced to live under the watchful eyes of the army. Displaced populations that refused internment in the villages were given 'belligerent status' by the army, forcing these communities to live clandestinely in forests and mountains where they were regularly bombed.[66] In the 'model villages', the distribution of food was one of the chief mechanisms of control over daily lives, in exchange for which the villagers were expected to provide free labour (public and private work). Approximately 50,000 came to live in the model villages as part of a pacification strategy.

Further aspects of controlling the population had ideological and psychological aspects, including campaigns of propaganda and disinformation in the media, schools and town halls. On the one hand, this meant tapping into anti-communism, adopted as state ideology after the fall of Arbenz in 1954, when communism was portrayed as a totalitarian ideology and - playing upon patriotism - as a foreign import. The army used a series of techniques to undermine any nascent credibility or legitimacy of the guerrillas such as committing acts of violence disguised as rebels as well as carrying out punitive campaigns. Collective punishment, where villagers were killed following guerrilla activities was a common practice. This sent a strong message to the rebels that there were no victimless acts of sabotage. On the other hand, propaganda increasingly succeeded in convincing many 'neutral' civilians that the rebels were in fact responsible for breaking the peace and 'provoking' state violence. Ideological indoctrination, propaganda and psychological manipulation worked in conjunction with state terror to bring the population under the control of the armed forces, notably with programmes of re-education of civilian populations(CEH 1999b:41). Once again, the theme that the guerrilla was to blame for the violence inflicted upon the population, featured heavily in these programmes.

These activities were complemented by programmes designed to shore up support for the armed forces, where repression and coercion were complemented by activities designed to win the hearts and minds of the people. Operation 'guns and beans' and 'roof, work and tortilla', implemented from 1983 onwards, reflect this approach. These campaigns included civic action programmes, where the armed forces took a leading role in developing infrastructure, in distributing food, and in bringing health, education, as well as agrarian development to communities.[67] It must be noted that the army's campaigns to 'win the hearts and minds' of the population encountered a significant degree of success. Both Stoll (1993) and LeBot (1995) note that the shift from chaos

[66] These communities became known as CPR: Comunidades de Población en Resistencia.

[67] Civic action programmes were central feature of counterinsurgency campaign and national security doctrines. For a thorough and illuminating examination of national security doctrines and practices see Loveman, Brian and Davies, Thomas M Jr, eds., (1997) *The Politics of Antipolitics: The Military in Latin America*, Wilmington: University of Nebraska Press

and indiscriminate killings towards the 'order' of pacification campaigns had a deep impact on a traumatised population. From 1983 onwards, siding with the army was of clear benefit to most rural dwellers: it avoided violence and permitted access to certain key goods, foodstuffs, and services. In the case of isolated communities that had long been ignored by the state, this was an important change. Thus in the minds of many, Rios Mont is associated with this process of restoring order and bringing benefits to those prepared to side with the armed forces. This aspect of the counterinsurgency campaign is important in explaining Rios Mont's political success in post-Peace Accord Guatemala, on the base of strong support in the countryside.

#### 4.2.2 The URNG

The *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG) grouped together four distinct organisations: the *Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajadores* (PGT, the communist party), the *Organización del Pueblo en Armas* (ORPA), the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* (FAR) and the Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP). The structure of the ethnic composition of the guerrilla group parallels that of state actors. The leaders (*comandantes*) tended to be middle class, educated *ladino*s with the troops encompassing some *ladino*s and a majority of indigenous combatants. However, unlike the army, entering the ranks of the guerrilla organisation as a combatant was a voluntary process. The numbers of combatants and URNG supporters have not yet been evaluated, principally because few now recognize having belonged or sympathized with the guerrilla organization.

The PGT was not well organised militarily, but was deeply influential. Most of the commanders in the guerrilla groups had been formed under the wing of the party. Internal divisions over strategy (armed or political struggle) remained a key feature of the PGT and efforts to set up independent armed functions (1967-1986) never really succeeded (CEH 1999b: 238). Overall, the PGT tended to consider its role more as that of the political vanguard of the revolutionary effort, whilst maintaining fractious relations with armed groups (supporting FAR but splitting in 1968, and reluctant unification with other groups in the late 1970s). In Table 7, we summarize some of the main characteristics of Guatemala's Guerrilla groups, including their approaches, strategies, ideologies, geographical location and social bases of support.

.

**Table 7. Summary of the main characteristics of URNG groups**

*Source*: Summary derived from CEH (1999b: 235-300)

| URNG groups | Year set up | Ideological framework | Main engine for revolution and strategy | Position re: inter-ethnic relations | Relationship with social movement and social base | Key Geographical areas |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PGT** | Armed factions 1962-1968 (FAR), 1976-1978 (COMIL) | Orthodox Marxist, class war approach | Class war/Proletariat<br><br>Political organisation, sporadic military activities | Incidental and subordinate to wider class issues | Some links with social organisations<br><br>Communist party followers and militants | Communist activists and sympathisers over most of the national territory |
| **FAR** | 1968: split from PGT | Orthodox Marxist, class war approach | Class war/Proletariat<br><br>Military activities combined with political organisation and rising consciousness | Incidental and subordinate to wider class issues | Some links with social organisations<br><br>-Banana Plantation workers and small producer in east<br>-workers, students, middle class communists | -1960s:Zacapa, Izabal, San Marcos Retalhuleu, Quetzaltenago<br><br>Alter 1960s defeat in areas above: Guatemala, Peten |
| **ORPA** | 1972<br>Joined URNG 1982 | Revolutionary Nationalist, non-aligned. | Racism, position of Indigenous peoples in society<br><br>Pragmatic cross class alliances, military activities after 7 years of preparation in communities | Indigenous actors key to victory | Autonomy of social organisation | Sierra Madre (central Highlands, San Marcos, Solola, Xela, Retalhuleu)<br><br>Boca Costa<br>Guatemala (defeated 1981) |
| **EGP** | 1972<br>Alliance with FAR and sections of PGT from 1979 | Marxist Leninist | Class war, ethnic divisions and inequalities<br><br>GPP: Guerra Popular Prolongada, Military activities and political organisation. Social movement essential | Acknowledged importance of ethnic issues, attempted to integrate ethnic questions in Marxist doctrine but ultimately class unity prevailed | Strong link with social organisation | Ixcan (Quiche)<br>Ixil area (Quiche)<br>Southern coast<br>Guatemala |

There are well established debates within Guatemalan historiography regarding the role and responsibilities of the guerrilla organisations during the civil war, notably with regards to loss of human lives.[68] Some raise questions relating to the legitimacy of taking up arms in the first place and the extent to which this was bound to provoke a violence response from the state (ibid, CEH 1999b: 235). Yet, it is also important not to fall prey to *post-hoc* interpretations of history. First, it is important to recall that few foresaw the extreme form of state response. Second, there was a general climate that encouraged guerrilla warfare. Internationally, Cuba in the 1960s and Nicaragua in the 1970s both inspired and facilitated armed struggle. Third, it is essential to point out that authoritarianism and violent repression *preceded* the armed uprising and that peaceful avenues of change and participation had been tightly shut in counter-revolutionary Guatemala.

Other and perhaps more substantive issues relating to the guerrilla groups concern the URNG's use of forces and violent activities, whether they coerced civilian groups into providing help, and the extent to which the URNG put civilian lives at risk during the 1982-1983 period of generalised violence. As armed groups involved in a revolutionary struggle, the URNG by definition used violent means. Guerrilla activities used acts of sabotage on strategic targets (bridges, roads, *fincas* and the like), attacked military personnel and facilities, committed kidnappings, and murdered targets. However, although violence and violent means were central features of Guerrilla strategies, they never took the generalised and cruel forms of the armed forces. Table 8 summarises the five most reported cases of human rights abuse committed by the URNG.

**Table 8. Percentage share amongst the five most frequent type of abuse committed by the guerrillas**

| Type of Abuse | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Arbitrary execution | 63 |
| Torture, cruelty, inhumane and degrading treatment | 6 |
| Disappearance | 5 |
| Kidnapping | 3 |
| Grievous bodily harm | 3 |

*Source*: CEH, 1999b: 429

Table 8 indicates that executions were the most common type of abuse committed by the guerrilla groups. Executions by the URNG were typically targeted at army informants, key allies or personnel of the army, and the business elite. The EGP in particular ran a campaign of 'popular justice' where those deemed to oppress or collaborated with the army were executed by the guerrillas (CEH, 1999c: 431).[69] Cases of executions increased rapidly in the early 1980s, with the criteria for executions clearly slipping out of control, from killing *comisionados* or mayors who boasted of 'killing Indians', to murdering individuals deemed to be collaborators for being employed in enterprises controlled by the army (ibid). Many of the critiques of the EGP (Le Bot 1995; Stoll 1993) point towards this slippage into a logic where partisanship was expected of the population from both sides: the army and the guerrilla with civilians left in the middle. The CEH detailed, ten distinct occurrences of massacres committed by the EGP between 1981 and 1982, where the guerrillas killed between twelve and seventy five individuals identified as army collaborators (CEH 1999c: 473-481).

[68] For an overview of some of the debates and issues see: Piero Gleijeses, (1997) "Grappling with Guatemala's Horror," *Latin American Research Review* 3.1. The best known critique of EGP activities in the Ixil triangle is provided by David Stoll: David Stoll, (1993) *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala,* New York: Columbia University Press. Outlined in a less provocative manner, but equally thoughtful and incisive, see Yvon Le Bot, (1995) *La Guerra En Tierras Mayas: Comunidad, Violencia Y Modernidad En Guatemala (1970-1992)*, trans. Maria Antonia Neira Bigorra, Mexico (D.F): Fondo de Cultura Economica. Gleijeses (1997) and Jonas (2000) answer some of these critiques.

[69] For typical illustrations of these cases of 'revolutionary Justice' see CEH (1999c:430-467).

It is important to acknowledge the abuses committed by the guerrillas, but neither should they be exaggerated. There were elements of coercion in the relationship between civilian communities and guerrillas, especially with the EGP, but overall, coercion does not appear to have been the defining characteristic of the relationship. Violence and violent means were central features of guerrilla strategies, but they never took the generalised and cruel forms of the violence carried out by the armed forces. The CEH attributed a total of 3% of recorded cases of human right abuses to the URNG, further mentioning that most abuses were committed by the EGP and FAR, with few denunciations against ORPA.

Finally, a last point must be made regarding the guerrillas and their relationship with civilian groups, especially sympathisers. Encouraged by swelling numbers of supporters, by the victory of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) in Nicaragua and by the advances of the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberación Nacional) in El Salvador, the Guatemalan guerrillas opted to launch a series of offensives in 1980-1981, convinced that they stood a chance of overthrowing the Guatemalan state. In the event that guerrilla forces overstretched themselves, and when the ultra violent campaign of the state started, the guerrillas could do little but retreat and watch as entire communities were butchered. Many from within the ranks of the URNG currently admit a degree of responsibility for these events, that a priority of the guerrillas should have been to ensure that they had the capacity to support and protect civilians, especially their supporters, but this basic requirement was overlooked in the haste to launch the 'final offensive'. To this day, resentment against the guerrillas is perceptible: expectations were raised within communities but when the repression came, the guerrillas fled and civilian communities were left to pay the price. If resentment is real enough within the ranks of those who used to sympathise with the URNG, it is of course doubly true for those who strove for neutrality.[70]

> "*La guerrilla no hizo nada para protegerla gente. Simplemente dejaron al Ejercito masacrar las aldeas*"[71]
>
> Testimony C 6251, 1999b:298

### *4.3 Impact and Consequences of War*

In this final part of the section on violence, we consider some of the impacts and consequences of violence. First, we consider how violence and counterinsurgency targets affected Mayan communities, identifying some of the consequences of such violence. Second, we briefly sketch broader issues regarding inter-ethnic relations since the end of the conflict. This section is short and limited in scope, in part because many aspects of the consequences of war are only beginning to become apparent. Thus, this section signals some issues and some possible avenues of research.

In its record and analysis of human rights abuses and acts of violence, the Guatemalan Truth Commission not only considered abuses committed against individuals, but also those committed against the Mayan groups, finding that a whole set of policies and activities by the state affected the existence and integrity of this group (CEH 1999b: 171-210). The economic cost of the civil war has not yet been quantified according to ethnic groups.[72] There is little doubt however, that the conflict exerted tremendous pressure upon the indigenous economy, already characterized by acute and institutionalized poverty. In conflict areas, such as el Quiché, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz and Chimaltenango, housing, crops and livestock were

[70] Resentment extend to the peace accords too, in the sense that leaders and the cadres of the URNG succeeded in becoming legitimate actors, most finding well paid position, but the masses of supporters have very little to show for thirty six years of armed engagement

[71] Translation: Guerrillas did nothing to protect the people. They simply left the villages to be massacred.

[72] The CEH evaluated some of the economic costs of war which are summarised in Appendix 4.

routinely destroyed during the most violent phases of the war. In these areas, forced displacement was one of the main consequences of the conflict, primarily affecting indigenous households who were the targets of mass repression. Estimates for forced displacement vary between 500,000 and one and half million people during the early 1980s (CEH 1999b: 212). Some sought refuge in neighbouring communities, some over the border in Mexico and others settled elsewhere in the country, notably in the capital (Adams, R. and Bastos 2003: 246-250). Displaced people lived eminently precarious lives, having lost their livelihood and housing. Furthermore, the army considered those who fled to be suspects, hence, they often distributed the land and property of displaced population to their supporters (but rarely transferred titles). This highly divisive policy gave rise to bitter land disputes - including outbreaks of violence - between the old and new occupiers in the aftermath of civil war. The absence of a reliable land title register and the fact that displacement often entailed losing documentation exacerbated disputes (CEH 1999c: 15).

In economic terms, counterinsurgency campaigns had an impact on most communities, even those outside conflict areas.[73] For most of the 'dark decade' (1975-1985), the army monitored and restrained: networks of supplies (in cases they should be destined for the guerrillas), as well as the movement of population, affecting most aspects of commerce and production activities. The restrictions on movements meant that moving outside the boundaries of villages could be forbidden, impeding the cultivation of distant land plot or the gathering of fuel and foodstuffs. Practices of forced recruitment in the PACs and army were rigorously implemented despite men's labour commitments. In the smaller the villages, frequent 24 hours 'patrolling' duties came, regardless of whether patrolling coincided with a market day or the harvest season.

The impact of forced recruitment did not only imply economic loss. National service in the army was a brutal, traumatic, and a-culturing experience for many young Mayan men. As Adams (1995) points out, the armed forces in Guatemala have long relied upon indigenous men for swelling the number of troops, mostly because the authorities found it easier to impose forced recruitment on them than on the wealthier, better educated, and more influential *Ladino* males. Once in the barracks, young Mayans were systematically brutalised. Beatings often occurred for the simple reason that they did not understand orders given in Spanish. Indigenous recruits were prohibited from speaking their languages and were compelled to distance themselves from their own cultural norms and values. This was an essential aspect of training as recruits were fully expected to commit acts of brutality against indigenous communities themselves. The experience of young Mayan men in the army thus raises two distinct sets of issues which are not easily evaluated: some relate to processes of acculturation and some relate to the legacy of violence within communities.

Violence and repression affected both the biological and cultural continuities of indigenous lives (CEH 1999b: 187). The armed forces carried out policies that appear to have no other purpose than to destroy Mayan communities: physically and culturally. The armed forces thus abused sacred religious sites of the Maya and systematically undermined, displaced or eliminated Mayan authorities. The attacks on the physical integrity of Mayan groups included selective killings of indigenous leaders and representatives, mass killings, public torture, and scorched earth policies. The CEH also noted that specific cases of extreme cruelty such as forced anthropophagia and coprophagia, which were reported solely in testimonies by Mayan people. Similarly, Mayan women accounted for 88.7% of the reported cases of rape (CEH 1999b:187-188). Rape had profound consequences for individuals and communities resulting in cases of rejection by partners or the community (where marriage becomes impossible), cases of abortion and infanticide, and a pervading sense of shame and isolation for the victims. The

[73] Carole Smith's (1988) excellent ethnographic examination of rural areas of Totonicapan pithily illustrates the economic hardship endured by communities, even those that were not directly affected by acute violence. Her article is published in Carmack (1988).

Guatemalan Truth Commission's careful examination of violence concluded that based on current United Nations definitions and criteria, acts of genocide had been committed by the armed forces against five specific Mayan groups: the Ixil, Achi, Kaqchikel, q'anjob'al and the k'iche'.[74]

In a volume that examines inter-ethnic relations since 1944, Adams, R. and Bastos (2003) conclude that in the post-war context, ancient hostility and suspicion remain the defining characteristic of Mayan-*Ladino* relations but that there are significant variations at local level, and with different manifestations at general level. In certain communities, ethnic relations are still 'traumatised'. In Rabinal, a community devastated by massacres and violence, the authors note that the *Ladino* population refuses to discuss the issue of ethnic relations. The achi Mayans firmly believe that the *ladino*s had fully intended to 'finish off' the indigenous group. Yet, it is the *ladino* population that express fear of 'ethnic or racial war' whilst the indigenous population maintains a discourse of 'respect and equality of opportunities' between groups (ibid).

Perhaps one of the most salient characteristics of post-conflict Guatemala is to be found in the huge variety of responses to the phenomenon of ethnic repression imposed by the state. There are no clear regional, let alone national trends emerging in Guatemala. This certainly relates to the wide array of post-war scenarios and settings, but may also reflect the fact that localised ethnographic accounts dominate research in Guatemala, thus emphasising the local and specific over the more general.

On the one hand, the devastation in the areas most affected by the war has to be noted. Some communities particularly in Huehuetenango and Quiché were dislocated by the war. The CEH (1999) outlined that the social and cultural fabric of many communities had been devastated by violence and the various counterinsurgency campaigns. A logical outcome of the brutal counterinsurgency campaigns of the army would be to lead to a diminution of the willingness of individuals to self identify as indigenous. This seems to be the case in the region of Huehuetenango. Household survey data in this region indicates that only 17% of those who answered the questions relating to ethnic identity self identified as indigenous (ENCOVI, 2000).[75] Many communities of Huehuetenango are still affected by the repression of traditional authorities, Mayan cultural practices, and beliefs. The reconstruction struggle relates to rebuilding the economy, social networks (war divisions and allegiances still run deep) and leadership, but also to uncertain identities and culture. Yet, in many other cases, there are clear moves and processes of 'recuperating' Mayan culture at local level, reintroducing (and where they had long disappeared almost 'reinventing') traditional authorities and practices. Thus, the phenomenon of seeking ethnic 'anonymity' with the abandonment of outward markers of identity such as Mayan dress, languages, and practices was, in some cases, a temporary measure to guarantee survival.

On the other hand, some claim - especially amongst a new generation of Mayan intellectuals - that contemporary self-definition of Mayan identities is changing, no longer solely encompassing the local, rural, and traditional, but can also include modern and urban lifestyles, especially in the capital city. Finally, one word needs to be said about the emergence of Mayan organisations and movements since the beginning of the 1990s.[76] These movements and organisations are quite disparate, with a basic divide between 'classist' organisations that focus on socio-economic demands (the *Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina,* CONIC, the National Coordination of Indigenous and Peasants, for instance) and 'culturalist' ones which

[74] The definition of genocide is contained in resolution 260 (III), adopted by the general Assembly of the United Nations on 9th December 1948. The findings and methodology of the Guatemalan Truth Commission are detailed in CEH (1999b: 314-423).
[75] This figure comes from a preliminary examination of the household survey data with Dr Mancini and further analysis of the data set will need to be carried out to confirm the reliability of the data set.
[76] Two excellent volumes on the Pan-Mayan movement are Warren (1998) and Bastos and Camus (2003).

focus on issues of language and culture.[77] In spite of strong differences, the symbolic importance of the emergence of Mayan intellectuals and Mayan led movements who promote strong, overt and proud identities cannot be mistaken. This is indeed a sharp departure from the past.

One of the key experiences of the war was displacement. The Mayan Diaspora provoked by the war took different shapes from temporary displacement to neighbouring communities, to settling in the capital or in exile abroad. Such varying experiences led to different outcomes in terms of the consequences of displacement. Adams, R. and Bastos (2003: 246-248) identify a series of important questions relating to the relationship with the place of origins. Migration patterns prior to the war had affected the meaning of belonging to local communities. Forced displacement deepened this process of change. Exile in Mexico was dominated by sharing experience with other Mayans and some *ladino*s, where belonging to a locality became less important (ibid). For many, displacement entailed becoming bi-or trilingual in Mayan idioms (in exile or in the *Comunidades de Población en Resistencia,* CPRs -) as well as learning Spanish as a lingua franca. Returning to Guatemala, especially when it implied setting up new communities also gave new meaning and significance to the previously fixed sense of belonging to a community. Some clear indications of change are increasing occurrences of inter-ethnic marriage or marriage with distinct Mayan groups (Adams, R. and Bastos, 2003: 247). New communities have emerged that are no longer characterised by geographical location or certain dominant ethno-linguistic groups. Instead, new diverse and hybrid communities of 'returnees', of new and old displaced, of CPR and of demobilised guerrillas give new terms of references for the constitutions of communities. These are altering the social and ethnic landscape of Guatemala.

In Guatemala city, some researchers emphasise that since the beginning of mass migration of indigenous peoples to the city, differences in the perceptions of indigenous are emerging between lower class *ladino*s (some are more positive) on the one hand, and middle and upper class *ladino*s on the other (still negative). Racism remains prevalent, but there is also interest and curiosity about the nature of indigenous experiences and the increasing presence of the indigenous in church groups is also leading to the slow emergence of some anti-racist discourses. Another change, signalled by Adams, R. and Bastos (2003) was the exit of many *ladino*s from key indigenous communities such as Jacaltenango, Todos Santos, and San Andrés Semtabaj. To a degree, this process was initiated at the beginning of the 1970s, accelerated with the earthquake of 1976, and completed with the ultra-violence of the early 1980s. *Ladino*s and the Mayan groups fled the violence by going to the regional capitals or Guatemala, but many *Ladino*s failed to return to the communities.

Overall, the impact and consequences of the war on indigenous communities, ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations are difficult to gauge. This relates first to the fact that the conflict has added to what was already a period of important changes to Mayan communities since 1944 and substantial variations between communities caution against hasty generalisations. Second, difficulty in gauging the impact of war stems from the many dimensions of such a lengthy and violent war. War affected, amongst other things, the physical, economic, social and cultural integrity of Mayan groups. These various dimensions of the impact of conflict varied according to geographical location but in most cases, these dimensions were both interrelated and cumulative (for instance displacement has an economic, social and cultural impact). We also need to warn against a tendency (present work included) to portray indigenous people *solely* as 'victims' of the conflict, caught between two warring armies (i.e. the

[77] To a large extent the main divides between organisations reflect differences about war time allegiances. Many of the 'classist' organisations can be traced back to guerrilla allied movements. These old ties still create divisions, from those who had no such ties during the war but feel a commitment to 'Mayanism' to those who actively oppose or resent the guerrilla (Bastos and Camus 2003).

guerrilla and the armed forces).[78] Some indigenous people and communities did indeed find themselves in this unfortunate position, but many others played an active role either on the side of the guerrilla or the state. Such active participation on both sides of the conflict still needs to be examined in more details. Third, we still lack historical perspective in the sense that we do not know yet which changes will endure and which are temporary. Furthermore, 'change' itself is also open to interpretation, with a very fine line for instance between what constitutes the abandonment of identity and the adaptation of ethnic identity to new circumstances.

The last issue clearly throw us back to issues of self–identification, conceptions of indigenous identities and of 'inner' versus 'outer' markers of identity. We do not propose any further conclusions here than to suggest that some of these issues and questions should be revisited when we finalise our research.

## 5. The Guatemalan Peace Accords

In this final section of this paper, we examine three distinct issues: why and how Guatemala negotiated an end to the Civil War, the content of the peace accords and finally the current status of implementation of the Peace accords.

### *5.1 Bringing the War to an End: The Negotiation Process*

The Guatemalan civil war came to an end through a negotiated peace settlement between the Government of Guatemala and the guerrilla umbrella group URNG. The peace settlement took the form of a series of broad agreements (totalling over 300 provisions and articles) between the main contending forces, negotiated over a period of 9 years (see below). There were three main rounds of talks. The early stages of the negotiations (1987-1991) sought to establish the ground for peace talks between the two main parties (that is, agreeing on the notion of political settlement to the conflict and setting up agendas, Jonas 2000). Dissent between and within the dominant groups in Guatemala (the private sector/business elite and the Guatemalan armed forces) stalled the process for almost three years. The process which had looked all but dead was revitalised in 1993-94, this time with the participation of the UN which mediated and verified the process. The final round of talks ushered in another series of agreements and finalised the process in December 1996 (Conciliation Resources, 1997). .

A central aspect of the peace process in Guatemala was the role and importance of external actors. The 'external' push came from several sources, from regional peace initiatives and from international organisations such as the UN. The involvement of the US in Central American affairs during the Reagan administrations (1981-1989) was unmatched by the subsequent Bush (1989-1993) and Clinton (1993-2001) administrations, not least because of the passing of the Cold War (Sieder 1996). During the 1990s, there was a marked change in US policy from backing armed actors, to support for 'pro-democracy' political parties in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama. The weight of US influence in the region cannot be overstated and as a key player in the unfolding of civil wars in Central America, hence, US approval for negotiated peace (initially reluctant but increasing markedly after 1990) was essential.

In regional terms, the accords brokered by Costa Rica (Esquipulas II in 1987) of which Guatemala was a signatory, already promoted political resolution to the various civil wars.[79] A

[78] Examining the 1980s from the perspective of indigenous individuals or communities firmly on the government side is indeed long overdue.

[79] The approach promoted by President Arias of Costa Rica (a demilitarised country with a clear interest in promoting political over military solutions near its borders) was in sharp contrast to that promoted by Washington at the time and gained a degree of legitimacy amongst regional and some international actors, precisely because it had been formulated independently of the White House.

key aspect of Esquipulas II was a commitment by all countries to move towards negotiated political settlements of conflicts and 'free and fair' electoral processes (Sieder 1996). Esquipulas II, or the Arias Peace Plan, as it became known had few immediate direct consequences in Guatemala. However, the plan did introduce an alternative blueprint for ending the conflicts throughout the region and most important of all, the commitment to hold elections undertaken by Nicaragua led to the fall of the Sandinista regime following their loss and acceptance of the results in the general elections held in that country on 25th February 1990. This was a clear turning point in term of regional affairs that signalled the end of the Cold War, the end of the revolutionary leftist challenge in Central America, and crucially, the beginning of the end of the Central American civil wars.

By 1992, Guatemala was the only Central American country which still had an ongoing civil war, augmenting the pressure on the Guatemalan government to proceed with peace talks. The guerrillas were no longer in a position to contemplate overthrowing the government, but neither had the URNG been eradicated and periodic attacks on military targets prevented the armed forces from claiming victory. However, by 1990 the URNG was clearly voicing its intention to negotiate peace with the government. The armed forces had launched a series of 'final offensives' between 1987 and 1991 but in each case the promised elimination of the URNG failed to materialise. The pressure on the armed forces to negotiate grew concurrently with their inability to bring the conflict to a conclusion militarily. This was precisely the stage where collective international pressure tipped the balance towards a negotiated settlement (Conciliation Resources, 1997).

One key characteristic of the dynamic that underpinned the Guatemalan peace process was in the range of actors that participated in the process that included a multitude of national and international actors, brokers and mediators.[80] Not only were the actors numerous, but each presented varying degrees of weakness, incoherence, and internal divisions. The URNG was extremely weak, having seen its bases of support eroded following the repression of the early 1980s. Furthermore, it was composed of four distinct armed organisations which were not always in agreements. All in all, the peace negotiations were subjected to centrifugal forces reflecting the heterogeneous nature of the Guatemalan polity. This characteristic was observable at all stages of the proceedings, negotiations and implementation.

**National Actors[81]:**

- Governments of Guatemala (4 different administrations)
- The Armed forces (split over the issue of civilian governance and peace negotiations)
- The private sector or business elite (key vehicle: CACIF: *Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras* – Coordinating Committee of the Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Chambers)
- The URNG (Guerrillas):
- The Catholic Church (especially the Guatemalan Bishop conference)
- Official commissions: CNR (National Reconciliation Commission,1990-1991); COPAZ (Government Peace Commission, 1993-1996)
- Civil Society Assembly (1994-1996). An advisory body representing various sectors of Guatemalan society (only the private sector declined to participate).

**International Actors**

[80] For detailed description of the various actors see: Conciliation Resources, (1997) *Negotiating Rights: The Guatemalan Peace Process,* Available: http://www.c-r.org/accord/guat/accord2/contents.shtml, 12 may 2004.
[81] Ibid.

- The United Nations: provided observers from 1989 and maintained an office for monitoring human rights violations. The role and profile of the UN mission in Guatemala was increased after 1993, moderating talks and negotiations. In 1994, the UN also took on a verification role with the setting up of MINUGUA (*Misión de Naciones Unidas para la Verificación de los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala – United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala*), focussing initially upon compliance with the Human Rights Accords (1994), but expanding the verification mandate to full observance of the Accords (1997-2004). MINUGUA is winding down its activities at present, and was scheduled to stop in 2004. Other UN related actors present in Guatemala have been the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and PRODERE (Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America).
- The US is of course the key actor in the region, but was more prominent during the conflict phase (especially during the Reagan administrations 1981-1989) than during the negotiation and implementation phase. Nonetheless, the end of the Cold War saw a shift towards a more positive endorsement of peace initiatives in the region
- Regional Governments and individual states. Mexico, Costa Rica Ecuador, Canada, Venezuela, and Colombia all played a part in hosting talks for the Arias Peace plan. Mexico hosted government-URNG talks for most of the negotiation phase. Other countries such as Norway and Spain played important role in facilitating discussion of key accords.
- International financial institutions. The IMF and World Bank and a range of affiliated donors were important background actors. The World Bank consultative group agreed to cover most of the cost of the Accords implementation estimated to run at $2.6 billion. Finally, the main donors affiliated to the IMF and World Bank tied support for Guatemala to a comprehensive neo-Liberal agenda (macroeconomic stability and privatisation as well as improving administrative efficiency, political pluralism, social investment and basic human rights).
- International NGOs: Several church related bodies, notably the Lutheran World Federation (working with the catholic church) worked to facilitate the talks

### 5.1.1 Early Phase and General Agreement on Peace Processes: 1990-1991

This reads as a very general declaration of intent, especially of the URNG's willingness to seek a negotiated end to the civil war, and that some civilian actors in government concurred with the notion of peace settlement. There were four distinct agreements that set out a very general agenda for a peaceful resolution to the Guatemalan civil war:

- **Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means ('The Oslo Agreement')**
  30th March 1990
- **Agreement on the Procedure for the Search for Peace by Political Means ('The Mexico Agreement')**
  26th April 1991
- **Agreement on a General Agenda**
  26th April 1991
- **Framework Agreement on Democratisation in the Search for Peace by Political Means ('The Queretaro Agreement')**
  25th July 1991

A key issue in these early stages of the proceedings was the extent to which the elected civilian government had the capacity to carry out peace negotiations (Jonas 2000). Direct military rule

officially ended in 1985 when a new constitution was ushered in and general elections took place, returning a civilian president and government to power. However, this process hardly constituted a substantive process of transition to democracy. The President elect, Vinicio Cerrezo (1986-1991) openly acknowledged that the Guatemalan armed forces still held the last word on most important decisions and only a few vetted political actors were allowed to take part in elections.[82] Thus the role played by civilian actors in government was both constrained and highly disputed by the armed forces. Three coup attempts in 1987, 1988 and 1989 illustrate the fragile and uncertain nature of the transition process (CEH, 1999:210). Throughout the negotiation process, a difficult dynamic between the civilian executive, the armed forces and the business elite, all of whom were divided over the issue of peace, acted against substantive negotiations. Thus, the early stages of the Guatemalan peace process were fraught with uncertainty, not in the least because there was no clear legitimate governmental interlocutor to engage with (ibid).

### 5.1.2 Second Phase, the UN Mediated Process 1994-1995

A series of key events took place in 1993 that altered the balance of power in favour of pro-negotiations actors. First, international pressure for negotiations was gathering pace, especially after the Salvadorean Peace Accords were signed in 1992. At the domestic level, much of the underlying tensions within government, between civilian actors, the military and the private sector came to a head in 1993. President Jorge Serrano Elias (1991-1993) had taken the key decision of accepting UN mediation and verification missions, institutionalising international participation in the peace talks. However, Jorge Serrano Elias' administration was weakened by internal divisions, a fraught relationship with the military and an apparent inability to formulate a modicum of consensus across social sectors and the political opposition. (Jonas 2000). Serrano's attempt to address the crisis involved bypassing Congress and suspending a series of articles in the constitution.[83] The Serrano Elias actions certainly succeeded in building a surprising consensus, but against the coup. Sectors traditionally in opposition such as CACIF, leftist popular organisations, the human rights ombudsman, trade unions, and political parties joined the international community (including the US embassy) in condemning the coup (McCleary 1999). The turning point came when the 'constitutional' wing of the armed forces won the day and the army sided with the opposition in rejecting the coup. In an unprecedented move, Guatemala's crisis was resolved peacefully and constitutionally, forcing Serrano to flee the country (ibid). The Human Rights ombudsman, Ramiro de Leon Carpio, a figure well regarded outside Guatemala was nominated as interim president for the remainder of Serrano's mandate.

Some of the key conservative figures within the military who had supported the coup and opposed the negotiations became isolated, and internal purges from the high command, strengthened the hand of the pro-negotiation wing. A window for negotiations was created in the aftermath of the failed '*autogolpe*' (self-inflicted coup) leading to a series of key accords in 1994-1995:

- **Framework Agreement for the Resumption of Negotiations between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG** (10th January 1994)
- **Agreement on a Timetable for Negotiations on a Firm and Lasting Peace in Guatemala** (29th March 1994)
- **Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights** (29th March 1994)
- **Agreement on the Resettlement of Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict** (17th June 1994)

[82] See Appendix 5 for a summary of presidencies from the onset of civil war (1962) to present day.
[83] Serrano Ellias was clearly inspired by Alberto Fujimori in a similar but successful '*auto-golpe*' (1992-1995).

- **Agreement for the Establishment of the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer** (23rd June 1994)
- **Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples** (31st March 1995)

5.1.3 1996: Finalising the Peace Process

The critical final round of negations took place after the General Elections held in 1995-1996.[84] The PAN (*Partido de Avanzo Nacional – The National Advance Party*) a new centre right political party, was a clear winner in the contests, returning Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen (1996-2000) as the President, also gaining a majority in Congress.[85] Arzú had run his campaign on a peace process platform, clearly stating that he intended to support and bring the peace process to its conclusion. This was in sharp contrast to the FRG (*Frente Revolucionario Guatemalteco* – The Guatemalan Revolutionary Front), the political vehicle of ex Dictator General Efrain Rios Montt (1982-1983) who came second in both Congress and Presidential elections, with a marked reluctance to conclude the accords.

The election of Arzú meant that the new government had much stronger base of support and legitimacy than previous ones, allowing the executive a much clearer mandate and authority that led to the conclusion of the peace negotiations. This was clearly necessary for the Guatemalan government to be in a position to bring the negotiations to a close. The final agreements were indeed of a substantive nature including key provisions for socio-economic reform (the most difficult accords from the perspective of the private sector) as well as demobilisation and demilitarisation processes (the most difficult accord from the perspective of the armed forces), the integration of the URNG as a legitimate political entity and a definitive cease fire (Jonas 2000).

**The Accords of 1996:**[86]

- **Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation** (6th May 1996)
- **Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society** (19th September 1996)
- **Agreement on a Definitive Ceasefire** (4th December 1996)
- **Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and the Electoral Regime** (7th December 1996)
- **Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of the URNG** (12th December 1996)
- **Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements** (29th December 1996)
- **Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace** (29th December 1996)

### *5.2 Content and Implementation of the Guatemalan Peace Accords*

The Accords comprise agreements that address distinct issues. Some of these issues relate directly to peace making (demobilisation and reintegration, disarmament, cease fire, demilitarisation and verification procedures) as well as to the consequences of the conflict (refuge, displacement, and resettlement issues). Others constitute an attempt to address some deep structural issues understood to have led and contributed to the civil war. Such Accords include the Agreement on Socio Economic Aspects and Agrarian Issues (Sept 1996) and 'on

[84] The first round of the Presidential elections took place in November 1995 and the second round in January 1996.
[85] For details see Political Database of the Americas, (2004) *Guatemala Elections Results 1985-*, Available: http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Elecdata/Guate/guate.html, 20 May 2004.
[86] Conciliation Ressources (1997)

the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1995). Finally, some of the Accords cut across these two distinct sets of issues, especially those on human rights (1994), the truth commission (1994) and political democratisation (1996).

In the review and summary presented here, we focus on a series of substantive accords signed between 1994 and 1996. Despite its weakened bargaining position (militarily and in terms of fast diminishing bases of support amongst the population), the URNG leadership fought extremely hard to institute a dynamic where substantive issues would be discussed and considered rather than simply making a disarmament deal. The support of international actors for such substantive issues to be addressed during the negotiation process was essential; it is unlikely that URNG demands for such negotiations would have been heard otherwise (Pásara 2003). The whole approach was legitimised on the ground that for a 'firm and lasting Peace' to be established then some of the structural causes that led to the war had to be addressed.

Beyond the general framework agreements, the first key accord to be signed was the **Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights** (29th March 1994). This agreement marked a commitment by all parties to respect human rights and international conventions on the treatment of combatants (Jonas 2000). Unlike other Accords, it came unto effect immediately. This accord was in fact very much a preliminary step in the negotiation process. Although human rights abuses had clearly diminished since the 1980s, there was nonetheless a climate of lingering terror in Guatemala, where human rights and political activists were still the targets of threats, intimidation, and assassinations. Maintaining such a climate of fear and terror made the process of conversion of armed combatants into legitimate political actors extremely difficult: no fighters will easily lay down their arms if there is a good chance that they will be killed. The URNG could hardly engage in peace negotiations unless it could guarantee its supporters a modicum of protection. A central provision of the agreement was in ensuring that the UN verified the implementation of the accord, receiving and assessing complaints and providing regular reports on the evolution of the human rights situation.

There is no question that there has been a marked improvement in reducing, if not eliminating, the number and the gravity of human rights abuse cases in Guatemala.[87] Overall, state terror has largely abated, and undoubtedly the 1994 Accord helped improve the human rights record, as well as helping creating a momentum for peace negotiations (Jonas 2000: 71-72). However, where the 1994 Accords failed significantly, has been in ending impunity whenever security forces violate human rights. Although there have been cases of officials being found guilty of human rights abuses and then being sent to jail, these cases are the exception rather than the norm (Sieder, Rachel et al. 2002).[88] The judiciary remains weak, whilst the security forces remain secretive, powerful and largely unaccountable.

Another two accords are intimately related to the general human rights Accord, those concerning displaced persons and the Truth Commission. The displaced person Accord was clearly important for the constituencies of the URNG and also received substantial international support.[89] The agreement provided for government assistance in ensuring the safe return of refugees and internally displaced to communities of their choice. Indirectly, this agreement also represented an important move on the part of the Government in agreeing to differentiate

[87] A note of caution here, the latter reports of the verification Mission MINUGUA reported a renewed increased of intimidation practices and abuses in 2002 and 2003 (Mision de Verificacion de las naciones Unidas en Guatemala) MINUGUA, (2003) *Informe Del Secretario General a/58/267,* United Nations, Available: http://www.minugua.guate.net/Informes/INFOCRONOG/Cronograma8.pdf, 10.04.2004 2004..

[88] Two such well know cases are the jailing of the security forces responsible for the assassination of American anthropologist Myrna Mack (killed in 1990) and of Bishop Gerardi (killed in 1998). In the Mack Case, the judgment was reversed by the Appeal Court in 2003 (MINUGUA 2003).

[89] Mexico had a clear intent to see Guatemalan refugees concentrated in Chiapas return to their homeland. Many of the Guatemalan refugees were considered to be sympathiser of the URNG, not an entirely desirable outcome from the perspective of a Mexican government facing the Zapatista uprising (January 1994).

between civilian populations and combatants (a long standing issue in Guatemala), regardless of whether the former harboured sympathies for the latter (Jonas 2000).

The Truth Commission, with a mandate to report on the entire war period, dealt with past rather than present human rights abuses. This was one of the least well received of the Accords, failing to satisfy any of the parties (Jonas 2000: 74). On the one hand, actors directly implicated in the violence (members of the civilian extreme right and the armed forces) were opposed to any such investigations that were likely to expose their involvement in the violence. The investigations were not linked to any potential judicial fall outs: the mandate of the Commission would not allow for legal procedures to take place after the Commission produced its report and the armed forces had passed sweeping amnesty laws in the mid 1980s prior to the transition to civilian rule. Furthermore, these provisions were reiterated and ratified by the URNG in the Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of the URNG (12th December 1996 Accord). For the opposition, it is precisely the weakness of the mandate and investigation (a maximum of 12 months to report on a conflict that had lasted over three decades) that was a source of dismay. The likelihood was that there might be peace in Guatemala, but there would not be justice.

Whilst acknowledging the limited mandate and investigative capacity of the Truth Commission, nonetheless, it proved to be an important process for Guatemala and is likely to continue to be so for generations to come. In an environment characterised by ideological confrontation, polarisation, disinformation and violence, establishing 'the truth' or at least an account of events that is not tainted by overwhelming partisanship, has merit and the truth commission has done this job extremely well. To a large extent, the Guatemalan Truth Commission is now *the* main reference of much writing and reporting on the war. This is especially important for contested issues such as which actors were responsible for the violence and the number of war casualties. The main surprise of the report (published in 1999) was to establish the genocidal character of the repression undertaken against indigenous peoples.[90] The amnesty provisions exonerate individuals from most crimes with the specific exception of genocide, leaving the door open for possible future legal procedures against those responsible for these acts.[91] The torture, rapes, disappearances, killings and massacres as well as the various strategies of collective punishment utilised against indigenous peoples are carefully recorded in the thirteen volumes produced by the Commission.

Furthermore, the structural and historical roots of the conflict, originating in extreme socio-economic, political and cultural inequalities were clearly established by the Commission which also denounced the racist and discriminatory practices in government, the state, and throughout the country. In doing so, the *collective* responsibility for the war was laid out, intimating that the nature of inter-ethnic relations amongst Guatemalans had made the genocide possible. In the end, the Truth Commission was not a whitewash, but its short term impact has been very limited, certainly not leading to a sea change in collective behaviour in terms of inter-ethnic relations. Overall, the Truth Commission impact has been limited because there has been no clear state policy to implement the recommendations of the CEH or to diffuse its findings. Thus the CEH report is available and accessible for all those who want to consult it, but these remain few and far between.

> "Hemos asistido, estupefactos, antes la ausencia de reacciones públicas. No ha habido indignación de la opinión pública [...]. El silencio de la Prensa, de los intelectuales, de las organizaciones sociales, de los partidos políticos, del

[90] The CEH used the 1948 UN General Assembly definition of genocide (CEH Historical Clarification Commission, 1999).

[91] A legal procedure against former dictator Efrain Rios Montt has been instigated in Guatemala (interview with Frank Larue CALDH, Saturday 17th January 2004, Guatemala City). CALDH is one of Guatemala's most prominent Human rights organisations; Frank Larue was its director until January 2004 when he accepted a post in the new government.

> gobierno [...] sólo es posible como explicación, porque fue esta sociedad la que produjo y cobijó a quienes ahí se denuncia. Es una continuación de la misma responsabilidad ¿Por qué escandalizarnos con una cultura cómplice, si ella misma fue la que produjo el crimen que se memora?"[92]
>
> *(Torres-Rivas 2000:xxix cited in Pásara 2003:156)*

The **Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation** (Mexico City - 6th May) was amongst the most hard fought and ultimately disappointing of the Accords. The Accord comprised general commitments to high levels of economic growth, to restructuring public expenditure, and to increase social investment (Conciliation Resources 1997). The accords set a series of precise state expenditure/revenue targets. The latter which comprised an increase in the tax base and a range of measures against tax evasion was most vehemently contested by the private sector, forcing the intervention of the US, the IMF and the World Bank which insisted that increasing social spending was essential in building a peaceful future for Guatemalans (Jonas 2000).

For many URNG sympathisers, the key section of the Accord related to Agrarian issues. The agreement contained the following:

- provisions for popular consultation in rural development,
- the setting up of a register for land tenure (the last land survey took place in the 1970s and titling is in a mess),
- the establishment of a trust fund to purchase underutilised land earmarked for re-distribution to tenant farmers,
- to set up conflict resolution mechanisms for land dispute, and
- to introduce new taxes on land.

If one recalls the issues that gave rise to frustrations and mobilisation in the 1970s such as the lack of land reform, illegal dispossession of land, and poor working conditions and wages in the plantations, it is clear that the accord was a disappointment. Only the provisions regarding the resolution of land disputes truly addressed some of the concerns of the *campesinos*. Overall, a good indicator of the overall value of this agreement is that it was greeted with enthusiasm by business associations, the international community, the legislature and the army, but largely rejected by labour, indigenous, and *campesino* movements which all expressed dissatisfaction at both the process and content of the Accord. This included sections of the URNG base that were dismayed by the concessions made by their leaders. Maybe it is in this key agreement that one can truly examine the balance of power between the various actors showing that the private sector was most capable of preserving and conserving its interests.

If the Socio-economic Accord was considered by many to be weak in its original guise, then its implementation has been a further source of frustration. The collapse of coffee prices in the late 1990s has not facilitated the implementation of the Accord and the commitment to high growth proved over-optimistic (MINUGUA 2003). The record with regard to public expenditure and revenue is examined in detail in Table 9. Funding has been weak and there are ongoing legal barriers that prevent further implementation. In one of its latest reports, MINUGA (2003) signals that there has been a critical lack of political will in institutionalising the Accord. Overall, there has been little visible political will to implement this accord, substantial legal barriers remain and no change of policy is visible on the horizon.

[92] Translation: we have assisted, shocked, to a lack of public reaction. There has not been any public indignation […] The silence of the Press, of the intellectuals, of social organizations, of political parties, of the Government […] that's the only possible explanation, because this was the society that produced the ones that are now denounced. It is a continuation of the same responsibility, why should we scandalize with a culture that produced the crime that is here remembered?

**The Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society** (Mexico City - 19th September) has a somewhat more mixed record than the previous one. The agreement contains a comprehensive package of provisions relating to strengthening of democratic government covering the legislature, executive and judiciary. It also emphasises the need to overhaul the security functions of the state. It provided for:

- the abolition of the PACS (civil patrols),
- the restructuring of the intelligence apparatus which was to be submitted to greater scrutiny,
- the abolition of the Presidential High Command (*Estado Mayor Presidential* - EMP) which ran death squads responsible for countless disappearances and extra judicial killings,
- the end of forced conscription,
- limitation of the Army's role to external defence,
- new doctrines and training practices in the army,
- an overall reduction in the size and budget of the institution, and
- reform of the Penal Code and the regulation of private security firms.

Although slow, some progress has been made in implementing the Accord. The PACS were dissolved, forced conscription ended, and a civilian alternative to military service is now in place. There has been a substantial diminution of the number of military units and bases throughout the country and the civilian nature of the police forces has been reinforced (MINUGUA 2003: 11).

However, the security crisis experienced in post-Accord Guatemala has been a substantial obstacle to the institutionalisation of the reform of the security apparatus. The drastic and steady increase of the number of violent and property crime (rapes, homicides, kidnappings, car-jacks and bus-jacks, armed robbery and theft) indicates that peace has not brought an end to violence and the latter has clearly hindered security reform.[93] The police for instance remain under-funded and are perceived as ineffective. This has led to general support for army patrols throughout the country which is hardly compatible with the narrowing of the mandate of the armed forces to external security issues. Some researchers have also questioned the extent to which the armed forces have contributed to the security crisis as a way of circumventing the Accord (WOLA 2003). There is certainly some evidence that some members of the armed forces have links with criminal organisations such kidnapping, cars and drug trafficking (WOLA 2003; Sieder Rachel et al. 2002). In the context of this security crisis, the armed forces have continued to have a relatively free hand and civilian oversight over military affairs is tenuous. The budget of the armed forces has increased since the late 1990s, exceeding the 0.66% of GDP set in the Accords. Other clear indicators that the reform of the security apparatus is not entirely successful is that eight years after the signing of the Peace accords the EMP, the nerve centre of many extra judicial operations remains in place, surviving three successive changes of administration.

Overall, it is important to note that some progress has been made. Military presence was overwhelming in Guatemala throughout the war (in the streets, the countryside and also in running state enterprises now privatised) and such presence is now much diminished. Military patrols still occasionally take place, but subject to Congress and Presidential approval. The power and profile of the armed forces has clearly been dented if not broken or subjected to civilian oversight.

[93] Guatemala has remained amongst the three worse countries of Latin America for the extent of violent crime, the other two are El Salvador and Colombia.

Much more far reaching in its conception and much better-if still cautiously received, was **The AIRI (Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples,** 31st March 1995). This is the agreement the ASC (Civil Society Assembly) were the most engaged with and had the most influence on. The agreement includes wide-ranging commitments:

1. to recognise the identity of indigenous peoples,
2. to eliminate discrimination against indigenous peoples, and
3. to guarantee their cultural, civil, political, social and economic rights (Conciliation Resources 1997).

The general commitment to recognising the multi-cultural nature of Guatemala included the ratification of ILO convention 169, the most extensive international convention for the protection of indigenous peoples rights (ILOLEX 2004).[94] The Accord also establishes several joint commissions (*comisiones partidarias*) composed of government and indigenous representatives tasked to develop specific proposals for the implementation phase of the accords. Finally, the AIRI's implementation would also be subjected to UN verification. Eight joint committees were conceived of to draft proposals on:

- educational reform and cultural diversity,
- officialising indigenous languages,
- the protection of indigenous religious sites,
- political reform,
- participation and cultural reform,
- indigenous women,
- indigenous peoples' land rights, and
- Customary Law (Sieder Rachel et al. 2002)

If adequately implemented, the AIRI provides the blue print for a radical transformation of the Guatemalan state as well as a new starting point for inter-ethnic relations. Implementation has been a disappointment from two perspectives. Although the implementation procedures appeared well thought out (based on a collaboration between indigenous representatives and the government), problems emerged soon after 1996. First, although participation by indigenous organisation in implementation seems a good idea on paper, in practice, this was problematic. Civil Society organisations were technically and politically unprepared to carry out their tasks (Sieder 2002: 17-20). The drafting of each new proposal (a bi-lingual education bill for instance) required developing specialist expertise representing serious commitments in terms of personnel, time, and resources. International financial aid was earmarked for this process, but it was slow in being released and has led to a competitive scramble for resources amongst organisations favouring divisions over unity (ibid). The demands of the process on organisations have reinforced both specialisation and fragmentation within the Mayan movement, and between Mayan organisation and other organisations that focused on wider land or women's issues. Thus, an unforeseen consequence of the participation envisaged during the negotiation phase was to increase divisions of the sectors that had most at stake in successful implementation of the Peace Accords.

Second, the institutionalisation of the joint proposals was conditional upon successful constitutional reform, new legislation and the setting up of new institutions. The key event was the rejection of a referendum on constitutional reform in 1999, following a well organised 'no' campaign (see below). The reform package which included a large number of propositions (AIRI was only one of the proposals) affecting several accords has meant that implementation of AIRI and other accords has stalled. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering that indigenous

[94] Although in the case of Guatemala, the convention was ratified by Congress (1996) with an amendment subordinating it to the Guatemalan constitution (Jonas 2000:77-78).

peoples have been subjected to a bloody regime of domination for over 500 years, ethnic, racial and cultural discrimination still characterises much of Guatemala. Whether AIRI can be salvaged, revived and some of its measures implemented is still not clear.

## 6. Some Concluding Remarks: The Failures and Successes of Peace Accord Implementation

Table 9 summarises a series of selected peace monitoring indicators relating to public expenditure and how completion has fared since 1996. The figures highlighted in the table indicate where targets have been met or exceeded:

**Table 9: Selected peace monitoring indicators**

| Target | Base 1995 | Target 2000 | Actual 2000 | Estimated 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic and Fiscal Targets | | | | |
| Growth Rate (%) | 6 | 6 | 3.3 | 1.9 |
| Tax Revenues (%of GDP) | 7.6 | 12 | 9.6 | 9.8 |
| Health Spending | 0.9 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Education Spending | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.8 |
| Judiciary Spending (%of GDP) | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| Military Spending (%of GDP) | 1 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.9 |
| Social Targets | | | | |
| Literacy Rate | 64.2 | 70 | 68.9 | N/a |
| Infant Mortality (death per 1000 live births) | 40 | 20 | 40-45 | N/a |
| Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 giving birth) | 97-270* | 48.5 | 190-270* | N/a |

*Source*: (World Bank/GUAPA, 2003: 39)
*First figure: World Bank (2000), second figure: World Health Organisation

First it is evident that the projected high growth rates (viewed as an essential first step towards the reducing poverty) proved rashly optimistic and have failed to materialise. The post-conflict climate has not been kind to Guatemala, with a notable slowing down of economies throughout the region (1999-2003) and an added catastrophic fall in coffee prices. Whilst taking due notice of the generally unfavourable climate, Table 9 provides graphic illustrations of the slow progress in reaching the targets set in the peace accords with the notable exception of education expenditure. A further aspect is that some key services such as education, access to water and electricity are targeted at the rural population, and there have been some marked improvements for Mayan groups (see Appendix 3). The figures are moving in the right direction, with public spending on human development increasing from 3.1 to 5% of GDP between 1997 and 2001, but still falling short of targets.[95] This means that it may be extremely difficult to sustain current levels of expenditure. Thus, the traditional reluctance to invest in social spending has only partially been reversed. By contrast, the failure to reach target figures for tax revenues (estimated as the minimum viable for maintaining social expenditures) and newly increasing military budgets (legitimised by a catastrophic increase in violent crime) both point towards the strength and resilience of military and economic elites in protecting their interests and resisting change.

The figures in Table 9 are good indicators of the general trend in public spending, but this clearly does not provide a complete picture. For instance the increase in education spending is notable and should be lauded, but this should not obfuscate other ongoing issues: universal education for the 7-12 years old with a minimum of three years schooling still has not been attained, leaving over 500,000 children with no schooling at all and there is the further caveat that improving literacy rate may prove unsustainable.[96] Examination of public expenditure increases in health and housing reflect similar problems: increases in expenditure have led to patchy and in some cases no perceptible tangible improvement in human development. This according to Pásara (2003:152) does not necessarily reflect issues to do with the implementation of the Accords, nor the unwillingness of the government to comply with spending targets, but difficulties in setting up systems and structures that have the capacity to provide and deliver previously unavailable services.

[95] UNDP (*Informe de Desarollo Humano* 2001:129) figures cited in Pásara (2003:151).
[96] MINUGUA figures cited in Pásara (2003:152)

One of the central questions is whether the Guatemalan accords were too ambitious and to complex, thus weakening the possibility of building up consensus for a successful implementation (Pásara 2003:143). Pásara's (ibid) examination of the Guatemalan peace accords noted some criticism. The broad approach to peace negotiations flew in the face of conventional 'minimalist' approaches which refute the notion that there is room for such considerations *during* the peace negotiation phase (ibid). Yet, to single out the breadth of the Accords as the main obstacle that prevented successful implementation is not entirely convincing and the struggle with implementation has to be examined much more carefully. It is essential to stress that in narrow 'peace making' terms, the Guatemalan Peace Accords have encountered a degree of success: armed conflict has ended in Guatemala and there is no sign of civil war starting again. Clearly, this weakens the minimalist proposition in the sense that in the Guatemalan case, a 'broad approach', whilst not entirely successful did not impede the consolidation of a cease fire, regarded by the minimalist as the main objective of peace negotiations.[97]

For the organised and politicised sectors of society, the agreements went too far for some and not far enough for others. The breadth of the agreement is such that it does seem to invite divisions: few are likely to support all aspects of the Accords. Thus, the army might be inclined to support the augmentation of tax revenue, but might challenge the reform of the security apparatus. In short, the prospects for alliances, deals, and behind doors agreements amongst actors were great. Opposition to the Accords emerged rapidly in 1997, with prominent campaigns run in the media from conservative sectors of the population. Criticism of the Accords ranged from opposition to the content of the Accords (such as permitting the URNG to become a legitimate political actor) to criticism of the processes per se, arguing that it had been 'forced' upon Guatemala by external forces (US, UN and international financial institutions) and as such infringes upon Guatemalan sovereignty (Jonas 2000). The key issue here is how the discourse of opposition to the Peace Agreement developed in the aftermath of 1996. The ultra right or conservative business sector did not mount a campaign built around the defence of their own narrow interests, but instead built a sense of collective and common interest in opposing the Accords. It is also worth considering the impact of 'externally imposed' argument in a country where anti-communist state propaganda had routinely denounced the 'invasion of foreign ideologies' for the best part of fifty years. .

Whilst opposition to the Accords slowly gathered pace, the government faced the task of effecting the constitutional changes necessary for the implementation of key components of the Accords. This is the stage where the implementation of the Guatemalan Peace Accords largely failed. The Arzú government, perhaps due to misplaced confidence in holding a majority in Congress, decided to embark on a process where Congress would contribute to the design of the necessary constitutional amendment which would then be subjected to public approval by referendum. This was in order to shore up support and increase the legitimacy of the Accords. By contrast, in El Salvador all constitutional amendments had been approved by Congress within twenty four hours of the signing of the final Accords. The distinction there is in the political strength and legitimacy of the main political actors (FMLN and ARENA) both with clear commitments to the Accords, strong bases of support in the masses, and the ability to discipline support both within the masses and within the formal institution of the state (in this case Congress). Guatemala's barely configured political system, with weak and divided political actors, did not permit such a speedy resolution of constitutional issues. Instead, the plan backfired badly and the Guatemalan Congress became embroiled in a process that had much more to do with jockeying for power, position, and favours, than substantive discussion of the accords (Jonas 2000: 189-193; Sieder 2002).

[97] A case could be made that peace has not brought an end to violence in Guatemala, but the Peace Accords design hardly relates to this. There have been similar problems with crime and violence in El Salvador, which had a minimalist approach to peace negotiations.

Several deadlines for Congressional approval of the constitutional amendments went by and a final agreement on a package to be presented to the electorate was completed in September 1998. During the course of the process, dozens of amendments and propositions unrelated to the Peace Accords had been added to the reform proposals, diluting the importance and centrality of Accords-related amendments.[98] Further delays occurred in the wake of hurricane 'Mitch'.[99] Eventually, a date was set for the referendum to take place for the spring of 1999, a few weeks before the Presidential elections (scheduled for the autumn), maximising the politicisation of issues and debates.

All the main political parties (the PAN ruling party, Rios Montt's FRG and the small leftist parties led by the URNG) gave official approval to the referendum but this did not translate into strong campaigns - at best, approval was muted. The campaign for the 'Yes' vote was carried out primarily by indigenous popular organisations and trade union leaders, some sectors of the Catholic and evangelical churches, with key support from ex-CACIF director Luis Reyes Mayén and ex-Defense minister Julio Balconi (Jones 2000:195). The fact that the 'Yes' vote seem to dominate in opinion polls until late in April 1998 may have led to complacency amongst the 'Yes; supporters.

However, this was no match for the strong, vehement, ideologically coherent and well funded 'No' campaign (Jones 2000: 200). Millions of Quetzales were disbursed to fund the media blitz of the 'No' campaigners in the few weeks that preceded the referendum. The 'No' campaign revelled in scare tactics and scaremongering, manipulating key fears of Guatemalan society: the threat of indigenous power and the threat of ethnic violence. Thus, whilst many of those who funded the 'No' Campaign may have been concerned primarily with the notion of resisting tax increases (a long standing battle of the elite), most of the campaigning focused on the approval of the agreement on indigenous rights and identity. Leaflets screamed that the approval of the referendum would "convert Guatemala into an indigenous state, marginalising the non-indigenous, that citizens would be divided and that indigenous people would possess more rights than other citizens".[100] In this scenario, Guatemalans would be 'forced' to learn a Mayan language, customary law would replace the legal system, teachers mono-lingual in Spanish would lose their jobs and those with property built on Mayan sacred site would be expropriated. Guatemala was in danger of falling prey to ethno-politics, of becoming 'balkanised', a Central American Yugoslavia. The latter suggested the possibility of renewed civil war. Yet, this form of campaigning was also made possible because little was known about the meaning and content of the reform. This points towards a failure of the government to take a strong position in favour of the 'Yes' vote and to explain the nature of the issues at stake. Thus, ignorance and prejudice proved eminently favourable terrain for such scaremongering.

In the end, it was apathy and depoliticisation which won the day: 18.55% of the electorate went to the poll and amongst those the 'No' vote prevailed by a margin of 55% to 45% (Jones 1999: 199). Table 10 shows, a clear ethnic divide in voting patterns with the 'No' vote prevailing in *ladino* dominated regions (with the exception of San Marcos and Peten) and the 'Yes' vote prevailing in most indigenous areas (with the exception of Quetzaltenango and Suchitepequez).

[98] There was a total of fifty reforms or amendments joined together in four blocks of questions that were subjected to public approval.
[99] Guatemala is the only country where such restrictions were put in place, despite being less affected by the disaster than Honduras or El Salvador
[100] Exert from Liga Pro-Patria leaflet, May 14 1999, cited in Jones 2000:196.

**Table 10. Departmental breakdown of voting in the 1999 Referendum on Constitutional Reform**

| Department | Percentage of Indigenous population (1994) | Referendum on Constitutional Reform | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Si (Yes) |
| Totonicapán | 96.90 | | Si |
| Solola | 95.20 | | Si |
| Alta Verapaz | 90.80 | | Si |
| El Quiché | 85.70 | | Si |
| Chimaltenango | 79.40 | | Si |
| Huehuetenango | 66.10 | | Si |
| Quetzaltenango | 60.60 | No | |
| Suchitepequez | 58 | No | |
| Baja Verapaz | 56.70 | | Si |
| San Marcos | 43.3 | | Si |
| Sacatepequez | 42.60 | No | |
| Jalapa | 38.50 | No | |
| Retalhuleu | 33.90 | No | |
| Chiquimula | 30.10 | No | |
| El Peten | 27 | | Si |
| Izabal | 23.20 | No | |
| Zacapa | 16 | No | |
| Guatemala | 12.80 | No | |
| Escuintla | 10.30 | No | |
| Jutiapa | 5.2 | No | |
| Santa Rosa | 2.7 | No | |
| El Progreso | 2.1 | No | |

Source: Jonas (2000:2001)

On the one hand, the high level of abstentions suggest that the endorsement of the 'No' was not wholehearted, reflecting a lack of interest in the issue of constitutional reform. There is thus, good ground to interpret the vote as a general rebuff of politicians and the political class rather than as determined opposition to change, but from the perspective of the implementation of the Peace Accords, the result was nothing short of disastrous. Some aspects of the Accords require constitutional change to be wholly implemented and have since remained in limbo: their future is uncertain. Keen supporters of the Accords may have succeeded in implementing as many provisions as legally feasible without constitutional change, whilst working out a strategy to bring about such change. The election of the FRG candidate to the Presidency in the autumn of 1999 has meant that such a policy has not been pursued. The negative referendum made it easy for an administration that was less enthusiastic about the accords to slow down implementation without incurring condemnation.

Overall, most Accords, bar those that dealt with the strict mechanics of the cease fire, have either floundered or been subjected to substantial and ongoing delays during the implementation phase. Key sections of the Accords depending on constitutional reform for full implementation are currently in limbo (agrarian issues, indigenous rights, the redefinition of the mandate of the armed forces and the overhaul of the tax system). Considering the current state of implementation, it appears unlikely that the Peace Accords will prove to be the re-

foundational event that one could have wished for after the civil war came to a close. Yet, in a country long stifled by silence and the refusal to debate, let alone address socio-economic and inter-ethnic inequalities, the Peace Accords still influence political agendas of Guatemala and are likely to do so for a few years to come. The Accords, at least provide a bench mark, a starting point from which progress or lack off can be measured and evaluated. Thus, we conclude with a comment made about the Salvadorean Peace Accords but which seems remarkably apt for the Guatemalan case too:

> "Looking back over the past twenty-five years, you can see a gigantic leap forward; but looking ahead, what stands out is uncertainty"
>
> *Roberto Turcios (1997) cited in Jonas (2000:217).*[101]

[101] This is a comment on the Peace Process in El Salvador, which is equally apt for the Guatemalan case.

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# 8. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Main Concentration of Indigenous Peoples in Departments, by Percentage of Population (in Descending Order) 1994-2002

| Department | Percentage of Indigenous Population (1994) | Percentage of Mayan Population (2002) | Total Population by Department (2002) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Totonicapán | 96.9 | 98.29% | 339.254 |
| Solola | 95.20 | 96.18% | 307.661 |
| Alta Verapaz | 90.80 | 92.53% | 776.246 |
| El Quiché | 85.70 | 88.34% | 655.51 |
| Chimaltenango | 79.40 | 78.62% | 446.133 |
| Huehuetenango | 66.10 | 62.84% | 846.544 |
| Quetzaltenango | 60.60 | 51.84% | 624.716 |
| Suchitepequez | 58 | 46.93% | 403.945 |
| Baja Verapaz | 56.70 | 58.21% | 215.915 |
| San marcos | 43.30 | 28.74% | 794.951 |
| Sacatepequez | 42.60 | 40.72% | 248.019 |
| Jalapa | 38.50 | 10.82% | 242.926 |
| Retalhuleu | 33.90 | 20.55% | 241.411 |
| Chiquimula | 30.10 | 15.06% | 302.485 |
| El Peten | 27 | 29.74% | 366.735 |
| Izabal | 23.20 | 21.80% | 314.306 |
| Zacapa | 16 | 0.47% | 200.167 |
| Guatemala | 12.80 | 11.60% | 2,541,581 |
| Escuintla | 10.30 | 6.26% | 538.746 |
| Jutiapa | 5.2 | 0.36% | 389.085 |
| Santa Rosa | 2.7 | 1.14% | 301.37 |
| El Progreso | 2.1 | 0.55% | 139.49 |

Source: INE. National census 1994 and 2002

## Appendix 2: Peace Accords Implementation Summary

| | Implementation | | | Trend | Obstacles to Implementation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Good | Intermediate | Poor | | |
| **Public spending** | | | Few targets have been met | Improving | Resilience of elites in changing order priorities. |
| **Human rights agreement** | | | | | |
| -Abuse as instrument of state policy | Systematic abuse through state policy has ceased | | | Stable, decreasing | |
| -Ending impunity | | | Partial: few sanctions | Worsening with increased HR abuses in 2003 | Failure to dismantle the shadowy security apparatus mitigates against completion |
| -Freedom of movement, association and forced recruitment | High | | | Stable | |
| -CEH/truth commission | | - Support for investigation, limited impact of recommendations. Limited impact and dissemination amongst wider public | | N/A | Key issue of genocide officially rejected by government. No interest in disseminating findings. Limited short term impact. |
| **Reintegration** | | | | | |
| - Displaced population | | - Refugees returning or relocating with basic minimum for subsistence<br>- Internal displacement: ongoing issues with lack of ID | | | |
| - URNG combatants | - ex-combatants received training and help. No cases of violence reported | | | | |
| **Security Reform** | | **Implementation** | | **Uneven but with some progress** | **Obstacles to implementation** |
| **-** Demilitarisation | | - Uneven implementation<br>- Good on re-conversion, reduction of staff and general retreat of army<br>- Poor on dismantling intelligence networks and formulating new doctrine<br>-Partial dismantling and in cases | | - Worsening under FRG administration, including some reversals. Unclear direction of new administration | Some changes falling short of profound institutional transformation. Remaining powerful actors, support of FRG key for resurgence of conservative elements 2000-2004. Some aspects of accord require constitutional change turned down in 1999 referendum. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | resurgence of civil-military networks at community level.<br>- Budgets increasing again since 2000 | | | |
| - Police Reform | | - Civil police set up 1997 (existing personnel)<br>- Institutional weaknesses, poor training, conflictive relation with prosecution services<br>- Reports of human rights abuse to UN mission (violence and corruption<br>- Perceived as weak and ineffective: leading to army patrol to maintain law and order | | Consolidation of civilian police forces | Generous support from international community does not compensate for the lack of interests of government and URNG in the issue. Clear lack of political will and high crime rates mitigate against reform. |
| **Indigenous Rights** | | | | | |
| - Multicultural state | | | Poor: there is no clear state policy reflecting indigenous presence in the country<br>- Some improvements in creation of academy of Mayan languages and increase in number of indigenous deputies from 8% to 12.4% | Accords in limbo since 1999 | - No clear official policy<br>Some aspects of Accord require constitutional change turned down in 1999 referendum |
| **Gender** | | | | | |
| **-** Role of women in society | | - MINUGUA noted an improvement in women and indigenous women participation<br>- Lack of state support for supporting proposals and no clear state policy | | Unclear | Gender issues still tend to take second or third place behind other set of issues, no clear policy. |
| **Development and rural development** | | **Implementation** | | | **Obstacles to implementation** |
| - Land and rural development | | | - Very little progress with land issue: land fund created but with insufficient budget. Unequal land distribution remains, no up to date land survey and register<br>- No rural development policy<br>- Rural credit has improved especially in conflict zones. | Little or no progress | Resilience of elites, policy of 'dragging of the feet' of the state, absence of land survey and up to date land register paralyses reform. |
| **Labour** | | | - Minimum wage legislation passed but not implemented | Little or no progress | Government still subordinated to private interests |

## Appendix 3: Literate Population by Area, Ethnic Group and Gender, 1989-1998 (%)

| | 1989 | 1998 | Change 1989-1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Indigenous** | **10.2** | **57.5** | **43** |
| Urban | 55.3 | 74.1 | 34 |
| Rural | 36.5 | 50.9 | 39.5 |
| Men | 53.2 | 67.3 | 26.6 |
| Women | 28.10 | 48.5 | 72.5 |
| **Non-Indigenous** | **76** | **78.6** | **3.4** |
| Urban | 57.7 | 89.5 | 2.1 |
| Rural | 65.6 | 66.2 | 0.8 |
| Men | 81.3 | 81.1 | -0.2 |
| Women | 71 | 76.2 | 7.2 |
| **Urban** | **81.5** | **84.5** | **3.7** |
| Men | 88.10 | 87.4 | -0.8 |
| Women | 75.8 | 82 | 8.1 |
| **Rural** | **52.2** | **57.4** | **10** |
| Men | 61.8 | 66 | 6.8 |
| Women | 42.8 | 49.1 | 14.6 |
| **Gender** | **63.10** | **68.7** | **8.9** |
| Men | 71.2 | 74.7 | 4.9 |
| Women | 55.5 | 63.1 | 13.6 |

Source: PNUD (2000:124)

## Appendix 4: Estimated Losses and Costs Incurred During the War

| | Millions (1990 US $) | % of 1990 GDP |
|---|---|---|
| **Production loss breakdown** | | |
| Dead and disappeared | 600 | 8 |
| Internal displacement | 1,600 | 21 |
| Refugees | 900 | 12 |
| Additional army recruitment | 800 | 10 |
| PAC recruitment | 3,000 | 39 |
| URNG recruitment | 100 | 1 |
| Subtotal | 7,000 | 91 |
| Material destruction cost | | |
| Crop, livestock, tools | 340 | 4 |
| Cooperatives and fincas | 150 | 2 |
| Infrastructure | N/A | |
| Sub-total | 490 | 6 |
| Additional military expenditure | 740 | 10 |
| Sacrificed Growth | 1,070 | 14 |
| **Total** | 9,300 | 121 |

Source : CEH 1999c :226

## Appendix 5: Presidents and Political Regimes 1958-2004

| Dates | Length of time | President | Civil /military president | Type of Government | End of administration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| March 1958-March 1963 | 5 years | General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes | Military | Elected | Military coup |
| March 1963-July 1966 | 3 years | Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia | Military | De facto | Elections |
| July 1966 to June 1970 | 4 years | Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro | Civilian | Elected | Elections |
| July 1970-June 1974 | 4 years | Colonel Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio | Military | Elected | Elections |
| July 1974-March 1978 | 4 years | General Kjell Eugenio Laugerud Garcia | Military | Elected | Elections |
| July 1978 to March 1982 | 3 years 9 months | General Romeo Lucas Garcia | Military | Elected | Military Coup |
| March-June 1982 | 3 months | Military Junta | Military | De facto | Junta dissolved, Rios Montt named president |
| June 1982-August 1983 | 1 year 2 months | General Efrain Rios Montt | Military | De facto | Barrack coup |
| August 1983-January 1985 | 2 years 5 months | General Oscar Mejia Victores | Military | De Facto | Elections |
| January 1986 to January 1991 | 5 years | Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo | Civilian | Elected | Elections |
| January 1991-June 1993 | 2 years 5 months | Jorge Serrano Elias | Civilian | Elected | Impeached following auto-coup |
| June 1993-December 1995 | 2 years 7 months | Ramiro de León Carpio | Civilian | Temporary government nominated by Congress | Elections |
| January 1996 January 2001 | 5 years | Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen | Civilian | Elected | Elections |
| January 2001-December 2004 | 4 years | Alfonso Portillo Cabrera | Civilian | Elected | Elections |
| Jan 2004- | - | Oscar Berger Perdomo | Civilian | Elected | - |

*Source*: (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico) CEH 1999; Base de Datos Políticos de las Américas 2004

## Appendix 6: Chronology of Main Political Events: 1821 - 1991

- 1821: Independence from Spain: the Central American Federal State is created, including present day Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

- 1821-1838: The Central American Federal State with Guatemala as the clear dominant actor. This is the apotheosis of the first Liberal regime: above all free trade and capitalist agriculture not so much democracy. Conservatives: very much in favour of *continuismo*: the role of the church, traditional relation with landowners, oppression and paternalism but also a degree of protection: if labour dues are extracted, clearly the communal lands are left intact. The attempts to impose new form of taxation following the elimination of the Tithe are hardly successful and few end up on the liberal camps. Overall the liberal proposition is weak.

- 1838: Break up of the federal state into the 5 republics, dominated by conservative forces. Indigo cultivation is on the wane everywhere and Cochineal is the economic base of the conservative republic.

- 1871: Liberal victory: the power of the Church is under severe attack. Tension between Rome and Guatemala city and mistrust between the oligarchy and Catholic authorities are already evident in the latter stages of the 19$^{th}$ Century. The expansion of Coffee begins in earnest. The key aspect is to ensure availability of labour at harvest time, underpinned by a series of vagrancy laws. Although some land expulsion does take place, these 'efforts' are tempered by a fear of Indian uprising. To a large degree, highlands landholdings do not come under threat.

- 1873: Barrios in power.

- 1876-77: Vagrancy laws and debt peonage to secure labour on the plantations are guaranteed by the Liberal state.

- 1885: Barrios is killed.

- 1898: Beginning of Manuel Estrada Cabrera regime (1898-1920)

- 1899: UFCO established, first contracts in 1901.

- 1920: Carlos Herrera, conservative in power, makes powerful enemies by showing keenness to revise the terms of operation of foreign capital in Guatemala.

- 1920: A phase of unprecedented expansion of coffee throughout Central America: by late 1920 total coffee area under cultivation is 90% of that of 1960.

- 1921: Coup of General Jose Maria Orellano (1921-1926), recognised by US immediately in contravention of several international agreements to boycott regimes founded on insurrection.

- 1926: Lazaro Chacon succeeds Orellano (1926-1930), Minister of War General Jorge Ubico masterminds stiff repression of strikes and opposition.

- 1931: Jorge Ubico takes over Presidency. Repression is swift and efficient: by 1931 Guatemala is the only country in the region not to have with a communist party.

- 1944: Ubico overthrown.

- 1944: Setting up of the CTG: Confederación de Trabajadores deGuatemala

- 1945: Juan José Arévalo elected president, beginning of the reformist period, new constitution women right to vote.

- 1949: PGT is set up and later legalised. The PGT becomes an increasingly prominent actor in the Arbenz government. Francisco Javier Arana, Chief of Staff and arch-enemy of Defence Minister Jacobo Arbenz is assassinated.

- 1950: Jacobo Arbenz Guzman elected President.

- 1950: Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala (CNGC) is set up.

- 1951: CGTC confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala is set up.

- 1952: Agrarian reform law.

- 1954: Arbenz is toppled by a coup, following campaign of disinformation in Guatemala and the US. The Armed forces are divided over the issue. The land reform is reversed, all effective unions are disbanded. Purging of public offices for Arbenz supporters. Many loose their jobs, many are exiled and many more are jailed. Fear of denunciations becomes endemic in Guatemala.

- 1955: Castillo Armas who led the invasion to topple Arbenz becomes President. Anti-communism becomes the dominant ideology of the post-Revolution regime. He sets up the MLN party.

- 1956: CACIF is us set up: National coordinator of "Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations.

- 1957: Castillo Armas assassinated (unresolved mystery). The Vice President takes over, elections are called; riots; military take over.

- 1958: Elections; Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes.

- 1960: ANACAFE (Coffee exporters association), the most conservative of all elite/private sector association. Unlike CACIF, it refused to negotiate with the URNG during the Peace Accord Talks.

- 1961: Failed military coup against Ydigoras: the rebels take to the mountains.

- 1962: Major student and labour protest; m-13 formed and FAR: rebel armed forces guerrilla group is created. Made of the failed coup leaders

- 1963: Armed forces remove Ydigoras, he is replaced by the Defence Minister: Col. Alfredo Enrique Peralt Azurdia.

- 1965: New constitution.

- 1966: Col. Carlos Arana Osorio directs counterinsurgency campaigns: over 8,000 die. First appearance of death squads: the White Hands. Other rightwing death squad become active: responsible for over 30,000 deaths over the next 7 years.

- 1968: US ambassador John Mein is assassinated. CNT, the National Confederation of Workers is formed.

- 1970: MLN candidate Arana Osario (from the armed forces) is elected President.

- 1972: ORPA: strategy of building network of support in the countryside, remains low profile and clandestine.

- 1972: EGP: Ejercito de los Pobres set up in the Ixil triangle. Strategy of building strong links with popular organisations. Higher profile than ORPA. The military as part of the militarisation process expand their economic interests: the Banco del Ejercito is set up, also the social welfare institute IPM.

- 1974: Rightwing candidate Gen. Kjell Laugerud Garcia elected President in fraudulent elections against Rios Montt who accept to leave for Spain.

- 1975: EGP starts campaign of guerilla violence.

- 1976: Earthquake. Coca cola strike.

- 1977: Massive march by miners from Ixtahuacan, Huehuetenango to Guatemala city. Guatemala refuses US aid package pre-emptively as it refuses the human rights conditionality clauses imposed by the Carter administration.

- 1978: Elections fraud: no one with clear majority or clear mandate. General Romeo Lucas Garcia elected president by national Congress. 100 Q'ekch'i Indians attending a meeting in Panzos to discuss and denounce strategy of land grabbing by cattle growers are machined gunned. This marks the beginning of *la violencia*. CUC the Campesino Unity committee is formed. There are massive demonstrations in Guatemala city against bus fares hikes. Systematic killing of Trade unions leaders begins. The US bans arms sales to Guatemala but honours existing contracts. Guatemala finds alternative source in Israel and Argentina.

- 1979: First military operations by ORPA.

- 1980: Occupation of Spanish embassy by *campesinos* (mainly from CUC): 39 protesters are burned alive by the security forces. Only the ambassador and a *campesino* survive. The latter is kidnapped from hospital, tortured and killed. Spain breaks off diplomatic relationship with Guatemala. A loose alliance between main guerrilla groups: ORPA EGP and FAR as well as some members of the leadership of the PGT. Ronald Reagan is elected President of the US.

- 1981: Major counterinsurgency offensive in Chimaltenango: 1,500 Indian *campesinos* killed in 2 months period. CUC goes underground. CAEM a body representing private enterprise is founded.

- 1982: US-AID distributes 15.5 millions of aid.

- Feb 1982: URNG is created on bases of broad alliance above. Fraudulent elections 'won' by General Anibal Guevara: Rios Montt seizes power before he is sworn in. The new Junta presents its national Development and Security Plan: S-5. The Civilian Affairs division is formed. The beans and guns campaign escalates in Quiche, Alta Verapaz, Chimaltenango, San Marcos and Baja Verapaz. Civilian Patrols: set up within 2 years: 900,000 members.

- July 1982: State of siege declared. The World council of churches reports 9000 dead at the hands of the government within 5 previous months.

- 1983: US resumes sales of military parts, first CONTADORA meeting (regional peace initiative which the US strongly disapprove off).

- March 1983: State of siege is lifted.

- Aug 1983: Rios Montt 's short period of rule comes to an end. After alienation of business sector, army, as well as Catholic Church, defence minister general Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores seizes power in military coup. The model villages program is initiated and armed forces announce transition to civilian rule. Censorship, secret tribunal and council of state are abolished.

- Nov 1984: 2 AID employees are killed: US economic aid is suspended. Constituent assembly convenes. The World Council of Indigenous People accuses the government of systematically exterminating Indian population. The Kissinger commission recommends increase of military assistance to Guatemala.

- 1985: US economic and military aid resumes. UNISTRAGUA the union of Guatemalan workers is set up. Coca Cola plant in Guatemala reopens after occupation. Massive demonstrations following bus fare hikes and inflation. October: Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo (Christian Democrat) wins national elections.

- 1986: Cerezo is sworn in, but declares that he has to share power with the armed forces. Federal and municipal government employees granted rights to organise. Department of Technical Investigations (DIT) is disbanded, many of its members join the police force. The pro-land association led by Catholic priest led a 16,000 strong demo to ask for land for landless. CEAR: creation of Special Commission for the Assistance of Repatriates. Germany gives $175 million in bilateral assistance over next three years. April CGTG is set up: Confederacón General Trabajadores Guatemaltecos.

- 1987: US-AID gives $187 millions. UASP: Unidad Accion Solidaridad Popular: alliance of popular and labour organisations.

- August 1987: Esquipulas II, the culmination of regional effort to bring a political end to the Central American crises; Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras sign up. The US remains sceptical about the proceedings.

- September 1987: CNR - Comité Nacional de Reconciliation is set up. Armed forces launch a 'last offensive' to finish up the Guerrillas. Nov: Esquipulas II comes into effect. Meeting with URNG and Govt in Madrid: comes to nothing.

- 1988: CERJ: Runuel Junam Council of Ethnic Communities set up, against forced recruitment in PACS and army. CONAVIGUA: The National Coordination of Guatemalan widows is set up, Rigoberta Mechu is its spokesperson.

- Jan 1988: US Immigration Service the INS reports increases in asylum applications from Guatemala. The number of arrests of Guatemalans entering the country illegally is up by 38 %. March 1988: the armed forces call off its offensive after casualties become too high and the failure to stamp out the guerrillas becomes evident. May: army coup failed. Newspaper La Epoca offices firebombed. August: another failed coup attempt. November: armed forces kill 22 in Aguacate and attempt to blame the guerrillas.

- 1989: Emergence of jaguar justice: a new death squad. URNG announces it inflicts 7 casualties a day to the army and 'hopes' to increase to 15 a day by the end of the year. The PGT is formally included in the URNG. March 1989: URNG and national Reconciliation Commission sign accord in OSLO to initiate a three step political parties -social sectors and government/military dialogue over next months.

- May 1989: failed coup attempt.

- 1990: Guatemala profile as drug transit corridor is increasing. June: at Escorial in Spain: signing of agreement between URNG and political parties to work towards the political resolution of conflict.

- December 1990: Massacre in Santiago de Atitlán; the whole town protests and successfully drives the army out. Presidential elections: between Serrano and Jorge de Carpio Nicole.

- 1991: Serrano wins landslide victory in Presidential elections.

- April 1990: Peace negotiations begin between government and URNG. 500 years of Resistance campaign begins.