Security and Democracy in El Salvador: An Undeniable Connection

By Michael Wilkerson

In 1992, UN mediators helped bring El Salvador’s decade-long civil war to an end and played an instrumental part in creating a democratic government. Both the peace process and subsequent democracy-building endeavors were extraordinarily successful. El Salvador remains an important case study in how international actors can help in post-conflict environments. In particular, El Salvador shows the importance of providing security both for former combatants and the general public after years of war. Only after a secure environment has been established can true rebuilding and reconstruction occur in other areas like the government and the economy. With ongoing nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the possibility of future international interventions in former conflict zones like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador’s lessons remain applicable. Security is an absolute prerequisite for demobilizing former combatants and creating credible democratic institutions.
In 1992, with the heavy involvement of the United Nations (UN), a peace agreement ended more than 10 years of civil war in El Salvador. The ensuing rebuilding process included sweeping democratic reforms and the full transformation of the rebel Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) into a functional political party. Though imperfect, El Salvador’s transition from bloody civil war to peaceful elected government is widely considered one of the most successful examples of how to build democracy in a post-conflict environment.

A key component of El Salvador’s success in negotiating peace and creating democracy was the provision of security to both combatants and the populace. Focusing on the Salvadoran case, this paper seeks to emphasize the importance of security to democratic success, particularly in post-conflict countries. By examining why security is important to democracy and how El Salvador achieved it during its transition with the help of the UN, it is possible to derive lessons for how international actors can aid other post-conflict states in creating or sustaining democracy.

After better defining the concept of security and reviewing its importance in post-conflict interventions, the paper will proceed in three phases. First, it will suggest that public desire for security after years of civil war helped both start and sustain the Salvadoran peace process. Second, it will discuss how the tactics of the UN intervention were successful in advancing security and consequently increasing democratic quality. Finally, it will present El Salvador’s more recent problems with high levels of crime and violence and connect this lack of security to the difficulties of maintaining high levels of democracy in the country.

Overall, El Salvador is an excellent case study for examining how security serves as an important prerequisite for democratization, the choices nation-builders can make to strengthen this relationship, and the harmful backlash insecurity can create.

DEFINING SECURITY

First, it is important to define security. At its core, security means public safety. In a secure environment, citizens need not fear for their persons or their possessions, and everyday life can proceed without continual and unpredictable disruption. Historically, political philosophers have defined the provision of safety as one of the primary functions of government. In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes conceived of the ideal ruler as a Leviathan, a monster so powerful that all citizens would obey the law for fear of this overwhelming force. By ceding authority to the ruler, the citizens no longer had to fear one another. Philosophers including John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill later democratized this rudimentary social contract to include more basic natural rights for individuals and explicit accountability of the government to its citizens. However, the idea that government should be able to enforce laws by having a monopoly over use of force has remained, and this component can be referred to as “public security.”

Since it would be easy to imagine, as Hobbes did, a relatively stable environment created by a repressive authoritarian government, a second component of the modern definition of security is the protection of individual rights or “human security.” Beyond simply providing rule of law and protection from violence, democratic governments must also provide minimal guarantees of individual freedom. In describing this ideal, the UN
Commission for Human Security writes:

Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms - freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s behalf.7

In evaluating El Salvador and other post-conflict cases, both the provision of public safety and the more comprehensive protection of human security are important and sometimes conflicting aspects of the security discussion.8

WHY SECURITY MATTERS

This dual definition of security is a vital consideration when discussing international interventions and building post-conflict democracy. Not surprisingly, conflict zones generally have very low levels of public security.9 Civilians are often caught in the cross-fire between warring parties and may be coerced into joining one of the sides. At the same time, incumbent governments often respond to rebellions with repressive mechanisms such as death squads, special police, and internal intelligence agents.10 In some cases, the government or the state may have crumbled completely, leaving a security vacuum which can quickly be filled by criminal elements, religious fanatics, or opportunistic warlords.11

For these reasons, security needs to be one of the highest priorities for international forces in peace or nation-building operations. In fact, it is often the impetus for intervention. As Dobbins et al. write,

International interventions invariably are launched to deal with a security gap that has emerged: either a civil war is under way, public order has broken down, or a regime is abusing its own citizens or threatening its neighbors.12

A successful intervention therefore often hinges on dealing with a security issue, and one of the first tasks of intervening forces must be to fill the security gap. In cases where a war has just ended or a regime has recently collapsed, failure to provide security in the interim reconstruction period risks allowing criminal and insurgent groups to gain permanent traction. In the words of democracy scholar Larry Diamond, “[a] vacuum of power is always filled, one way or another.”13 The biggest problem faced by the US during its occupation of Iraq has been its failure to anticipate or address the massive security void created by the fall of Saddam Hussein.14 As US forces there have discovered, only after basic public order is established can other areas like governance, social services, and economic reconstruction be dealt with effectively.15 As political theorist Francis Fukuyama argues, “adequate security is the absolute sine qua non of success” for post-conflict reconstruction.16

The methods which should be used to deal with the security gap depend on the scope of the conflict and the nature of the intervention, but a number of best practices can be identified. Criteria like the size and duration of the conflict, the probability of spoilers, the friendliness of neighboring states, and the availability of valuable resources like timber or diamonds can be used to estimate the difficulty of a post-conflict environment.17 More difficult circumstances require larger commitments of resources and political will. Additionally, in defining the nature of an intervention, there is a major distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. In peacekeeping missions, an international force (often the UN) enters after the establishment of a ceasefire and oversees the demobilization of forces. Peacekeepers operate as facilitators of peace agreements and generally try to hold conflicting parties to commitments made in peace agreements.18 Peace enforcement, on the other hand, tends to involve the deployment of international military forces against one party in a conflict with the hope of bringing peace by neutralizing an antagonist. The British intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 is one such example.19

In almost all interventions, the deployment of police is the best option for restoring civil order once combat is over. Police embody the rule of law and, when effective, can create a stable environment even while a larger political transition is underway.20 Most international forces have little capacity to take on policing duties, so it is often necessary to rely on native police forces that may be ineffective or partisan. This reliance can lead to complications like corruption and distrust among officers, but, as one study points out, “it is usually preferable to rely on flawed local security forces, provided these are closely monitored, than to cede the streets to criminals and political extremists.”21 Where the state has collapsed or where the international forces are trying to stop ongoing fighting, military intervention may be necessary to stabilize the situation.22 Even in these more volatile situations, the rapid mobilization of effective local forces is important. Most international interventions are ill-equipped to handle the entire security burden for very long, since foreign soldiers can quickly be perceived as illegitimate. The integration of local forces is necessary to begin the process of capacity
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Once order has been established, the next step is to demobilize former sources of insecurity. This process may involve reforming and downsizing military and police forces, demobilizing and disarming combatants, and reintegrating former fighters into non-violent positions in society. Here it is clear that the relationship between improved security and political reform is mutually reinforcing. As I will discuss in the case of El Salvador, combatants must be stakeholders in the political process, trusting the new political order and rule of law. Along the same lines, economic considerations are necessary to make sure former combatants or downsized military and police can find legitimate jobs. When former dissident groups are not threatened by the new system, they have important incentives to look to politics instead of violence as a way to resolve grievances, minimizing new outbreaks of fighting. With a stable peace, a new government can make more progress in liberalization and reform. This condition increases "human security" by way of better protection of civil rights. To put it succinctly, increasing public security should pave the way for democratic progress, and a more open political system should provide even more security through better rule of law and individual rights.

EL SALVADOR’S CIVIL WAR

The experience of El Salvador underscores the importance of security to successful peace-building and democracy. El Salvador’s civil war officially began in 1979 when five pre-existing rebel groups united to form the FMLN. Though there had been previous armed resistance, it was not until 1979 and 1980 that the unification of the rebels first posed a serious threat to the state apparatus. The conflict was rooted in years of economic inequality caused largely by the country’s agricultural economy. Since El Salvador’s independence in 1823, an alliance between the military and the small number of land-owning elites to oppress the working classes had persisted, and land reform was one of the key demands of the modern insurgents. Though elections were technically conducted after the creation of a formal constitution in 1948, the majority of the population was politically and economically disenfranchised by the authoritarian government.

El Salvador’s civil war was notorious for the government’s use of paramilitary “death squads,” which often operated under the guise of intelligence organizations to terrorize the population and carry out targeted political murders. Some of the most infamous death squad killings included the assassination of the Catholic archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero in 1980 and the murder of six Jesuit priests and two of their staff in 1989 in retaliation for the Catholic church’s alleged sympathy for the rebels. More than 75,000 Salvadorans were killed during the war, a majority of them civilians. Government forces were responsible for almost all of the deaths. Peace talks were attempted in 1984, 1986, 1987, and 1989, but in each case failed largely because the government demanded the full surrender of the FMLN but refused political reforms demanded by the FMLN.

The FMLN nearly won the war in 1983, but the US feared the revolutionary socialist rhetoric of the rebels and gave the Salvadoran government heavy military support including the major advantage of airpower. Though the rebels were supported and armed by Soviet sources through neighbors like Nicaragua, the Salvadoran government’s US-provided硬件 and funds were more significant and kept the regime afloat. US support was a primary reason for the heavy civilian casualties as the government used air strikes as one of several tools to conduct a form of total war against civilians suspected to be rebel supporters. US assistance (which totaled over $6 billion in military and economic aid) also helped extend the war by hardening the Salvadoran government’s negotiating position. The government assumed that US support made military victory inevitable and thus viewed any concessions to the rebels as unnecessary.

Starting in 1989, a combination of several events put El Salvador on the road to peace. First, the Soviet Union decided to stop shipping arms to Nicaragua, both depriving the FMLN of a main arms supplier and de-escalating US strategic concerns. Second, despite being from the Alianza...
Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA), the right-wing ruling party, the newly-elected president Alfredo Christiani determined that El Salvador could not sustain more long years of war and called for peace talks with the FMLN. Third, after these peace talks broke down, the FMLN began a major offensive that ultimately failed and showed that neither side was likely to emerge with a clear military victory. Fourth, major international news coverage of the deaths of the six Jesuits at the hands of government death squads undermined public support in the US for the Salvadoran government, leading to a reduction in military aid. Last, both parties appealed separately to the UN for help with mediating a peace agreement. All these factors lead to the first main point about the importance of the security issue to democracy in El Salvador: the security concerns of Salvadorans at large helped drive the onset and success of peace negotiations. As Call writes, "By 1987, polls showed that 83 percent of the national population supported an end to the war through negotiated settlement." The state was plagued by extreme insecurity with its many civilian casualties, severe economic ruin, and a large portion of its populace fleeing the country. Though it is impossible to ignore others factors leading to peace negotiations, including the end of the Cold War, it is significant to note the powerful role that public weariness of the fighting had in bringing about peace talks. The Salvadoran war-fatigue became even clearer when the November 1989 offensive of the FMLN brought the war for the first time to the capital, San Salvador. The rebels were eventually pushed back, showing that the FMLN lacked support for an all-out popular revolution, but the offensive also brought the war to the backyards of the urban elite, many of whom had previously held in unwavering support for the military government. It became clear that the military could no longer guarantee protection of its core supporters, let alone achieve a decisive win. War-fatigue, coupled with decreased support from the no-longer competitive US and USSR, negotiated peace was finally an option. This Salvadoran desire for security helped not only to initiate, but also to sustain the four-year peace process in its most difficult moments.

UN INTERVENTION IN EL SALVADOR

The role of the UN in El Salvador was remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of which was its facilitation of El Salvador’s complete transition to peace and improved democracy without renewed outbreaks of fighting. After meeting with both sides secretly, the UN was able to bring government and FMLN representatives together in Geneva, and on April 4, 1990, an agreement was signed to open official negotiations with the United Nations serving as mediator. The UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, assigned a special representative, Alvaro de Soto, to lead the UN mediation in El Salvador. Though the beginning of official negotiations was an accomplishment in itself, the talks soon stalled as the FMLN wanted the “complete abolition” of the army, while the government refused to consider a purge of any of its officers, even for blatant human rights violations. Asking for gestures of good faith to bypass the stall, de Soto was eventually able to make two important breakthroughs. Both sides accepted a UN mission to monitor human rights in El Salvador, establishing an on-the-ground presence within the country. Additionally, an agreement was made to allow the UN’s representative, de Soto, to play a more active role in making substantive and original proposals instead of just facilitating discussion. This increased power, along with the stalemate between the government and the FMLN allowed the UN to ultimately draft the majority of what would become the final peace agreement. Despite these steps forward, it took intense pressure from the international community, including the temporary reduction of American military aid by 50 percent at one point, before the government agreed to significant military reforms and signed the peace accords. Agreements were signed first in April 1991 and then in January 1992 to officially end the war.

The final peace agreement, known as the
Chapultepec Accord, was over a hundred pages long and included more than a hundred explicit deadlines for the cease-fire and stages of demobilization and disarmament. After a formal cease-fire, the FMLN was to demobilize and give up its arms. The Salvadoran military was to be significantly downsized, rescinding all of its internal security duties with intelligence responsibilities consolidated to a single civilian-run agency. A new National Civilian Police (PNC) was to be created with a maximum of 20 percent of its forces from the FMLN, and 20 percent from former government soldiers. The PNC would have an entrance exam for applicants, and a new civilian-run police academy would be held responsible for training new recruits. An ad hoc commission was to review human rights violations and make recommendations for purges from the government and military, and a Human Rights Advocate's Office would receive and investigate human rights complaints. The judiciary was to be depoliticized and professionalized, and some basic land reform was agreed to, albeit mostly in principle. A National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ) was created with representatives from the government, FMLN, and each political party to oversee implementation of political agreements. It had the ability to submit legislation, but no executive power. Finally, perhaps the most important provision of the agreement was that the UN mission which had been serving as a human rights observation force (ONUSAL), would expand with military and police divisions to help oversee the implementation of peace.43

The scope of ONUSAL’s responsibilities in its expanded form was largely unprecedented. Call writes, “This marked the first time divisions formally dedicated to human rights and to police observation constituted part of a UN peacekeeping operation.”44 ONUSAL was to oversee disarmament and demobilization, monitor human rights, help organize and train the PNC, and remove mines. It also later took on the role of monitoring elections. Along with these official duties, ONUSAL continued to mediate disagreements and stalemates, publicly protesting when either side failed to live up to its commitments. In particular, ONUSAL's ability to publicly embarrass the two sides gave it significant clout. When an FMLN secret arms cache was discovered in 1993, ONUSAL's outrage led the FMLN to reveal over 120 additional secret storage sites. When the government refused to follow the recommendations of the ad hoc commission and remove senior officials implicated for human rights abuses, ONUSAL's public criticism led to heavy international pressure and eventually acquiescence.45 ONUSAL did face a number of setbacks like delays, resistance from government, incomplete land reforms, and inadequate reintegration of former combatants, some of which were never resolved. Still, the ONUSAL operation and the Salvadoran peace process as a whole were largely successful. There were never any relapses into war, the FMLN became a functioning and successful political party, the military was shrunk and overhauled, and both the police and military significantly improved their respect for human rights.46 Today, El Salvador is considered a solid democracy, garnering a rating of “free” - the highest possible ranking - from the Freedom House monitoring organization.47

El Salvador was able to make this transition to peace and democracy in large part because the UN was so effective in dealing with sources of insecurity. First, the UN helped bring both parties to the negotiating table. After years of fighting, both sides were constantly suspicious of one another, and the “strict impartiality” of the UN representatives was crucial in bringing both sides to a final agreement.48 Furthermore, Alvaro de Soto himself was a major factor in this process. Like the Secretary General who appointed him (de Cuellar), de Soto was Peruvian and was familiar with the larger region and could communicate fluently in Spanish. By getting each side to agree to small measures of good faith such as the initial human rights monitoring and expanded UN involvement, de Soto helped build trust in UN-led negotiations as a way out of war. In many peace negotiations, opposing sides simply cannot bridge the gap of distrust created by years of fighting, but de Soto was able to use his own credibility, along with that of the UN, to reassure both sides. In addition, the peace agreements themselves (largely written by the UN) were tailored to ensure increases in public and human security in the post-war environment. These assurances were particularly crucial in getting the FMLN to agree

Salvadorans cast their votes in the 1994 election
to demobilization. Lastly, though the proposed measures were less successful in practice, economic insecurity was also targeted by land redistribution plans, especially to former combatants.49

The ONUSAL-led implementation of the peace agreement generally followed through on resolving sources of insecurity, using many of the intervention practices mentioned earlier. The elimination of death squads, military down-sizing, and the institution of a national police with respect for human rights removed many of the instruments of fear and death. These moves, besides reassuring common citizens, also allowed the FMLN to disarm with less fear of becoming vulnerable to retribution and gave the organization more incentive to join the political process. The structure - if not the final outcome - of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration used by ONUSAL in El Salvador is quite literally the textbook procedure of how to deal with former combatants.50 Rebel and government forces were separated, disarmed, and then demobilized and reintegrated into society and new security forces in carefully regimented stages.

The security improvements facilitated by ONUSAL allowed democratic reform in both direct and indirect ways. The subjugation of the military to civilian authority directly moved the government away from a rule of fear. Moreover, the cessation of hostilities and integration of the rebels into the political process broadly increased the representative nature of the government. In a more indirect way, the legitimacy and trust ONUSAL gained through its success with security reforms allowed it to be more effective in other areas like election and judiciary reform, which increased democratic quality. Once again, in a testament to the effectiveness of ONUSAL’s staff, Montgomery notes the following:

In the last six months of ONUSAL's tenure, the mission had to develop all the institution-building projects, such as providing training courses to reinforce the judicial system and did so in six weeks despite the UNDP having claimed it would take them a year to accomplish the same thing.51

There were certainly shortcomings to ONUSAL’s peace implementation, including the lack of complete reintegration of former combatants. Nevertheless, with better security and improved democracy due in large part to the efforts of ONUSAL, El Salvador made significant progress in other areas. According to one author’s calculations, “between 1990 and 2002, extreme poverty decreased from 31 percent to 15 percent, while overall poverty was reduced more than 27 percent.” Malnutrition in small children and infant mortality decreased, and access to clean water also improved.52 It is no wonder the intervention in El Salvador is considered one of the most successful peacekeeping missions the UN has ever undertaken.53

CRIME AND THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN EL SALVADOR

Despite the success of El Salvador’s transformation, a look at more recent events shows that El Salvador’s security troubles are not over. Enormous crime problems, particularly with street gangs, have hurt the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Salvadoran government.54 The problem of crime has been severe indeed: deaths by homicide at one point surpassed the highest death rate during the twelve year civil war.55

The end of the war enabled security reforms, but also paradoxically stands as one of the root causes for the crime wave. Much of the crime increase can be attributed to the ability to fully reintegrate former combatants into society.56
As Susan Burgerman writes, “With high unemployment and underemployment rates, the Salvadoran economy could not absorb the influx of young males trained to do battle.”\(^{57}\) Despite disarmament attempts, guns remained easily accessible, and with jobs scarce, the Salvadorans who spent much of their lives surrounded by war returned to violence as a means of sustaining themselves.

It is possible to argue that the crime increase is due to in part to ineffective policing. According to one report, the El Salvador case is especially interesting because “US assistance helped improve the accountability and human rights practices of the Salvadoran police after the Chapultepec Accords, but it did not improve police effectiveness, as violent crime rates soared in the late 1990s.”\(^{58}\) This claim is debatable, however, in light of what Call refers to as the “transaction costs” of security reform. The PNC was given the task of securing the entire country, a job that had previously been shared with the military. Because of the consolidation of the military, as well as the limit on the number of ex-combatants who could join the military or the police, security forces in post-war El Salvador were both smaller and less-experienced than during the war. Even though the PNC was ostensibly better-trained than ever before, the decline in total personnel was out-of-sync with the rising number of unemployed young men with guns.\(^{59}\)

The crime problem has worsened with the increase of organized street gangs known as “maras.” Journalist Ana Arana explains that the two largest and most dangerous gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street Gang (M-18) both grew out of slums in Los Angeles populated by Salvadorans who had fled during the civil war. When the US enacted tougher immigration laws in 1996, non-citizens convicted of crimes could be deported after serving time in jail. Consequently, an increasing number of Salvadoran gang members were returned to El Salvador “with few prospects other than their gang connections.”\(^{60}\) Worse still, US immigration rules banned the US from disclosing the criminal background of deportees, meaning that the Salvadoran criminals were simply set free upon being returned home. Consequently, in the words of Andrew Papachristos, “US immigration policy has led to unintentional state-sponsored gang migration.”\(^{61}\) As Arana wrote of El Salvador in 2005, “the gangs now boast 10,000 core members and 20,000 young associates” and account for growing proportions of violent crime, drug trafficking and robberies.\(^{62}\) Not surprisingly, many Salvadorans, including current president Elias Antonio Saca, blame the US for introducing the gang problem in a society already struggling with violent crime. Though some US programs exist, such as those advising law enforcement in El Salvador, the US has generally been slow to help.\(^{63}\)

Just as an increase in security can promote democracy, growing insecurity creates multiple threats and challenges to improvement or even sustainability of democratic quality. Post-war crime problems in El Salvador have led to three notable threats to the health of democracy. First, organized crime and drug trafficking are one factor leading to the increase of corruption, which initially declined until about 1999.\(^{64}\) By bribing the police, criminal elements entrench themselves and undermine the quality of justice and protection of citizens—eventually leading to a further decline in both security and democracy.

A second threat to democracy appears when a government backslides into authoritarian tendencies out of its desperation in dealing with high crime rates. When President Francisco Flores Perez was elected in 1999, he pledged to reduce violent crime by 50 percent and ordinary crime by 60 percent, both within three years. Pressure to live up to such unrealistic goals led to expanded arrest powers for the police. At the same time, police began to be evaluated on the basis of the numbers of arrests, increasing motivation to make arbitrary arrests.\(^{65}\) Recently, the military may also be gaining in political power. In 2002, the Legislative Assembly passed the National Defense Law, which drew protests from human rights and civil society organizations. Its vague terms seemed to allow military forces back into the realm of internal security, though supposedly only in cases of public disturbances.\(^{66}\) In a country with a history of military-dominated authoritarianism, reverting toward such tendencies, even for the honorable cause of fighting crime is very, very dangerous.

Finally, high crime in El Salvador is problematic because the insecurity creates doubt among the general public as to whether a democratic government truly is the best option. At the peak of the post-war crime surge, a majority of Salvadorans surveyed backed the need for a “strongman” to solve the country’s issues.\(^{67}\) Indeed, Call says, “polls by Latinobarometro showed a dramatic decline in support for democracy in El Salvador, from near 80 percent in 1998 to 40 percent in 2000.”\(^{68}\) Besides the crime factor itself, the other two resultant problems of corruption and growing authoritarianism create new sources of insecurity and casts doubt on the government’s ability to do its job. Edgardo Alberto Amaya points out that actual victimization rates, or the percentage of people who reported being victims of a crime decreased from 34.3 to 16.1 percent from 1993 to 2001. The persisting perception of public insecurity, Amaya writes, “reflects the absence of transparency, accountability, and systematic planning on
crime issues by official agencies.”

If democracy is to flourish in El Salvador, the government will have to find a way to solve its security dilemma. Most importantly, it will need to figure out how to ensure the safety of its citizens without reverting to repressive authoritarianism. Because of its involvement in the civil war, its connection to the gang problem, and its interest in promoting democracy, the United States has an obligation to give El Salvador major assistance with crime reduction. Susan Burgerman argues that the best way to do this in El Salvador and elsewhere is through long-term commitment to supporting democratic institutions rather than sporadic assistance. As she writes, “Lowering violent crime significantly in poorly performing states requires focused, systemic, long-term assistance to the security sector and justice administration systems plus intervention at the community level.” A major democracy-building lesson, therefore, from El Salvador is that even though ONUSAL’s efforts helped set the country on a positive path, sustained assistance and attention is the best way to ensure that democracy is strengthened over time.

CONCLUSION

When examined from a comparative perspective, the UN intervention in El Salvador’s civil war was a very successful case of peacekeeping and nation-building. To be sure, much of this success has to do with the nature of the conflict. El Salvador had actually finished fighting, unlike in the interventions in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, in which conflicts reemerged despite the presence of UN forces. Divisions were economic rather than ethnic, as opposed to the cases of Iraq or Bosnia, for example. And finally, the international community gave tremendous support to the mission, in contrast to the weak responses to Somalia and Sudan. Still, ONUSAL and Alvaro de Soto performed admirably, and by improving security helped El Salvador make major progress toward liberal democracy.

As the case of El Salvador demonstrates, there is a strong connection between the quality of security and the progress of democracy in post-conflict states. Without adequately creating and improving security, intervening international forces will have little chance for success. More recently, El Salvador’s struggle to fight crime also reinforces the importance of security to democratic stability and success. With higher insecurity, El Salvador is faced with increased corruption, greater authoritarianism, and growing public distrust in democracy. Though it is difficult to predict what will happen next, El Salvador solidly demonstrates the high correlation between security and democracy and shows the crucial need of maintaining security for building and strengthening democracy in the years following conflict.

ENDNOTES

3. When referring to international interventions, nation-building etc., I assume increased democracy to be a goal of international forces. This may not always be the case, but at least recently, most international involvements in post-conflict states attempt some degree of democratic reform.
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6 Generally, conventional definitions of security also include national security, or security of the state, along with public and human security. This is a less important consideration of nation-builders focusing on internal problems, although with hostile neighbors it can be a problem. See A. Douglas Kincaid, "Demilitarization and Security in El Salvador and Guatemala: Convergences of Success and Crisis" Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs Vol. 42. No. 4, Winter 2000, 40.
8 Citizen security and public security can come into conflict when as in El Salvador, civil rights like probable cause for arrest (human security) are compromised in the name of reducing crime (public security).
9 Call, 305.
12 Ibid., 24-25.
16 Ibid., 234.
18 Fukuyama, "Guidelines for Nation-Builders" 233.
19 Ibid.
20 Call and Stanley, "Civilian Security" 303.
22 Ibid., 24.
23 Ibid., 60-63.
24 Ibid., 30-35.
26 Ibid., 322.
27 Examining this same connection, Call proceeds to evaluate competing theories of institutional reform. He argues the mode of transition to democracy is a strong predictor of the degree of reform. See Call, Charles T. "Democratization, War and State-Building," 828.
28 Call "Assessing El Salvador's Transition from Civil War to Peace" 385.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 385, 403.
31 Call, "War Transitions" 13.
33 Call "Assessing El Salvador's Transition from Civil War to Peace" 386-387.
34 Ibid.
36 This list is taken roughly from Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution.
37 Call, "Assessing El Salvador's Transition from Civil War to Peace" 387.
40 Ibid.,141.
42 As one of the FMLN negotiators put it, "Alvaro de Soto presided over the negotiating table while Pedro Nikken [another UN official] wrote almost all the accords." Montgomery, "Getting to Peace in El Salvador" 142.
44 Ibid., 391.
46 Ibid., 412.
49 Call, "Assessing El Salvador's Transition From Civil War to Peace" 410-411.
51 Montgomery "Getting to Peace in El Salvador" 156.
53 Dobbins, James et al. The UN's Role in Nation Building: From the Congo to Iraq Rand 2005, 64.
54 Arana, Ana "How the Street Gangs Took Central America" Foreign Affairs May/June 2005, p 1 (online printer friendly edition) 3.
55 Call "Democratisation and State-Building" 839-840.
56 Ibid., 860.
57 Burgerman "Making Peace Perform" 256.
59 Call "Democratisation and State-Building" 843.
60 Arana, Ana "How the Street Gangs Took Central America" Foreign Affairs May/June 2005 (online printer friendly edition) 2.
61 Papachristos, Andrew V. "Gang World" Foreign Policy March/April 2005. 53.
62 Arana, "How the Street Gangs Took Central America" 2.
64 Call, "Democratisation and State-Building" 844.
66 Ibid., 142.
67 Call, "Assessing El Salvador's Transition from Civil War to Peace" 413.
68 Call, "Democratisation, War and State-Building" 859.
70 Burgerman "Making Peace Perform" 276-77.
71 This is a major point of Paul Collier, a World Bank economist and Oxford professor, in his new and controversial book The Bottom Billion. Collier argues that in nation-building exercises, countries like the U.S. should commit to sustained assistance and plan on having a presence and giving aid for around a decade instead of just the first few high profile years. See Paul Collier, The Bottom Billion, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 177.