NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN GUATEMALA

by

Carlos G. Berrios

June 1998

Thesis Advisor: Thomas C. Bruneau
Thesis Co-Advisor: Scott D. Tollefson

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	June 1998	Master's Thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN GUATEMALA

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)
Berrios, Carlos G.

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5000

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(maximum 200 words)*

The purpose of this thesis is to examine civil-military relations in Guatemala and their effect on democratic consolidation. The issue of civil-military relations in Guatemala is one of particular importance as political and military leaders as well as members of civil society attempt to redefine the role of the military after 36 years of civil war. Applying Felipe Aguero's theory of civilian supremacy, this thesis argues that since 1982, the Guatemalan military has evolved into a professional military institution, becoming an essential part of the democratic state. This evolution has resulted in the development of sound civil-military relations with firm civilian control, thus impacting significantly the democratization process of the country. The stability and structure of civil-military relations in Guatemala will depend not only on the military but also on the consensus reached by all elements of civil and political society as to how best to utilize the armed forces in support of the democratic state. Currently, Guatemala does not have the institutional mechanisms by which to control the military. Nevertheless, civil-military relations are stable and the military fully supports the democratization process. Further research is recommended in order to investigate the role of the democratic institutions in Guatemala in the monitoring and implementation of defense policy.

14. SUBJECT TERMS	15. NUMBER OF PAGES
Democracy, Guatemalan Peace Accords, President Jorge Serrano 1993 Attempted Coup, Latin America Civil-Military Relations, Guatemalan Military, Guatemala	107
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFI- CATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std.239-18

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN GUATEMALA

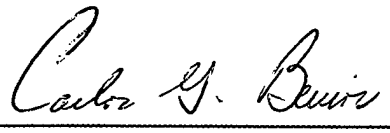
Carlos G. Berrios
Captain, United States Army
B.B.A., St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, 1987

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

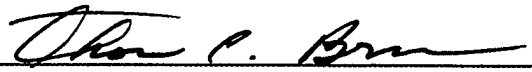
MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

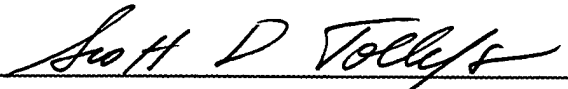
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 1998

Author: 

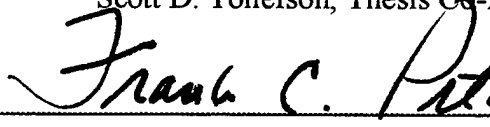
Carlos G. Berrios

Approved by: 

Thomas C. Bruneau, Thesis Advisor



Scott D. Tollefson, Thesis Co-Advisor



Frank C. Petho, Chairman
Department of National Security Affairs

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine civil-military relations in Guatemala and their effect on democratic consolidation. The issue of civil-military relations in Guatemala is one of particular importance as political and military leaders as well as members of civil society attempt to redefine the role of the military after 36 years of civil war. Applying Felipe Aguero's theory of civilian supremacy, this thesis argues that since 1982, the Guatemalan military has evolved into a professional military institution, becoming an essential part of the democratic state. This evolution has resulted in the development of sound civil-military relations with firm civilian control, thus impacting significantly the democratization process of the country. The stability and structure of civil-military relations in Guatemala will depend not only on the military but also on the consensus reached by all elements of civil and political society as to how best to utilize the armed forces in support of the democratic state. Currently, Guatemala does not have the institutional mechanisms by which to control the military. Nevertheless, civil-military relations are stable and the military fully supports the democratization process. Further research is recommended in order to investigate the role of the democratic institutions in Guatemala in the monitoring and implementation of defense policy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis is to examine civil-military relations in Guatemala and their effect on democratic consolidation. In Guatemala, two key factors have significantly influenced civil-military relations – societal structures and political institutions. Samuel P. Huntington, in Political Order in Changing Societies traces the roots of military involvement in politics to a given country's societal and institutional arrangements. He argues that militaries become involved in politics as a result of the politicization of social forces in society, one in which social groups have a vested interest not only in the issues that affect their organizations but society as a whole. Huntington refers to this hyper-politicization of social forces as a "praetorian society."[1]

The concept of "praetorian society" serves to explain civil-military relations in Guatemala. The involvement of the Guatemalan military in politics can be attributed to the structure of the Guatemalan society, which after its independence, like many countries in Latin America, remained highly oligarchic and feudal. This social structure developed a legacy of weak and ineffective political institutions incapable of assimilating the entry of new social groups in politics.[2]

Since the early part of the twentieth century, the Guatemalan military institution has undergone a significant transformation. From 1931 to 1944, the Guatemalan military served as an instrument of state control. From 1944 to 1982, the military became the guardians of the political process. From 1982 to 1985, the military guided the democratic

---

1 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 194-195.

2 Ibid., pp. 198-199.

transition process. And since 1986, the military began a reform process in order to become a more professional institution, supportive of the democratic state. In 1998, after twelve years of civilian democratic rule, the military continues with its institutional reforms in response to the peace agreements signed in December 1996 and its new role in the Post-Cold War era. The significant progress toward sound civil-military relations in Guatemala can be attributed to the democratization process and the military's willingness to undergo institutional reforms.

I argue in this thesis that since 1982, the Guatemalan military has evolved into a more professional military institution, becoming an essential part of the democratic state. This evolution has resulted in the development of sound civil-military relations with firm civilian control, thus impacting significantly on the democratization process of the country.

I consider this thesis of great importance because Guatemala, like other countries not only in Central America but also around the world, is emerging from years of societal and political conflict as a result of the Cold War. The fact that democracy has taken root in Guatemala for more than twelve years, and that the Peace Accords were signed in December 1996, makes the prospects for democratic consolidation much more positive.

The issue of civil-military relations in Guatemala is one of particular importance, as political and military leaders as well as members of civil society attempt to redefine the role of the military after 36 years of civil war. Currently Guatemala is not only trying to formalize its civil-military relations, but is also trying to define the role of the military in a democratic society, as well as educating civilian leaders in matters related to defense and security. The stability and structure of civil-military relations in Guatemala will

depend not only on the military but also on the consensus reached by all elements of civil and political society as to how best to utilize the armed forces in support of the democratic state.

In this thesis, I use the theory developed by Felipe Aguero in Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post Franco in Comparative Perspective. In his theory Aguero points out that civilian supremacy is neither achieved in "one blow" nor initiated by civilian imposition; it happens through a process in which the military itself as an institution decides to revert to a role more restricted to professional military matters.[3]

This thesis is a single country (Guatemala) case study, which compares the level of political influence of the Guatemalan military during two period: from 1986 to 1990 after the transition to democracy, and from 1996 to 1998 after almost twelve years of democratic rule. This thesis focuses on four issue areas: 1) military role in domestic intelligence and internal security; 2) military education system; 3) size, roles and missions of the Guatemalan military; and 4) military expenditures.

In this thesis I found that Guatemala has increasingly sound civil-military relations with civilian control having a significant impact on the democratization process. I define civilian control in the case of Guatemala as the ability of the executive branch of government to maintain control over the military. Currently, however, Guatemala does not have the institutional mechanisms by which to control the military. Nevertheless, civil-military relations are stable and the military fully supports the democratization process.

---

[3] Felipe Aguero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post Franco in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 17.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife Alexia for her understanding and support. Without you and the boys, I would never have finished this thesis. To Professor Thomas C. Bruneau, thank you for your help in editing my work and for providing me with the necessary guidance and encouragement to complete this thesis. To Caesar D. Sereseres, Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine, my sincere appreciation for helping me understand some of the historical facts related to this thesis, and for editing my work along the way. And finally, to Senior Lecturer Scott D. Tollefson who encouraged me to inquiry into this subject, I express my sincere gratitude; you have been a great mentor to me throughout this graduate journey.

I. INTRODUCTION

The republic of Guatemala is the second largest country in Central America. It gained its independence on 15 September 1821, after more than three centuries of Spanish domination. Guatemala's territory encompasses over 100,000 square kilometers and is the most populated country in Central America. Guatemala is bounded to the west by Mexico, to the east by Belize and the Gulf of Honduras, to the southeast by El Salvador and Honduras and to the south by the Pacific Ocean. Even though Spanish is the official language, at least half of the population speaks one of the 23 indigenous dialects spoken in the country.

Since the early days of its independence to the mid-1900s, four dictators ruled Guatemala for long periods: Jose Rafael Carrera (1837-1865), Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885), Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920), and Jorge Ubico (1931-1944). Each relied on the armed forces for support and cultivated the officer corps.[1] In addition, the armed forces served as instruments of the state and also protected the societal structure left by the Spanish colonizers, which was highly oligarchic and feudal. Despite the fact that Guatemala enjoyed considerable economic development during the early and mid 1900s, its societal structure and weak political institutions led the armed forces to intervene in the political process.

---

[1] Richard F. Nyrop, "Introduction," *Guatemala: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: American University, Foreign Area Studies, 1983), p. xxv.

The 1944 military coup d'etat against Ubico's successor, General Federico Ponce Vaides, despite triggering the democratic revolution that lasted ten years (1944-1954), marked the beginning of a trend in which Guatemalan military became active participants in the political process. The Guatemalan military continued its participation in the political process throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and early part of the 1980s until it transferred power to a democratic-elected leader in 1986.

In Guatemala, two key factors have significantly influenced civil-military relations – societal structures and political institutions. Samuel P. Huntington in chapter four of his book, Political Order in Changing Societies traces the roots of military involvement in politics to a given country's societal and institutional arrangements. He argues that militaries become involved in politics as a result of the politicization of social forces in society, one in which social groups have a vested interest not only in the issues that affect their organizations but society as a whole. Huntington refers to this hyper-politicization of social forces as a "praetorian society."[2]

The concept of "praetorian society" serves to explain civil-military relations in Guatemala. The involvement of the Guatemalan military in politics can be attributed to the structure of the Guatemalan society, which after its independence, like many countries in Latin America remained highly oligarchic and feudal. This social structure developed

---

2 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 194-195.

legacy of weak and ineffective political institutions incapable of modernizing society or assimilating the entry of new social groups in politics.[3]

Since the early part of the twentieth century, the Guatemalan military institution has undergone a significant transformation. From 1931 to 1944, the Guatemalan military served as an instrument of state control. From 1944 to 1982, the military became the guardians of the political process. From 1982 to 1985, the military guided the democratic transition process. And since 1986, the military began a reform process in order to become a more professional institution supportive of the democratic state. In 1998, after twelve years of civilian democratic rule, the military continues with its institutional reforms in response to the peace agreements signed in December 1996 and its new role in the Post-Cold War era. The significant progress toward sound civil-military relations in Guatemala can be attributed to the democratization process and the military's willingness to undergo institutional reforms.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine civil-military relations in Guatemala and their effects on democratic consolidation. This thesis addresses three questions in relation to the military's political role in Guatemala: 1) What is the level of civilian control of the military in Guatemala today? 2) How does that control or lack thereof affect the democratization process of the country? And 3) Is Guatemala entering a new era of democratic governance or is the military withdrawal from politics just a passing phenomenon? I argue in this thesis that since 1982, the Guatemalan military has evolved

[3] Ibid., pp. 198-199.

into a more professional military institution becoming an essential part of the democratic state. This evolution has resulted in the development of sound civil-military relations with firm civilian control thus impacting significantly on the democratization process of the country.

I consider this thesis of great importance because Guatemala, like other countries not only in Central America but also around the world, is emerging from years of societal and political conflict as a result of the Cold War. The fact that democracy has taken root in Guatemala for more than twelve years along with the signing of the Peace Accords in December 1996 makes the prospects for democratic consolidation much more positive. The issue of civil-military relations in Guatemala is one of particular importance as political and military leaders as well as members of civil society attempt to redefine the role of the military after 36 years of civil war. Currently Guatemala is not only trying to formalize its civil-military relations, but is also trying to define the role of the military in a democratic society, as well as educating civilian leaders in matters related to defense and security. The stability and structure of civil-military relations in Guatemala will depend not only on the military but also on the consensus reached by all elements of civil and political society as to how best to utilize the armed forces in support of the democratic state.

In this thesis, I use the theory developed by Felipe Aguero and described in his book Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post Franco in Comparative Perspective. Although the criteria for sound civil-military relations developed by Aguero in his theory is difficult to meet, certain aspects of the theory can be utilized to assess the current level of

civilian control of the military in Guatemala. Aguero defines civilian supremacy as follows:

> Civilian supremacy is the ability of a civilian, democratically elected government to conduct general policy without interference from the military, to define the goals and general organization of the national defense, to formulate and conduct defense policy, and to monitor the implementation of military policy. Civilian supremacy is reached through a process consisting, first, of the removal of the military from power positions outside the defense area and, second, of the appointment and acknowledgement of civilian political superiors in the defense and military areas... Civilian supremacy is achieved when the military withdraws from policy areas not related to defense and its role is restricted to the assistance in the formulation and implementation of national defense policy.[4]

In his theory Aguero points out that civilian supremacy is neither achieved in "one blow" nor initiated by civilian imposition; it happens through a process in which the military itself as an institution decides to revert to a role more restricted to professional military matters.[5]

This thesis is a single country (Guatemala) case study, which compares the level of political influence of the Guatemalan military during two period: from 1986 to 1990 after the transition to democracy, and from 1996 to 1998 after almost twelve years of democratic rule. This thesis focuses on four issue areas: 1) military role in domestic intelligence and internal security; 2) officer professional education 3) size, roles and missions of the Guatemalan military; and 4) military expenditures.

---

4 Felipe Aguero, *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post Franco in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p.17.

5 Ibid., p. 19.

In order to accomplish the objective of this thesis, I provide in Chapter II a historical analysis of the Guatemalan military involvement in politics from 1931 to 1985. This historical analysis will include a review of the literature on civil-military relations and its relevance to Guatemala. Chapter III describes the development of the peace accords and provides an assessment of how the peace accords, the democratization process and the military internal reforms have led to stable civil-military relations in Guatemala.

In Chapter IV, I provide a comparative analysis of four civil-military issues in two different periods of democratic rule, 1986-1990 and 1966-1998. Finally, in Chapter V, I draw several conclusions based on the evidence presented, and the implications of the Guatemalan case for other fledgling democracies around the world that are trying to grapple with the issue of civil-military relations.

II. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

A. INTRODUCTION

The practice of praetorianism is embedded in Guatemala's political history. Since its independence in 1821, Guatemala has experienced military governments for more than one hundred and thirty years. The longest military government lasted more than twenty years (Manuel Estrada Cabrera, 1898-1920), and the shortest, lasted four days (Baudilio Palma, 12 December-16 December 1930), see Appendix. In Guatemala, praetorianism or military intervention became pervasive because Guatemalan society had all the characteristics of a "praetorian society" as described by Samuel P. Huntington. Moreover, the propensity of military officers taking over the government increased significantly during the Cold War as countries like Guatemala in the Western Hemisphere relied on military governments and their monopoly on the use of force to eradicate those who threatened the national security of the state.

The Guatemalan military has undergone a significant evolution since the days of General Jorge Ubico (1931-1944). In the 1930s and early 1940s, the military served as an instrument of state control, protecting a small privileged sector of Guatemalan society. During the democratic revolution that lasted ten years (1944-1954), the military became a professional institution serving as guarantor of the constitutional order. As a result of its

role in the 1944 coup d'etat that ousted General Federico Ponce Vaides, the military acquired significant prerogatives and was given institutional autonomy.

The aftermath of the 1954 CIA-led coup d'etat politicized the Guatemalan military. Caesar D. Sereseres describes the period after the 1954 coup in the following way: "the politics and the psychology of the "liberation" began a history of military politics, fragile civil-military relations, and thirty-five-year Cold War context for Guatemalan society."[6] In 1963, the military used its veto power to oust General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes. The military removed Ydigoras on the grounds of incompetence, but also to prevent former president Juan Jose Arevalo – the first president of the democratic revolution (1945-1950) – from running for president in the 1966 elections. Also, to block the resurgence of popular groups supporting the insurgency, and to protect the already established anticommunist order. The military coup d'etat of 1963 elevated Colonel Enrique Perlata Azurdia to chief of state. He reaffirmed the military's anticommunist posture, reorganized the government bureaucracy, rewrote the constitution and increased the military's fringe benefits.

In the 1970s, the military managed the political system by working in conjunction with the business sector and political parties to create a democratic façade marked by periodic elections – the *esquema politico*. In 1982, the military began the process of democratization as a result of the precarious economic conditions of the country, the

---

[6] Caesar D. Sereseres, "Guatemala Civil-Military Relations and Regional Cooperation: The Interplay of Internal War and Democratization Since 1982," in David Mares editor, *Civil-Military Relations: Building Democracy and Regional Security* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, Forthcoming, 1998), p. 210.

threat posed by the guerrilla movement to the state, its negative image in the eyes of the international community, and to reestablish discipline within the military institution.

In November 1985, general elections were held, in which the military yielded the presidency to a democratically elected leader after fifteen years of military rule. During the first four years of Post-Democratic Transition (1986-1990), the Guatemalan military exercised significant influence in matters related to internal security primarily due to the continued threat of the insurgency. The insurgency, although convincingly defeated in the battlefield by 1984, continued to inflict serious damage to the state.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical analysis of the Guatemalan military's involvement in politics from 1931 to 1985. This chapter seeks to answer two questions: (1) why has the Guatemalan military participation in politics been so pervasive? And (2) why did the Guatemalan military decide to transfer political power to civilians in 1985?

In this chapter I argue that from 1931 to 1982, the Guatemalan army hindered any movement toward a situation where the standards of democracy were met. The Guatemalan military's participation in politics was strengthened by historically weak and ineffective political institutions, the Cold War struggle, and an endemic civil war that brought the Guatemalan military to the forefront of formulation and implementation of national and defense policy. In addition, I argue that the Guatemalan military government initiated the democratic transition to regain its legitimacy. By allowing civilians to lead the country, and a democratic form of government to take place, the military would be able to focus on reforming the military institution, change Guatemala's negative image in the eyes

of the international community, and to facilitate economic assistance in order to improve the economy and continue to prosecute the war against the guerrillas.

B. ROLE OF THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY IN POLITICS UNDER DICTATOR JORGE UBICO, 1931-1944

When General Jorge Ubico assumed the presidency of Guatemala in 1931, he became the seventh army officer to assume the presidency of the country since 1838 (see Appendix). Before Ubico assumed the presidency, the military had established itself as one of the principal elements in the power structure of the country. Therefore, it is hardly a coincidence that the Ubico regime was the common mold followed in Guatemala. During the Ubico regime, military officers' participation in political and social life was pervasive. All 22 of Guatemala's gubernatorial and every ministerial post in the government were held by general officers. Piero Gleijeses explains that the military controlled the everyday life and every thought and action of the Guatemalan people. Military officers also controlled secondary education and senior army officers served as school principals. At the same time, lieutenants and captains were in charge of discipline, and students were required to undergo reserve training.[7]

The military regime of General Jorge Ubico had the characteristics of an oligarchic praetorian state, which dominated nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Latin America. This type of praetorianism, which was inherited from the former colonial ruler –

---

[7] Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1991), p. 15.

Spain – did not encourage the development of local political institutions. Samuel P. Huntington attributes this type of praetorian state to "the wars of independence, which produced an institutional vacuum, which the creoles attempted to fill by copying the constitutional arrangements of the United States and the Republic of France. Inevitably these could not take root in a society which remained highly oligarchical and feudal."[8]

The military regime under Ubico hindered the development of democratic institutions. Ubico ruled by decree and a carefully managed system of elections guaranteed the elections of a subservient Congress. By the mid-1940s, the world situation had changed and suddenly dictators became expendable. News of the allied victory over Hitler spread throughout Latin America creating a new sense of freedom. In Venezuela, Isaias Medina Angarita was toppled and in El Salvador, dictator Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez was ousted in April 1944. In Guatemala, the new emergent middle-class began to protest against Ubico. Unable to quell the political unrest, Ubico chose to resign.[9] The ineffectiveness of the Guatemalan Congress became clear upon Ubico's resignation in 1944. Members of congress found themselves overwhelmed by the enormous demand for changes in the political process of the country and called on the military to reestablish political order.

---

8 Samuel P. Huntington, p. 198.

9 Piero Gleijeses, p. 23.

The type of political uncertainty seen after Ubico's resignation is common in a praetorian society where the absence of effective political institutions signifies that political power is fragmented.[10] The military after Ubico's resignation took charge of the political process in order to control those social forces demanding change, and also to provide a leader to run the country. After five days, the Congress finally endorsed General Federico Ponce Vaides as the new president. The presidency of General Ponce did not last long. General Ponce, who belonged to the so-called *old guard* of the military, tried several political tactics such as allowing political dissent and the formation of political parties in order to gain legitimacy but to no avail. The social forces demanding change had already been unleashed.

Simultaneously, dissent had begun to occur within the army from a group of young officers. This group of officers emerged as a result of Ubico's program to strengthen the military. This program expanded the military academy and modernized its curriculum. Hence, it produced an expanding corps of well trained and professionalized junior officers who considered themselves better prepared than their commanders from the *old guard* who had begun their careers prior to the establishment of the military academy and had gained their rank through political maneuvering. [11]

---

[10] Samuel P. Huntington, p. 196.

[11] Kenneth J. Grieb, "The Guatemalan Military and the Revolution of 1944," *The Americas* No 4 (April 1976): p. 527.

This group of young officers, in coalition with the newly emergent middle class, argued that the army had the duty not only to defend the government but also to uphold the constitution against the corrupt government of General Ponce. In order to oust the *old guard,* the young officers felt that it was necessary to propagate the notion that the military was above the government and had the duty to oust corrupt, unrepresentative and unconstitutional regimes.[12] This split within the military was the key in overthrowing General Ponce.

On October 20, 1944 a group of junior army officers revolted against the old military elite. General Ponce was removed from office and a new junta was established. This junta pledged to install a civilian as president after free and fair elections. Thus, in 1945, Juan Jose Arevalo became Guatemala's first civilian elected president. The military's support for Arevalo came with a price. The leaders of the uprising received promotions and held the highest positions within the military structure. In addition, the new constitution made the armed forces for the first time virtually independent of the government. Kenneth J. Grieb describes the aftermath of the October revolution as a military uprising representing a clash between rival elements of the military. The result did not transform the nation and its power structure.[13]

---

[12] Ibid., p. 541.

[13] Ibid., p. 543.

C. THE 1944 COUP D' ETAT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY

During the period of Arevalo's presidency, the Guatemalan military operated with significant autonomy and continued to be an institution of significant power. The 1945 constitution established the position of chief of the armed forces, largely free of civilian control. He was appointed to a six-year term and unlike any other appointed cabinet official, congress had the authority to remove him, only in the event that he had broken the law.

The constitution also stated that military appointments would be made only by the chief of the armed forces and the minister of defense. These clauses were placed in the constitution to ensure the military remained an apolitical institution capable of performing its function as defender of the constitution, liberty and national integrity. In addition, these clauses prevented the president from using the military as an instrument of personal and political gain as experienced during the Ubico regime.[14]

During the Arevalo government, the military underwent institutional reforms. The curriculum at the military academy was extended to four years starting with the cadets of the class of 43. All new academy graduates, in addition to receiving their commissions were awarded liberal arts degrees. Also, those officers who had received their

---

[14] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, *De la Guerra... ...A La Guerra: La Dificil Transicion Politica en Guatemala* (Guatemala: Fondo de Cultura Editorial, 1995), p. 51.

commissions within the army ranks (*line officers*) were required to enter the military academy in order to hone their military skills and improve their education.[15]

The officer corps in the Guatemalan army during the Arevalo government was divided between the so-called *line officers*, who had received their officer commissions within the army ranks, and officers graduates of the *Escuela Politecnica* (Military Academy). The groups had contrasting views of the role of the military in politics. Colonel Franciso Arana, Chief of the Armed Forces represented the *line officers* and Lieutenant Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, Minister of Defense, represented the officers who graduated from the *academy*.

Arana made his opposition to President Arevalo's governmental policies publicly known, and participated in the political process creating an atmosphere of antagonism between him and Arevalo. Arana overtly supported political candidates for Congress, expressed his interests in running for president and threatened to carry out a coup against Arevalo. Arana was assassinated in 1949, before a plan to remove him from his post could take effect. In 1949, the political party *Vanguardia Democratica* endorsed Jacobo Arbenz as its presidential candidate. He retired from military service in order to participate in politics.

Jacobo Arbenz became president of Guatemala in 1950. He enjoyed overwhelming support from the military in part because he had graduated from the military academy. However, Arbenz' governmental agenda – agrarian reform and his relationship

---

[15] Ibid., p. 58.

with communist friends, would eventually resulted in his distancing from the military. In order to retain the military's loyalty, Arbenz ordered the expansion of all commissaries, raises in pay, increased fringe benefits, generous travel allowances, and the placement of military officers in lucrative positions within the government bureaucracy. All the governors of the country's twenty-two departments were colonels – helping to boost morale among the officer corps. Arbenz decided to coddle the military in order to retain its loyalty and also to be able to advance its governmental policies without political opposition from the military.[16]

The immense amount of fringe benefits received by the officer corps during the Arbenz presidency led to the military's scant interest in government policies, which is what Arbenz intended to accomplished from the very beginning – to keep the military from meddling in domestic policy issues. Arbenz communist tendencies put him at odds with the United States. He sought to break up the monopoly established by the United Fruit Company, a U.S. own banana exporter which controlled the banana industry not only in Guatemala but throughout Central America. As a result of this, the United States launched a relentless political and psychological campaign against the government of Arbenz. This campaign led to the eventual execution of Operation PBSUCCESS, a CIA-led coup in 1954.

---

[16] Piero Gleijeses, p. 201.

The leader of the CIA-led coup was former Guatemalan officer Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas. He led a band of Guatemalan exiles with support of U.S. planes in the military operation against the Arbenz government. The resulting political and psychological campaigns led an already suspicious Guatemalan army to withdraw its support for Arbenz for fear of confrontation with the United States.[17] Although the CIA-led coup was aimed at eradicating communism and reestablishing some form of a democratic government, it brought about adverse results. The military moved to the forefront of politics once again and the same political environment that existed prior to 1944 – repression and disregard for individual liberties – resurfaced as part of the political environment of the country. The years following the CIA-led coup brought a total polarization of social and political forces in the country.

D. THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1954 CIA-LED COUP 'D ETAT AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY

The Guatemalan military did not participate in the 1954 CIA- led coup that ousted Arbenz, nor did it support him for fear of a U.S. invasion. However, the aftermath of the 1954 CIA-led coup tells a different story. Caesar D. Sereseres points out that "the aftermath of the 1954 CIA-led coup politicized the military and cast it in a Cold War mold. It also began a subtle, tacit antagonism between the military institution and the

[17] Ibid., p. 335.

Guatemalan political right, which had associated itself with a foreign power – the United States."[18]

After the resignation of Arbenz, military officers rushed to fill the political power vacuum left in the country. Piero Gleijeses describes the political situation in this manner, "In the eleven days following Arbenz's resignation, five provisional governments (staffed entirely by officers) succeeded one another, each more amenable to Castillo Armas than its predecesor."[19] The political instability created by the departure of Arbenz continued until Castillo Armas declared himself president of the republic on September 1, 1954.

In the aftermath of the 1954 CIA-led coup, Guatemala became the byproduct of the U.S. Doctrine of National Security, which identified communism as the number one threat in the hemisphere. The new political order prevented those of communist ideology from taking part in the political process. Moreover, the 1956 constitution prohibited the function of any organization supportive of communist ideology or any other leftist system. As a result of this new political order, the Guatemalan military introduced the principle of national security in order to maintain control of the political opposition.[20] Under the guise of protecting the national security of the state, the Guatemalan military continued to meddle in the political process, thus creating the unfortunate political polarization of Guatemalan society.

---

[18] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 210.

[19] Piero Gleigeses, p. 354.

[20] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 85.

Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas held on to the presidency for three years until his assassination in July 1957. Immediately following his death, the National Liberation Party (MLN), a party of the extreme right founded by Castillo Armas called for a general election. Miguel Ortiz Passarelli won the elections. However, the opposition candidate, former general Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes claimed fraud, and after a second round of elections Ydigoras Fuentes was declared winner and was inaugurated as president on 3 March 1958.[21]

During the presidency of Ydigoras, a small group of Guatemalan officers attempted a coup in protest against the use of Guatemalan bases to train Cuban exiles for the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. These officers felt humiliated by the way in which Ydigoras coddled the United States; they also vehemently opposed the use of Guatemalan soil to train foreign invaders. Rather than face severe punishment for the attempted coup, this group of officers began to wage a guerrilla war against the government. This guerrilla movement named the "Alejandro de Leon November 13 Guerrilla movement" as a tribute to both a fallen comrade and the date of their abortive army coup began in 1960, and triggered the armed conflict in Guatemala that would last 36 years.[22]

Shortly thereafter, a second guerrilla group sprung up, led by Arbenz' former minister of defense, Carlos Paz Tejada. This group took the name "October 20 Front" in recognition of the October 1944 revolution. They were protesting against the newly

---

[21] Ibid., p. 89.

[22] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinser, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1982): p. 241.

elected congress, which they called "government stooges," and voiced their indignation for the use of Guatemalan bases by a foreign power. They also felt that the only way to end the repression in the country was to overthrow the government of Ydigoras and to establish a government capable of representing the people. The November 13 guerrilla movement and the October 20 Front became the first generation of Guatemalan guerrillas. In 1963, the Guatemalan military exercised its veto power in the political process and executed a coup that ousted President Ydigoras from power.

E. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF ENRIQUE PERALTA AZURDIA, 1963-1966

President Ydigoras was ousted by a military coup d'etat in 1963 and replaced by his Minister of Defense, Enrique Peralta Azurdia for the following reasons: 1) to prevent former president Juan Arevalo, leader of the Revolutionary Party from becoming president; 2) to thwart the resurgence of popular groups supporting the insurgency; 3) to protect the principle of national security, and 4) to clean up government corruption.[23]

The political move executed by Peralta Azurdia is best described by Eric A. Nordlinger in his analysis of officers as guardians:

---

[23] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 99.

> This praetorian (officers) consequently aim to improve the effectiveness or alter the policy directions of previous governments, some of them also attempting to effect mild political and economic changes. Their goal is the removal of squabbling, corrupt, and excessive partisan politicians, the revamping of the governmental and bureaucratic machinery to make for greater efficiency, and the distribution of some power and economic rewards among civilian groups.[24]

The goal of the Peralta Azurdia government is summarized by Caesar D. Sereseres in the following way: "to put the political house in order prior to returning to civilian governance."[25]

During the military regime of Enrique Peralta Azurdia, Guatemala continued as a militarized society. Military officers held positions in the government bureaucracy, from cabinet positions to gubernatorial posts. The military regime functioned in a coalition of civilians and military officers working in the government. Jerry L. Weaver explains that "these coalitions were not permanent within the elite structure, they formed and dissolved as issues appeared and were decided."[26]

The officer corps in particular, was an alliance of competing factions – the economic reformers, the *duristas* and the moderates. They worked closely with the so-called managers of the economy – technocrats, industrialists, retailers, and financiers – in solving major economic issues. The Economic Reformers favored a more aggressive and

---

[24] Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1997), p. 25.

[25] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 210.

[26] Jerry L. Weaver, "The Political Elite of a Military-Dominated Regime: The Guatemalan Example," *The Journal of Developing Areas* 3 (April 1969): p. 375.

expanded government role in the economy, and the reaction from their civilian counterparts was not always favorable. [27]

The *Duristas* (hardliners) favored combating the insurgency and social unrest with basic social and economic reforms. Another groups within the *duristas*, urged vigorous suppression and expanded military action against all opponents of the government (full compliance with the doctrine of national security). Among the civilians, the *duristas* drew support from ardent anticommunists – owners of large plantations and import-export interests – who had suffered expropriation during the Arbenz' regime, and opposed even the most limited socio-economic reforms. This group of civilians had a vested interest in the existing distribution of power. They opposed expanded welfare and public services, and considered the proper role of government as limited to providing physical protection to themselves and their property.[28]

The Moderates, led by Peralta Azurdia, took a more pragmatic approach when dealing with social and political issues. They distanced themselves from the *duristas* but implemented some of their civic action, welfare and social programs. Also, the moderates adopted a vigorous anti-insurgency and anti-communist posture. With regards to the economy, they favored the implementation of administrative, fiscal and monetary reforms.[29] While in office, Peralta Azurdia protected the interests of the military

---

[27] Ibid., p. 376.

[28] Ibid., 378.

[29] Ibid., 379.

institution. He created the army social security system in order to minimize personal ties with economic interests. He also sustained the professionalism of the military. At the same time, he protected the welfare of the military family by subsidizing housing, building a military hospital and health clinics. Peralta Azurdia also established a military bank (*Banco del Ejercito*) accountable to the Guatemalan Central Bank.[30]

During the Peralta government, a new constitution was written, although similar to the one written in 1956 by the government of Castillo Armas. In the 1965 constitution, the state guaranteed the formation of political parties as long as their norms and principles were democratic. Communist parties continued to be banned from political participation. As far as the role of the military in society, the army's mission was to defend the Guatemalan territory, to maintain the independence and honor of the nation, and to cooperate in case of emergency or public distress. The constitution also stipulated that the army would remain apolitical. This new constitution, although it met all the parameters of a democratic state, continued to be undermined by the army's interference by pressure in the political process.

In 1966 Peralta Azurdia allowed general elections and the Revolutionary Party led by Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro won the election. Mendez Montenegro referred to his new government as the "third government of the revolution" and vowed to implement significant social and political reforms. However, prior to assuming the presidency, Mendez Montenegro was forced to sign a pact with the military in which he would adhere

---

[30] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 216.

to the principle of national security. Montenegro agreed to exclude "radicals"- - followers of Arevalo and social revolutionaries from the government- - and agreed not to meddle in the internal affairs of the army (selection of minister of defense, chief of staff, garrison commanders, budgets). Montenegro also agreed to give the army total control of counterinsurgency operations against the guerrillas.[31]

During the presidency of Mendez Montenegro, the military conducted a violent anti-insurgency campaign. The military under Mendez Montenegro fought the first generation of Guatemalan insurgencies (1960s). This group of insurgents applied the "foco theory" developed by the Ernesto "Che" Guevara who fought alongside Fidel Castro in Cuba. Michael A. Sheehan explains that Guevara believed that after lighting "the brush of fire of the revolution" in one isolated section of the nation (*foco*), the flames of the revolution would rapidly spread throughout the country.[32] The foco theory did not bring about the success envisioned by the Guatemalan insurgents. It lacked the political foundation in which to translate military victory into political power. In addition, the disjointed military activities from the Guatemalan insurgents were easily contained by government forces, who were better prepared than were their determined counterparts.

By the end of the 1960s, the Guatemalan military had undergone a process of institutionalization, modernization and technical preparation without precedence. This process occurred primarily as a result of the insurgency threat and a desire from the

---

[31] Ibid., 382.

[32] Michael A. Sheehan, "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies: Guatemala and El Salvador" *Conflict* (New York, 9:2, 1989), p. 133.

majority of officers to revindicate the military institution in response to the events surrounding the 1954 CIA-led coup and the military uprising of 1960.[33]

F. ROLE OF THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY IN POLITICS, 1970-1982

Three army officers ruled Guatemala in the decade of the, 1970s: Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio (1970-1974), General Kjell Laugerud Garcia (1974-1978), and General Romeo Lucas Garcia (1978-1982). Colonel Arana was the commander of the counterinsurgency operations in the department of Zacapa – considered the center of insurgency operations from 1966 to 1970. Generals Laugerud and Lucas Garcia were also veterans of the counterinsurgency operations in Zacapa, and each served as minister of defense for his predecessor.

These officers applied in their political style and programs, the counterinsurgency methods used successfully against the guerrillas in Zacapa – the army's pacification program linked to a military commissioner system which was an important social and military intelligence instrument in rural areas. Caesar D. Sereseres describes the political style and programs of these presidents in the following manner:

> The operational code of these presidents and their advisors was: What worked militarily in the Zacapa counterinsurgency campaign would work for the nation politically...by 1980, this strategy had failed partly because it was aimed at a small cadre of guerrillas with limited political base and no international support links.[34]

---

[33] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 105.

[34] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 211.

Moreover, the unprecedented levels of repression helped spawn a second generation of guerrillas that by 1982 would pose a serious threat to the state.

The period of military rule of 1970 to 1982 revolved around a carefully managed political system – "*Esquema Politico.*"[35] The foundation of this system was a political order established from a coalition of military officers, the private sector, and political parties to create a democratic façade. In other words, these groups worked to preserve the *status quo* by excluding any political groups that might pose a threat to the established order and the security of the state. This political façade was a flexible system controlled by the political style of the military officer in power.

Each president attempted to develop his own popular base through party alliances, government programs, and management of organized segments of society. The problem faced by the mangers of the *esquema* was that they were always trying to find ways to legitimize themselves. In a system that excluded broad-based political participation, government repression was the only vehicle to sustain the system. Therefore, the government turned to the counterinsurgency tactics used in Zacapa to eliminate political opponents and suspected guerrillas.[36]

---

[35] Caesar D. Sereseres, "The Guatemalan Legacy: Radical Challengers and Military Politics," in Philip Geyelin, ed, *Report on Guatemala: Findings of the Study Group on United States-Guatemalan Relations*, (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press with the Foreign Policy Institute, School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, 1985): p. 24.

[36] Ibid., p. 25.

During the 1970's, while the military solidified its control over the political process, new insurgency groups sprung up in the highlands. This insurgency had learned the lessons from its predecessors – lack of a political strategy – and devised a detailed political strategy focused on a long-term struggle against the government. In 1980, a second generation of guerrillas came together to form a unified front against the government after the original guerrilla groups were almost decimated by government forces in the 1960s. This unified guerrilla front was called the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). The URNG was made up of four different guerrilla groups: the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT).

In 1982, the URNG became a significant threat to the state. The Guatemalan guerrillas had established a powerful political and military network that extended their reach to the international community.[37] Their strategy was based on three principles. First, to reject "*foquismo*" and to prepare for a prolonged war by establishing a guerrilla base and a political infrastructrure in the remote but populated areas of the country. Second, to involve the Indian population (previously ignored by the radical left and orthodox communists) in the armed struggle. And third, to pursue a second, equally important front in the international community. Once again, the army found itself deployed to the countryside to deal with this elusive foe. Also, in 1982 the *esquema politico* had fallen apart and several army officers frustrated with the political process and

---

[37] Caesar D. Sereseres, "The Highlands War in Guatemala," in George Fauriol editor, *Latin America Insurgencies* (The Georgetown University, Center of Strategic and International Studies, 1985), p. 110.

the carelessness of their senior officers staged a coup to reestablish discipline within the military institution and to restructure the political process.

G. DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION PERIOD: (1982-1985)

Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, in their book Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, use the following definition in an attempt to establish how far a country has gone towards completing a transition to democracy:

> A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure.* [38]

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan describe the type of path for democratic transition experienced in Guatemala as "extrication from rule by hierarchical led military." Linz and Stepan explain that when the prior nondemocratic government – in this case authoritarian – "is led by a hierarchical military, the "military as institution," if it feels under internal and external threat, it may play a role in pressuring the "military as government" to withdraw from direct rule and to hold extrication elections." [39]

---

[38] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Atepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 3.

[39] Ibid., p. 59.

The Guatemalan military institution by 1982 considered the cost of rule by the Guatemalan military government too high. Internally, the business of governing was tearing the institution apart, the military government had lost its legitimacy, and the "esquema" had fallen apart. Also, the majority of young officers were tired of bearing the brunt of the insurgency war while senior military officers benefited from the "esquema." Externally, the political environment of the country had deteriorated, and the insurgency had begun to pose a serious threat to the state. Also, the military government had cultivated an unfavorable international image due in part to its poor human rights record.[40] As a result of these conditions, a group of young officers carried out a coup d' etat on 23 March 1982 and installed a junta led by General Efrain Rios Montt. The intent of the coup plotters was to end the deteriorating political environment and to oversee the transfer of power to a democratically elected government.

The Post-1982 Guatemalan military devised a strategy that would reorganize the political process, reestablish discipline within the army ranks, and terminate the civil war. This strategy which later became the Thesis of National Stability during the Cerezo administration (1986-1990) called for a complete reorganization of the state bureaucracy as well as total mobilization of political, social and economic institutions in support of the counterinsurgency effort. Also, through this strategy, the army and other security forces would restructure its operations in order to meet the counterinsurgency threat more effectively. This strategy, designed to replace the doctrine of national security, which

---

[40] Georges A. Fauriol and Eva Loser, editors, *Guatemala's Political Puzzle* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 1988), p. 57.

through the 1970s had relied on repressive means to maintain its legitimacy, envisioned free and fair election through an open political system. [41]

This politico-military strategy had as its objectives: 1) the military defeat of the URNG insurgency; 2) the development and sustaining of a process of liberalization and democratization; 3) the strengthening of the state institution as a stabilizing force in society; 4) the reform, modernization and professionalization of the armed forces; 5) the establishment of a civil-military "model" in which civilian authority is recognized and the military institution is recognized as an essential element of the state; and 6) the political termination of the insurgency through a formal, internationally recognized peace accord.[42]

The military junta led by Efrain Rios Montt, began to execute the army's strategy through a military counterinsurgency campaign called *"Victoria 82."* Michael Sheehan explains this counterinsurgency campaign in the following manner:

> Through this campaign, the army established a program of "development poles" as part of its *"Fusiles y Frijoles"* strategy of civil-military action. "Model villages" were established within the poles where displaced people were resettled in concentrated villages near their displaced lands. These model villages committed the people to the army and the government. The Army provided loans and aid to the people to acquire wood and other materials for the construction of their homes. Communal services such as fresh running water, schools, and town activity halls, were also established.[43]

Moreover, the army created the civil defense forces to maintain internal security in the rural areas. This concept was based on organizing the people to support the government

---

[41] Hector Gramajo Morales, p. 181.

[42] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 215.

[43] Michael Sheehan, p. 145.

as a counter tactic to the organizational efforts by the insurgency leadership. The army's objective in executing this campaign was to maintain direct contact with the populace while denying the enemy contact with the people. [44]

In addition to the counterinsurgency strategy, Rios Montt through executive decree created the Council of State. Made up of representatives of the economic sector, academia, media, and local municipalities, the Council of State served as an advisory group for the executive in matters related to the country's national interests. In addition to that, the Council of State established the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, selected its members and developed a new electoral law. While head of the junta, Rios Montt ruled by decree. He dissolved Congress, abrogated the 1965 constitution, set up special tribunals to protect judges and witnesses in the administration of justice, and declared a state of siege throughout the country. These initiatives were taken to clamp down on government corruption and reduce the wave of violence that had engulfed the country.

Despite General Rios Montt's successful campaign against the insurgency and initial attempts to move Guatemala to democracy, he was removed by the Commander's Council – a representative body of all ranks in the army in 1983 for the following reasons: (1) failing to set a firm date for the elections and (2) for allowing junior officers to manipulate the traditional chain of command and orders from the general staff. Additionally, his mishandling of the economy cost him the support of the private sector.[45]

---

[44] Ibid., p. 143.

[45] Caesar D. Sereseres , Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine, interviewed by author, phone, 10 June 1997.

In August of 1983, General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores became Guatemala's Chief of State. He continued his predecessor's counter-insurgency program and completed the plan of returning the country to democracy. While in office, Mejia Victores lifted the state of siege, abolished the special tribunals, the army defeated the insurgency (URNG) on the battlefield, and army officers were removed from the government bureaucracy. By May 1985, no military officers were serving in the government bureaucracy except for Mejia Victores himself and the president of the Guatemalan Central Bank.[46]

Furthermore, during the Mejia government, a period of political liberalization began to take place with the reemergence of political opposition groups after a long period of political isolation. The political transition began to materialize in 1984 when the supreme electoral tribunal called for elections of a new National Constituent Assembly. The National Constituent Assembly was elected to develop a new habeas corpus and electoral laws as well as to rewrite the constitution.

By 1985, the political opening in Guatemala had begun to take effect. In July 1985, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal called for new general elections to be held in November of that year. Political leaders of the opposition returned to Guatemala to participate in the general elections and for the first time in years, the army did not support any of the political party candidates running for government. The 1984 elections of the national constituent assembly and the 1985 general elections showed that in Guatemala

---

[46] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 231.

elections could become an accepted mechanism for the transfer of political power, and act as a consultative process between the population and the government.[47]

The end of 1985 marked the election of Vinicio Cerezo of the *Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca* (Christian Democratic Party) as the new civilian-elected president after more than fifteen years of military rule. Despite the fact the entire process of transition was controlled by the military it reflected their desire to establish democratic rule and their reluctance to return to traditional military rule. By establishing a democratic form of government, the military would be able to implement its politico-military strategy developed in 1982.

Guatemala's democratic transition, when judged in terms of the definitional standard presented by Linz and Stepan, meets all the criteria for a complete transition. The political procedures used to produce an elected government were put in place by creating the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in 1983. The Cerezo government came to power as a direct result of a free and popular vote. His government had *de facto* authority to generate new policies. And the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy did not share control of the government with the military as critics of the army might attest to.

---

[47] Georges A. Fauriol and Eva Loser, editors, p. 83.

H. CONCLUSION

This chapter sought to answer two questions: 1) why was the Guatemala's military participation in politics so pervasive? And 2) why did the military decide to extricate itself from government rule? One reason for the pervasive participation of the Guatemalan military in politics were the ineffectual and weak political institutions that have failed to exert their influence on society due to oligarchic and feudal societal structures that are an inherent part of Guatemala's history. As a result of this societal structure in Guatemala, civil society was politicized and the military stepped in to fill the political vacuum left by government institutions that were unable to integrate the social forces of the country into the political system; therefore creating a "praetorian society."

The other reason for the pervasive participation of the Guatemalan military in politics stems from the bipolarity of the world – Cold War – that led to an internal struggle in Guatemala between the government forces (anticommunist) and those who spoke out against the military regime. Guatemala after the 1954 CIA-led coup, adopted a political order that was the byproduct of the U.S. Doctrine of National Security. This Cold War doctrine saw communism as the number one threat in the hemisphere. Guatemala's newly adopted political order prevented those suspected of communist ideology from participating in the political process. Therefore, the wielders of the swords became the guarantors of the security of the state as well as the stability of the country.

The desire of the Guatemalan military to extricate itself from power was a result of its inability to implement political and economic reforms. The political façade that for

twelve years (1970-1982) served to manage the political system between senior military leaders and business elite fell apart. As such the business elite no longer pursued the military's desire to implement economic and political reforms that in the long run would affect the ruling class. In addition, several officers sensed that the military as an institution had fallen in complete disarray as a result of the corruption involving senior military leaders.

The history of the Guatemalan army is full of contradictions as shown in this chapter. However, since 1982, the army has committed itself to become part of the democratic process as evidence of the transition shows. In three years (1982-1985), the Guatemalan army defeated the insurgency on the battlefield removed all of its officers from the government bureaucracy and restored stability to the country. In addition, for the first time since the decade of the democratic revolution of 1944-1954, parties from all political orientations were allowed to compete in the general elections of 1985, thus, ending the electoral charade of the 1970s and early 1980s.

The question remains: can the process of democratization and internal reforms within the military institution lead to a military capable of operating in a democratic society and under civilian leadership? The answer is yes, but with one caveat. As Felipe Aguero in his theory of civilian supremacy points out: "civilian supremacy is neither achieved in "one blow" nor initiated by civilian imposition; it happens through a process in which the military itself as an institution decides to revert to a role more restricted to

professional military matters." [48] As we shall see in the next chapter, the commitment of the military institution to revert to a role restricted to professional matters and the democratization process have solidified civil-military relations in Guatemala.

---

[48] Felipe Aguero, p. 19.

III. THE PEACE PROCESS AND ITS IMPACT ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN GUATEMALA

A. BACKGROUND

The key to bringing peace to the Central American region ravaged by years of civil war can be attributed to a series of internal initiatives launched by Latin American leaders. The Central American peace effort began with the Contadora Process in January 1983 when the foreign ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela signed a declaration calling for dialogue and negotiations to bring about peace in the region. From its first declaration, the Contadora Process focused not only on bringing peace to the Central American region, but also on security issues. The security issues included effectively controlling the arms race, ending arms trafficking, eliminating foreign military advisors, creating demilitarized zones, prohibiting the use of one state's territory to destabilize another's, and prohibiting other forms of interference in the internal affairs of countries in the region. [49]

The Contadora Process was effective in fostering a dialogue for peace among the leaders of Central American nations. However, it failed to develop a consensus among Central American leaders as to specific mechanisms of implementing arms limitations in the region. Countries like El Salvador and Guatemala refused to go along with the idea of

---

[49] Jack Child, *The Central American Peace Process, 1983-1991: Sheathing Swords, Building Confidence*, (Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), p. 18.

arms limitations in the region due to their insurgency threat. The United States also disagreed with the implementation of the arms limitation in the region since it would ease off the *contras* pressure on the *Sandinista* regime.

The inability of the Contadora Process in bringing peace and security to the Central American region led to the Arias plan developed by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica in January 1987. The Arias plan, although similar to the Contadora Process, focused more on internal democratization. President Arias encouraged the presidents of the republics of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua to sign a peace agreement in August 1987 known as *Esquipulas* II. In the agreement, they called for a cease-fire, national reconciliation, amnesty, democratization and the end of aid to insurgent movements. This agreement not only revived the conditions for dialogue and cooperation among the countries in the region, but also originated the possibilities for internal negotiations in those countries.[50] The origin of the Guatemalan peace process and the creation the National Reconciliation Commission (CNR) is a direct result of the *Esquipulas* II agreements. In Guatemala, the National Reconciliation Commission was a catalyst in developing a consensus for peace in the country.

The Peace Process in Guatemala took nine years, nine accords, and four declarations before the government and the URNG agreed to sign a final agreement of firm and lasting peace in December 1996. Throughout those nine years, five generations of talks took place, each one of them creating the necessary conditions despite numerous

---

[50] Jack Child, p. 47.

disagreements, to continue with the much needed dialogue and negotiations until the final agreement was signed.

The first generation of talks took place in San Jose, Costa Rica in 1986 and was comprised only of a series of informal dialogues. The second generation of talks took place in Madrid, Spain in 1987, with two formal meetings that led to a more important meeting in Oslo, Norway in 1990. The third and fourth generations of talks were held in Mexico in 1991 and 1994, and the fifth generations of talks became a series of meetings between president-elect Alvaro Arzu and the URNG in 1996, leading to the signing of the final Accords that same year.[51]

The signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala on December 29, 1996 put an end to one of the longest civil wars in the Western Hemisphere. The peace process in Guatemala involved four main actors, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the government, civil society and the United Nations. The first actor, the URNG, was composed of four different guerrilla groups, which came together in 1980 to form a unified front against the government. The URNG's ability to pose a serious threat to the state was greatly diminished by 1984. Despite that, it had the capability to inflict serious damage to the country's infrastructure. The URNG, unlike its predecessors, was well organized militarily and politically. The URNG's military wing consisted of all three guerrilla commanders and the secretary general of the Guatemalan Labor Party. Together

---

[51] Miguel Angel Reyes Illescas, "Guatemala: Una Negociacion Madura?," Los Complejos Senderos de la Paz: Un analisis comparado de las negociaciones de paz en El Salvador, Guatemala y Mexico, *INCEP, Temas y Documentos de Debate* No. 2/97, Panorama Centroamericano, Guatemala, Junio de 1997), p. 47.

they formed the general headquarters or *Comandancia General.* The political wing of the URNG consisted of a political-diplomatic commission responsible for communicating the objectives of the insurgency at the international level as well as establishing formal links with support organizations in the United States and Europe.

The second actor was the government. The election of Vinicio Cerezo as president of Guatemala in 1985 marked the first time since 1966 that Guatemala had a civilian elected president. The Cerezo government had to work with a military that wielded significant influence over security matters. Any effort to achieve peace between the government and the URNG would be constrained by the army's security strategy. The government and the Guatemalan military under Cerezo insisted that the URNG had to lay down its arms, incorporate itself in society and use the political mechanisms already established in order to effect any political changes in the country. Additionally, the army refused to enter into any kind of political negotiations with the URNG who had been defeated convincingly in the battlefield.

The third actor, civil society was the most affected during the civil war due to the political polarization of the country. Civil society began to resurface in 1983 as a result of the liberalization process initiated by the government of Gen. Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores. Civil society continued to play a key role during the democratic transition with the development of the so-called *dialogos* in 1985. These dialogues brought together leaders of business, labor and popular organizations to discuss issues such as changes in the labor code, the social impact of economic stabilization and tax reform.

The fourth actor, the United Nations, acted as a third party interested in reaching a peaceful solution to the armed conflict. At first, the United Nations took on the observer role in the peace talks as agreed in the agreements signed in Oslo, Norway in 1990. Later in 1993, after the government and the URNG found themselves unable to move the peace negotiations further, the United Nations transitioned at the request of president Ramiro De Leon Carpio into the role of mediator which allowed it to play a more active role in the negotiations. As part of its new role, the United Nations in 1994, established the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the development of the Guatemalan Peace Accords and to assess how the Peace Accords and the democratization process have impacted on Guatemala's civil-military relations. I argue that the implementation of the Thesis of National Stability served as a means to tranform the Guatemalan army into an institution supportive the Peace Process and democracy. This "thesis," in addition to becoming a means to develop a more professional military, encouraged a civil military dialogue about national issues, which contributed to the achievement of a peace settlement in December 1996. It was not until after Serrano's failed "*self-coup*" in 1993, when more pragmatic group of senior military officers took charge of the Guatemalan Army that the peace process was invigorated, and a final peace agreement was signed. This group of officers favored democracy with civilian control, supported a peace settlement, favored improving the army's human rights record, as well as downsizing the military after the settlement of the conflict.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF PEACE ACCORDS, (1987-1996)

The election of Vinico Cerezo in 1985 brought hopes of peace to a country ravaged by war. Five months after his inauguration, Cerezo met with a delegation of the URNG in Costa Rica where he agreed to maintain a dialogue between both parties. Both sides met again in Madrid in October of 1987 but an atmosphere of distrust and rigidity led to a stalemate. In 1987, the *Esquipulas* II peace plan opened new possibilities for peace in Guatemala.

The *Esquipulas II* peace plan called for the creation of a National Reconciliation Commission (CNR). This commission included members of opposition parties, representatives of the government and distinguished citizens. Its mandate was to start a national dialogue that would generate political participation among sectors of civil society. Despite the absence of the army and the business sector, an overall consensus was reached regarding the need to address the causes of the armed conflict. These dialogues encouraged the government and the URNG to hold direct talks and eventually signed the first formal accord in March 1990 in Oslo, Norway.[52]

The agreement signed in Oslo, laid out the official framework for future negotiations between the government and the URNG. Both sides agreed to address the need to solve the country's problems through political means, and to develop a framework

---

[52] Monsenor Rodolfo Quezada Toruno, "El Proceso Guatemalteco de la Paz: Antecedentes y Perspectivas," La Contruccion de la Paz en Guatemala, *Compendio de Acuerdos de Paz por el Gobierno de Guatemala y la Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca; y de las ponencias presentadas en el Seminario-Taller, realizado en Antigua Guatemala, Sacatepequez*, (10 al 12 de Octubre de 1996), pp. 30-32.

in which to improve the democratization process of the country.[53] The meetings in Oslo showed the difficulties in trying to get both parties to accommodate each other's demands. The government delegation demanded full integration of the URNG into society with the assistance of the National Reconciliation Commission. The guerrillas demanded that the causes of the conflict had to be addressed before any demobilization and subsequent reintegration into society.

Between March of 1990 and January of 1991, the National Reconciliation Commission organized a series of meetings between the URNG and various civil, political and economic groups in the country. The government and the URNG recognized the importance of these meetings in achieving a partial solution to the peace process. Three years later, the Civil Society Assembly composed of university, social, indigenous and other groups was created to discuss the problems affecting the country and to present recommendations to both parties. The assembly made an immediate impact in the peace process, as it was able to provide both parties with the following five key provisions: resettlement of populations uprooted by the armed conflict, identity and rights of the indigenous people, socioeconomic aspect and the agrarian situation, and constitutional reforms. The Army provided the provision specifying the function of the army in a democratic society. These provisions served as the foundation for the accords signed in December 1996. The actions of the Civil Society Assembly showed that civil society had begun to reassert itself in Guatemala and that improving the democratization process of

[53] Miguel Angel Reyes Illescas, pp. 52-53.

the country was not only in the interest of the government and the URNG but in the interest of the entire Guatemalan society.

The election of Jorge Serrano as President of Guatemala in 1991 marked the beginning of the third generation of talks. He had been a member of the National Reconciliation Commission and understood that in order to move ahead with the peace process, negotiations had to focus on addressing the causes of the conflict. In Mexico, in April 1991, the Serrano administration was able to secure the signing of two formal accords. The first one was called the Mexican Accord, and it dealt with the framework of the negotiations designating an internal conciliator and an observer from the United Nations. The second one, called the *Queretaro Accord*, dealt with the democratization process, and both sides agreed that political, cultural, economic and social issues had to be addressed in order to have a functional and representative democracy.[54]

In January 1993, president Serrano presented to the United Nations General Assembly a proposal for peace in 90 days (*La Paz en 90 dias*). This proposal was part of a political-military offensive aimed at pressuring the URNG to sign the human rights accords in exchange for the signing of a cease-fire and demobilization of the guerrillas.[55] The failure of this campaign, compounded by gridlock in congress, lack of support and understanding from the business community, and frustration with the press, led Serrano to try a Fujimori like *autogolpe*. His attempt to assume dictatorial powers failed because of

---

[54] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, El Proceso de Paz en Guatemala 1987-1996, *Revista Estudios Internacionales*, Ano 7-Volumen7-No.14, (Julio-Deciembre 1996, Guatemala, C.A), p. 5.

[55] Hugh Byrne, "The Peace Process in Guatemala: Key Issues," *WOLA* (November 21, 1996), p. 3.

overwhelming opposition from civil society, the officer corps in the military and the influential business sector.[56] In the aftermath of the thwarted self-coup, human rights attorney Ramiro De Leon Carpio was selected by Congress to become the third civilian president of Guatemala since 1966.

Immediately after assuming the presidency, De Leon Carpio proposed a new plan for peace. In his new plan, De Leon Carpio proposed the use of the United Nations as a mediator of the talks and a conciliator as a coordinator for an internal forum of peace. The signing of this accord took place in Mexico in January 1994 and opened the fourth generations of talks signaling the beginning of intense diplomatic talks. Between January and June of 1994 five accords were signed leaving the indigenous accord to be signed at the end of March 1995.[57]

The signing of the accord to restart the process of negotiations in January 1994 allowed the United Nations' mediator to propose all the initiatives needed to facilitate the signing of a final accord by the end of the year. It also created the Civil Society Assembly and welcomed a group of five countries (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, and the United States) as active participants in the peace process. The most significant aspect of this accord was the creation of the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). MINUGUA, still in existence today, has the mandate to conduct independent verifications of violations of human rights as well as to monitor the implementation of the peace

---

[56] Francisco Villagran de Leon, "Thwarting the Guatemala Coup," *Journal of Democracy* Volume 4, No.4 (1993), p. 122.

[57] Miguel Angel Reyes Illescas, p. 65.

accords. It is also supporting institutional reforms in order to make democracy and the rule of law the foundations of Guatemalan society.

The goal of reaching a final peace agreement by the end of 1994 was not met. Both sides failed to discuss the issue regarding the identity and rights of indigenous people and consequently blamed each other for the delay in negotiations. Finally, in March 1995, in Mexico, after diplomatic pressure from the United Nations, both parties signed the accord on the identity and rights of the indigenous people. Throughout 1995, other issues outlined on the initial agenda continued to be discussed but no accords were reached. The parties involved in the negotiations learned toward the end of 1994 that in dealing with such complex issues like the ones in Guatemala, establishing tight deadlines with the hope of signing a final agreement only served to undermine the peace process.[58]

The election of Alvaro Arzu as president of Guatemala at the end of 1995 marked the last phase in the long process of peace in Guatemala. Prior to taking office, Arzu held secret talks with the URNG with the hope of moving the peace process forward without having to restructure the framework of the negotiations. In February 1996, the first formal rounds of talks took place between the guerrillas and the Arzu government. In March, during the second round of formal talks, both sides agreed to a cease-fire, which signaled the end of the conflict and the signing of the final agreement later on that year. In May of 1996, the accord on the socioeconomic and agrarian situation was signed, which called for increased citizen participation in socioeconomic development. Finally, in

---

[58] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, pp. 11-12.

September 1996, the accord on the strengthening of civil power and the function of the army in a democratic society was signed with the objective of refocusing the role of the military in a democratic society.[59]

The signing of the final peace agreement in December 1996 put an end to nine years of peace negotiations. The peace process in Guatemala was in fact the longest in Central America. One reason for the prolonged peace process can be attributed to the fact that both sides believed that prolonging the war would improve their possibilities of obtaining a better deal at the bargaining table. Gabriel Aguilera Peralta calls such mentality, in theory, a "more attractive option outside the bargaining table,"[60] which was fed by the ideological character of the conflict. Another reason can be attributed to the lack of trust between the parties. The guerrillas knew that 30 years earlier they had tried to find a political solution to the conflict through a cease-fire and the support of president Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro but the result was more bloodshed and the almost complete eradication of the guerrillas.

The final peace accords signify a unique opportunity for democratic consolidation in Guatemala. The reforms spelled out in the accords provide a blueprint for peace and reconciliation, and for the creation of a more just and open society. The peace process in Guatemala produced nine accords, six which focused mainly on social reforms and three which are considered operational accords dealing primarily with the cease fire conditions,

---

[59] State Department Background Notes on Guatemala, March 1997.

[60] Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, p. 17.

constitutional reforms, and reintegration of the URNG into legality. Each one of the accords contains a series of reforms and initiatives, which will require continued dialogue among members of civil society and the political will of congress in order to be implemented.

Peace in Guatemala from 1986 to 1990 became a difficult goal to achieve. The government of Cerezo had to work with a military that wielded significant influence over security matters and any efforts to achieve peace between the government and the URNG would be constrained by the army's security strategy. Also, the army refused to enter into any kind of political negotiations with the URNG who had been defeated convincingly in the battlefield.

C. MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE PEACE PROCESS, 1986-1990

After the 1982 military coup d'etat that brought Gen. Rios Montt to power, following the election of General Angel Guevara as president, the Guatemalan army laid the groundwork for internal reform, democracy, and peace through a political-social-military strategy. This strategy included among its objectives: 1) the reform, modernization and professionalization of the military institution; 2) the establishment of a civil-military "model" in which civilian authority and the military institution are recognized

as an essential element of the state; and 3) the political termination of the insurgency through a formal internationally recognized peace accord.[61]

In Guatemala, civil-military relations can be characterized as civil-military alliances. Ever since the military government of Col. Enrique Peralta Azurdia (1963-1966), civilians and the military have always formed alliances in order to carry out political and economic policies. Caesar Sereseres describes the relationship between civilians and the army in the following way:

> Civilians have done most of the work, whether it be legal, constitutional or technical. During the political liberalization period between 1982 and 1985, civilians participated as personal advisors to the presidency or the minister of defense and their influence was evident in all major government institutions and reform processes." How these alliances were created? Friendships between civilians and military officers, the need for technical and professional assistance found only in civil society, and the political and psychological necessity to bring civilians into the reform process and make them parties to constitutional and institutional changes.[62]

The election of Vinicio Cerezo as president of Guatemala in 1985 marked the beginning of a new civil-military alliance. The relationship between the military and Cerezo, the first president of the transition, can be characterized as professional and personal. Cerezo and the military, first through his Chief of Staff and then Minister of Defense Gen. Hector Gramajo, agreed that he would not meddle in the military's internal

---

[61] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 214.

[62] Ibid., p. 215.

affairs, and in turn, the military institution would provide broad support for civilian authorities.[63]

In 1986, the army presented Cerezo with the thesis of national stability. The army determined that the only obstacle to democratic consolidation was the insurgency. Although no longer a threat to the state, the insurgency continued to inflict damage to the country's infrastructure and had an elaborate international support network that legitimized its efforts. The thesis of national stability achieved three purposes: first, civilians assumed the responsibility of providing economic, social and political support to the conflict areas, while the military focused on the operational aspect of the war; second, it allowed the army to carry out its internal reforms; and third, it shifted the political burden of the war onto the civilians.[64]

While the army moved ahead in its support for the thesis of national stability, Guatemala became a proactive player in the Central American Peace Process. President Cerezo and Minister of Defense Gen. Hector Gramajo, viewed the peace process in Central America as an opportunity to legitimize Guatemala, and as a means to rehabilitate its blackend image as an pariah state under three previously elected military presidents.[65] However, the army and Cerezo used the mandate of the *Esquipulas* II agreement in 1987

---

[63] Caesar D. Sereseres, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 19 February 1998.

[64] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 258.

[65] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 218.

to insist on a cease-fire, a general amnesty and full demobilization of the guerrillas. The guerrillas refused to negotiate on those premises.

The Guatemalan army from 1986 to 1990 focused most of its attention on the modernization and professionalization of the military institution. The army under the direction of Gen. Gramajo developed a series of internal initiatives (*Fortaleza 87*, *Unidad 88*, and *Fortalecimiento Institutional 89*) to educate its officers on issues related to military discipline, human rights, military education, and the role of the military in a democratic society. Moreover, General Gramajo created *Centro De Estudios Estrategicos Para La Estabilidad Nacional* (*Centro ESTNA).*

Centro ESTNA was designed to bring military officers, civilians, labor leaders, businessmen, academics, and leaders of grass root organizations to discuss those issues which not only affected the attendee's organizations, but also those issues which affected the future economic, political, and social outlook of the country.[66] These initiatives designed by Gen. Gramajo imbued the Guatemalan officer corps with a professional attitude and a commitment to the democratic process. They also solidified the attitude among members of the officer corps that the army could become an essential element of the democratic state. Despite the fact that the army's attitude towards the guerrillas did not change from 1986 to 1990, Cerezo continued to support the initiatives specified in the *Esquipulas* II agreements, particularly with the creation of the National Reconciliation Commission.

---

[66] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 353.

Through the National Reconciliation Commission, members of civil society, the URNG and the government developed a consensus as to what issues had to be addressed in order to achieve peace and develop a pluralistic democracy. The army's reluctance to negotiate with the insurgency did not stop the debates among its officers on issues dealing with modernization, professionalization, and its role in a democratic society. What these initiatives and debates did, was to develop a democratic attitude among members of the officer corps that eventually led to the military's withdraw of support for President Serrano's attempted self-coup.

D. THE 1993 ATTEMPTED SELF-COUP AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

The watershed event in Guatemala's civil-military relations took place on May 25, 1993 during the attempted *self-coup* by the President Serrano. Serrano shared his intentions to close down the Congress with his immediate advisors including the Minister of Defense. Despite the Defense Minister's initial support for the president, he quickly removed his support as a result of the pressure exerted by other high ranking members of the military. Other groups from civil and political societies contributed to the army's decision to withdraw its support from Serrano.

Both the business sector and the military in Guatemala learned important lessons on the importance of preserving democracy despite the many problems and challenges associated with it. First, the powerful business sector persuaded by the international community, realized how damaging the effects of the coup could be in terms of trade and

economic cooperation. Therefore, they supported the return to democratic rule. Second, the refusal of most military commanders and mid-level officers to support Serrano showed that the internal debates regarding the role of the military in a democratic state had permeated throughout the officer corps. The Guatemalan army also realized that the responsibility for supporting Serrano's unconstitutional rule would fall upon it, and that it would hurl the army back into its authoritarian past.

The most important lesson for democracy in Guatemala came from the refusal of the major democratic institutions (the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the Court of Constitutionality and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman) to accept Serrano's anticonstitutional action. These three institutions chose to follow the principles and procedures of constitutional rule as the only legitimate and peaceful path to a resolution of the crisis. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal denied Serrano's request for elections of a new constituent assembly. The court ruled that such elections could not be held under suspended constitutional guarantees. At the same time, the Court of Constitutionality, which had been dissolved by Serrano, met clandestinely and issued rulings through the media declaring Serrano's actions unconstitutional.[67] Civil Society played a key role during this crisis. It had been revitalized as part of the political liberalization process, which began in 1983, and as a result of the dialogues taking place as part of the peace process. Once the major democratic institutions refused to back Serrano, elements of civil society organized themselves under the National Forum of Consensus.

---

[67] Francisco Villagran de Leon, p. 123.

The National Forum for Consensus, a forum representative of the majority of the sectors of civil society, spoke with one voice and exerted significant pressure on Serrano to abandon his plans to assume dictatorial powers. It also played a major role in persuading the majority of political parties in Congress and the military not to support Serrano's vice president as his successor. Moreover, it drew up the list of candidates from which congress chose Ramiro De Leon Carpio for the presidency. The outcome of this crisis showed that Guatemala had developed elements of a democratic culture, whereby civil society had become a significant force for political change. Therefore, its influence in effecting the democratic process could no longer be discounted.[68]

The aftermath of the Serrano attempted coup eventually allowed for a more pragmatic group of senior officers to take over the military high command. The debates continued among members of the officer corps, which led to negotiations with the guerrillas. Caesar D. Sereseres points out three reasons why the Guatemalan army decided to negotiate with the guerrillas.

---

[68] Ibid., p. 126.

> First, the army already had the vision of army 2000 and it could not implement it as long as the insurgency existed. Second, by signing a pact of peace, the army would legitimize itself, not only in Guatemala, but also in the Central American region and the rest of the world. Moreover, from 1981 to 1996, the insurgency had the upper hand in psychological operations, political warfare, and had captured the image of the Indian in Guatemala. The insurgency was able to last politically because the URNG had done much better work in Geneva, the United Nations, and had also captured the human rights agenda. Third, the army learned the lessons from the Salvadoran Peace Process, in which the Salvadoran army was forced to implement every major military institutional reform dictated in their peace accords. The Guatemalan army was not going to let the peace process dictate its institutional reforms. By the time the peace agreements were signed, the Guatemalan Army had already implemented the majority of the reforms called for in the accords. Also, the Guatemalan army officers had side talks with the guerrilla commanders to remove as many oblstacles as possible prior to formal talks about the military.[69]

The analysis by Caesar D. Sereseres shows that the debates held among member of the officer corps in the late 1980s and early 1990s had changed significantly the attitude of the Guatemalan Army regarding its role in a democratic society. It also shows that the Guatemalan Army had become more pragmatic when dealing with the insurgency. Refusing to change its original position vis-à-vis the insurgency would have forced the army to accept the same fate as its Salvadoran counterpart, which was forced to implement every major military institutional reform dictated in the peace accords. Therefore, the thesis of national stability led the way to a military willing to move beyond the signing of the peace accords in which civilian control becomes the norm, and where the military is recognized as an essential part of the state.

The aftermath of Serrano's attempted self-coup, allowed Presidents Ramiro De Leon Carpio and Alvaro Arzu to further consolidate Guatemala's democracy. They began dismantling some of the counterinsurgency programs established by the army in the early

---

[69] Caesar D. Sereseres, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 19 February 1998.

1980s. President Ramiro De Leon Carpio signed a decree in 1994 ending forced recruitment, and on September 15, 1995, 24,000 military commissioners were officially disbanded. In an effort to remove the military from domestic intelligence, De Leon Carpio introduced legislation in 1994 to create a Civilian Intelligence Secretariat. The legislation was blocked in congress but the framework of a civilian intelligence agency was formed nonetheless. Also in 1994, the training and education at the military academy was extended one additional year to prepare cadets in liberal arts subjects with the support of civilian universities.[70]

As president, De Leon Carpio also reinvigorated the peace process. He changed the format of the negotiations and proposed the use of the United Nations as a mediator. During his presidency, the Civil Society Assembly became the domestic forum responsible for developing the required documents that served as the foundation for the peace accords. And the arrival of MINUGUA in 1994 provided a verification mechanism for the accords and the necessary assistance to help Guatemalans build the institutional capability to consolidate democracy in their country.

A major obstacle for peace, according to Caesar D. Sereseres, after 1993, was not the Guatemalan Army, but the guerrillas' politico-military commission. This commission was involved in the principal negotiations and was linked to the the popular groups in Guatemala and foreign human rights groups. According to Sereseres, the commission prolonged the negotiations by taking a more radical position than the guerrilla

---

[70] Guatemalan Armed Forces. Summary of the Implementation of the Peace Accords. Online. HTTP://members.aol.com/agremilusa/implementation.html. 25 January 1998.

commanders preferred. The guerrilla commanders replaced the commission.[71] While the Civil Society Assembly and the United Nations mediator continued to hammer out a peace agreement, the guerrillas and army commanders met outside the negotiating process to discuss issues of core interest to the military. Alvaro Arzu became president of Guatemala in January 1996 and thanks to what Serrano and De Leon Carpio had already accomplished, he was able to finalize the peace process.

E. MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE PEACE PROCESS, 1996

With the election of Arzu, a new civil-military alliance was formed. Arzu promoted military officers committed to the peace process; officers willing to modernize the military and to develop a military force capable of functioning in a democratic society. Since the beginning of his presidency, Arzu was able to conduct general policy without intervention of the military, and that is because of his personal character and the institutional reforms that had already taken place in the military prior to assuming the presidency.[72]

Upon taking office in January 1996, President Arzu vowed to curtail the authority of the military and its high command and was quoted as saying "they (the military) will have to confine themselves to the specific space for which they are created, not a step

---

[71] Caesar D. Sereseres, interviewed author, Monterey, CA, 19 February 1998.

[72] Luis Alberto Padilla, "Las Nuevas Relaciones Civico-Militares bajo el Cuadro del Proceso de Paz," *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* (Ano 7-Volumen 7-No.14, Julio-Diciembre 1996, Guatemala, C.A.), p. 35.

more, not a step less.[73] The president did not take long to put his words into action. On January 19, 1996, Arzu discharged 8 of the 16 generals in the Guatemalan armed forces and dismissed many colonels, making more high-echelon changes than any other civilian president since Guatemala became a democracy in 1986.[74] According to Caesar D. Sereseres, Arzu is in control of the armed forces. He has withheld promotions and has continued to rid the military of officers alleged of corruption and other crimes.[75] In 1997, Arzu dismissed the the deputy minister of defense and other high-ranking military officers for alleged ties to a powerful smuggling ring.[76]

In addition to purging military officers for alleged corruption, Arzu moved forward with his plan to dismantle the remaining mechanisms created in the early 1980s to fight the insurgency. First, he disbanded the civil defense patrols in August 1996. Second, Congress passed a law curtailing the authority of military tribunals. This law complied with judicial reforms stated in the peace accords by ending the military's jurisdiction in cases of common crimes. Third, on 11 December 1997, the Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* reported an announcement made by Minister of Defense, Hector Mario Barrios that the Mobile Military Police would be officially disbanded on 16 December 1997. Additionally, in the same newspaper report, Gen. Barrios pointed out

---

[73] *New York Times*, 9 January 1996.

[74] *New York Times*, 7 February 1996.

[75] Caesar D. Sereseres, interviewed by author, phone, 25 September 1997.

[76] LTC John Churchill, Assistant Defense Attaché, U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 9 June 1997.

Minister of Government would assume responsibility for the Department of Arms and Ammunition (DECAM) on 31 December 1997, and also, that the army would meet its force reduction of 33% by the end of the year.[77] By complying with these provisions, the army has shown its commitment to the full implementation of the accord regarding the role of the military in a democratic society.

So far the Arzu administration and the army have complied with those provisions regarding the role of the military in a democratic society that required no constitutional amendments. The rest of the provisions require congressional action to take effect. Those provisions are: the enactment of a new national service law, which includes military service and community service, two articles of the constitution dealing with the organization and functions of the armed forces, the appointment of a civilian defense minister, and the creation of a civilian intelligence and information analysis department under the Minister of Government.

Will Congress ever take action on such measures? When looking at the performance record of the Guatemalan Congress throughout the years, one cannot help but be skeptical of the chances of Congress ever amending the constitution or enacting any of the laws proposed in the accords. Congress not only has to deal with constitutional amendments dealing with the role of the military in a democratic society, but also with several others specified in six different accords. For Congress to take action, it will require a great deal of political will and consensus from two major political parties, the

---

[77] *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala), 11 December 1997.

PAN (*Partido Accion National*) and the FRG (*Frente Democratico Nacional*). At the present moment, the Guatemalan Congress has opened the debate over the constitutional amendments which require a two-third congressional majority and a referendum to take place in 1999, when the next general elections will take place.

The speed with which the Arzu administration was able to reach a peace agreement with the URNG is remarkable. However, none of the agreements or secret meetings with the guerrilla commanders and the appointment of pragmatic/institutionalist military officers could have taken place without the efforts of Arzu's predecessors and former senior army officers. By the time Arzu assumed the presidency, the army had accomplished all but one objective-the termination of the insurgency and an internationally recognized peace accord - specified in its 1982 strategy. Therefore, the army became an asset rather than a liability in Arzu's negotiations with the guerrillas. Arzu's predecessors worked all together nine years with members of civil and political societies to finally achieve a consensus on how to deal with the issues that brought about the armed conflict in the first place. It was a combination of Arzu's willingness to achieve peace and the work already done by civilians and the military that allowed him put an end of 36 years of armed conflict.

F. CONCLUSION

The Guatemalan Peace Accords provide for the opportunity to revise the democratic rules of the game that will allow Guatemala to consolidate its democracy. The peace process, despite running into several stumbling blocks, allowed for the development of two very important democratic arenas, civil and political societies, which Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan point out in their book, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe.[78] The civil and political institutions in Guatemala gained significant strength in shaping the political future of Guatemala. This was evident during the 1993 democratic crisis, and in the peace accords themselves, which resulted from the consensus achieved by various business, popular and civic groups comprising civil society.

The army, despite its reluctance to negotiate with the guerrillas, continued with its internal dialogues and forums. These debates created a consensus among army officers that the army had to negotiate with the insurgency if it was to implement its long range vision (Army 2000). Also, after 1992, as a result of the signing of the Salvadoran Peace Accords, the Guatemalan Army decided that it would not accept the United Nations or a truth commission to determine its fate. Therefore, the Guatemalan Army became more pragmatic. The new senior officers occupying the high command realized that by

[78] Juan J.Linz and Alfred Stepan, pp. 7-8.

supporting and participating in peace process, they would protect the military institution and all the reforms that had taken place since 1983.

The Guatemalan Peace Accords, when looked at closely, have very little to do with reforming the military institution. Over 70% of the Peace Accords in Guatemala deal with indigenous rights, displaced persons, human rights, social, economic and land issues. A great number of civil-military reforms, termination of forced recruitment, abolition of military commissioners and civil defense patrols, reform of the military education system, and force level reductions, took place before the final peace accords were signed in 1996. The Guatemalan Peace Accords were about revising the democratic rules of the game to achieve a more pluralistic society in Guatemala. Regarding the impact of the Peace Accords on the military as institution, many of the reforms called for in the accords have already been implemented. What the military accord did was to institutionalize force levels, reduce budgets and open the door for a civilian minister of defense.[79]

All major political players involved in the peace process won something. The military regained its legitimacy in Guatemala and the rest of the world, and neither the URNG nor the army accepted a truth commission. The URNG was able to enter the political process and the government put an end to 36 years of armed conflict. The degree of civilian control of the military in Guatemala when measured against the backdrop of the peace accords can be measured in terms of the milestones achieved as a result of civil-military alliances, peace negotiations and military institutional reforms. The need of the

---

[79] Caesar D. Sereseres, interviewed by author, 19 February 1998.

Guatemalan army to regain its legitimacy, implement its long range institutional reforms and achieve peace, has empowered the civilian presidents to strip the prerogatives acquired by the army as a result of the counterinsurgency war. The current initiatives taking effect as a result of the peace accords, like dismantling the Mobile Military Police, transfering the department of arms and ammunition, reforming the military education system and army doctrine reflect the army's commitment since 1983 to focus its attention on the internal affairs of the military institution.

The military institutional reforms initiated by the Guatemalan army in 1983, the efforts by the army and civil society to preserve democracy in 1993, and the signing of the peace accords have shown that Guatemala's democratic consolidation has become an attainable goal. As long as the civil-military alliances continue to work toward solidifying the democratic process and the Guatemalan Army continues to be an institution committed to the support of the democratic state, military involvement in politics will be a thing of the past.

IV. CIVIL-MILITARY ISSUES IN GUATEMALA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERIODS 1986-1990 AND 1996-1998

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comparative analysis of four civil-military issues in two different periods of democratic rule, 1986-1990 and 1996-1998. These four issues are: (1) military role in domestic intelligence and internal security; (2) officer professional education; (3) size, roles and missions of the armed forces, and (4) military expenditures. When comparing these four civil – military issues, I look at the regime leverage and regime capacity of both democratic regimes as the framework of my argument in trying determine the level of civilian control over the military in Guatemala.

In this chapter, I argue that the progress made in the four civil-military issues mentioned above is primarily due to the army's modernization and professionalization program and the willingness of civilians to curtail the miltary's sphere of autonomous action. In addition, I argue that the administration of Arzu had the necessary leverage to institutionalize these civil-mlitary issues. However, in order to do so, civilian and military leaders had to work together to determine the future role of the military in a democratic society.

Regime leverage is defined by Harold A. Trinkunas as the ability of civilians to compel the military to accept civilian orders that contravene their traditional interests and prerogatives. He also defines regime capacity as the combination of budgetary resources,

expert civilian personnel, and executive and legislative branch attention specifically and exclusively committed to matters of civilian control and national defense.[80]

When comparing the periods of the Vinicio Cerezo administration (1986-1990) and the current admininstration of Alvaro Arzu (1996-present), regime leverage has changed significantly to the advantage of civilians, but the regime capacity remains a problem. This problem is not only endemic to Guatemala but also to other newly emerging democracies throughout the world.

The low regime leverage of the Cerezo administration stemmed from the fact that the Guatemalan military guided the transition to democracy. The military, through its politico-military project, defeated the URNG on the battlefield, developed the process of liberalization and democratization, and remained in control of the counterinsurgency mechanisms which guaranteed the security of the state. Moreover, the civilian institutions primarily in charge of internal security lacked the resources and adequate trainining to establish the rule of law.

The government of Alvaro Arzu came to power with high regime leverage. The high leverage stemmed from role of the democratic institutions – court of constitutionality and Supreme Electoral Tribunal – as well as the military in preventing President Serrano from consolidating his self-coup. Also, Arzu's predecessors were able to dismantle the army's counterinsurgency mechanisms, and a new generation of pragmatic officers who

---

[80] Harold A. Trinkunas. "Crafting Civilian Control of the Armed Forces: Statecraft, Institutions, and Military Subordination in Emerging Democracies," dissertation manuscript, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, forthcoming, August 1998.

favor democracy with civilian control took over the military high command. Moreover, Arzu is viewed as a man of impecable character who has brought an uncompromising attittude to the presidency. However, both administrations have low regime capacity, which allows the military to dominate security issues, particularly internal ones.

B. MILITARY ROLE IN DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY

In 1986, the Guatemalan military remained involved in matters related to domestic intelligence and internal security due to the the insurgency threat and the lack of resources in the National Police to fight crime. President Cerezo assigned a senior military officer to head the Department of Administrative Control of the Presidency (this department no longer exists) to end corruption in the government. At the same time, Cerezo appointed another senior military officer to head the National Police in an effort and curb urban crime. In addition to that, Cerezo ordered the development of a plan called *Sistema de Proteccion Ciudadana* whereby both the national and imigration police would increase their capabilites against crime with the help of an investigative infrastructure led by the military intelligence (G-2) and the Mobile Military Police. [81]

In the countryside, the military maintained strict control of internal security by relying on the military commisioner system and the civil defense patrols (PACs) to maintain control and guarantee the security of the population. Military commissioners

[81] Hector Alejandro Gramajo Morales, p. 350.

managed the affairs of their respective departments, supervised the civil defense patrols and worked in close contact with the intelligence division (G-2), also run by the Army. The military maintained its influence in internal security and intelligence because after the transition it remained the only institution with the resources and trained personnel capable of protecting the the citizens of Guatemala. The civilian police was inneficient in carrying out the mission of internal security.

Guatemala's intelligence apparatus, known as the G-2, maintained a controversial reputation throughout the 1980s and 1990s for allegedly committing human rights violations. In an effort to curb the G-2s influence in domestic intelligence collection, President De Leon Carpio, who was elected by the Congress in 1993 after President Jorge Serrano resigned in the aftermath of his failed *autogolpe,* introduced legislation in 1994 to reform the intelligence apparatus (G-2) by announcing the creation of the Office of the Secretariat of Intelligence. This intelligence reform created an agency run by a team of civilians and military personnel to assist in matters of national security and limited military intelligence only to support the military in defending national sovereignty.[82]

In addtion to the intelligence legislation introduced by De Leon Carpio, the Civil Department of Intelligence has been created under the supervison of the Minister of Interior. There is also an on-going discussion about the scope of its functions as well as its inter-relation with other institutions like the National Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

---

[82] Report on Military Intelligence and Human Rights in Guatemala: The Archivo and the Case for Intelligence Reform, published by the Washington Office of Latin America in April 1995.

and the Ministry of Defense.[83] The issue of internal security and intelligence are directly related to the rule of law, which is one of the main components of a democracy. Currently the military remains the only effective institution capable of controlling the rampant crime on the streets. However, civilian are working to build an efficient national police force that will eventually take over the duty of internal security. Also, once the National Police takes over the task of internal security, the military will assist in this role only under the authority of the executive,with strict oversight by the Congress.

C. OFFICER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The officer military education system in Guatemala consists of the military academy "*Escuela Politecnica*" where most of the officers are graduated and commissioned from. The Academy is supported by a Reserve Officer's Program from which commisioned officers later could get on active duty. Those who enroll in the Reserve Officer Program attend the Adolfo V. Hall school system and after graduation have the option of either attendig the military academy or a civilian university. Those officers who later choose to enter active duty have to attend a six months officer course at

[83] Colonel Cesar Ruiz, (agremilusa@aol.com). "Military Role in Domestic Intelligence." E-mail to CPT Carlos G. Berrios (Cgber0751@aol.com). 3 March 1998.

the Center for Military Sudies (CEM) There are also several other school and training facilities for tactical and technical preparation, some of them for all the services. [84]

The other military education facility is the Center for Military Studies, which has the Command and General Staff School, the Application of Arms School (basic and advanced courses for all military branches, and the Officer's Candidate School, the Language Center and other military courses. Other education organizations like universities, foreign military schools and technical school complement the officer education system. [85]

Since 1994, the military education system has been civilianized by converting the military academy curriculum from three years of largely military training to a four years bachelors of arts program. Officers who are not under the new system are offered the opportunity to complete the bachelors program while attending the Command and General Staff Course. This program is in conjuntion with the local Francisco Marroquin University.[86] Also, most of the professors at the military academy are civilians, according to the need and the courses they teach. Usually those professors are graduates of the Guatemalan National University or private universities in Guatemala. Therefore, they play

---

[84] Colonel Cesar Ruiz, (agremilusa@aol.com). "Officer Professional Education in Guatemala." E-mail to CPT Carlos G. Berrios (Cgber0751@aol.com). 3 March 1998.

[85] Colonel Cesar Ruiz, (agremilusa@aol.com). "Officer Professional Education in Guatemala." E-mail to CPT Carlos G. Berrios (Cgber0751@aol.com). 3 March 1998.

[86] LTC John Churchill, U.S. Army Assistant Attaché in Guatemala, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 9 June 1997.

an important role in the formation and education of the cadets. In the Center of Military Studies, civilian professors teach all non-military courses. [87]

In addition to trying to civilianize the officer education system, civilian universities through the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), sponsored by the United States, are becoming interested in developing curriculums dealing with defense and civil-military issues in order to develop the necessary civilian and military expertise that would eventually increase the capacity of the government in dealing with matters related to civilian control and national defense.

The progress made so far in the area of officer professional education and the desire of civilian institutions to incorporate courses dealing with national defense in their curriculums,shows the desire of both civilians and military in trying to build the capacity of the government in matters related to national defense that could eventually lead to the instituionalization of civilian control over the military.

---

[87] Colonel Cesar Ruiz, (agremilusa@aol.com). "Officer Professional Education in Guatemala." E-mail to CPT Carlos G. Berrios (Cgber0751@aol.com). 3 March 1998.

D. SIZE, ROLES AND MISSIONS OF THE GUATEMALAN ARMED FORCES

Table 1. Guatemalan Total Military Force Strength, 1986-1990 and 1996-1997

Year	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1996	1997
Total Force Strength	54,000	54,000	54,000	54,000	54,000	50,000	Jan-46,800 Sept-39,000 Dec-31,400

Sources: Colonel Cesar Ruiz, (agremilusa@aol.com). "Size, Roles and Missions of the Guatemalan Military." E-mail to CPT Carlos G. Berrios (Cgber0751@aol.com). 3 March 1998.

Table 1 shows a comparison of total troop strength in the Guatemalan military during the Cerezo (1986-1990) and Arzu administrations (1996-1998). The Guatemalan armed forces are not separated in individual services; rather the Army, Navy, and the Air Force all compose one national armed force. From 1986 to 1990 the total number of armed forces remained constant primarily due to the insurgency threat and the army's influence over the country's security strategy. However, since 1996, the army began to downsize as part of the institutional reforms specified in the Peace Accords. In December 1997, the army downsized its forces to 31,400 complying with the 33% troop reduction as required by the Peace Accords.

The mission of the Guatemalan armed forces as stated in the 1985 constitution consists of maintaining the independence, sovereignty and honor of Guatemala, the integrity of its territory, its peace as well as internal and external security. During the Cerezo administration, the army's primary mission was counterinsurgency. In carrying out such mission, the army maintained its autonomy in the prosecution of the war and remained in control of the internal security apparatus in support of its counterinsurgency

strategy. In addition to conducting counterinsurgency operations, the Guatemalan Army worked in conjuction with the civilian government in providing basic services, executing civic action and road construction projects. Since December 1996, the army has ceased counterinsurgency operations but remains heavily involved in matters related to internal security due to rampant crime in the country.

The current role of the Guatemalan army is crime prevention. According to the Army's Chief of Staff, 90% of the army is involved in crime prevention and the army will remain in such role until at least the year 2000 when 20,000 policemen are supposed to be on the streets. The army is no longer working autonomously in the fight against crime. The Minister of Government, a civilian and the Minister of Defense, are working together under executive mandate in executing a national plan to combat the rampant crime.[88]

The mission of the Guatemalan military as stated in the constitution remains unchanged. However, as part of the Peace Accords, Congress has the mandate to change the mission of the Guatemalan Army. The army's new mission will be to protect the sovereignty of the state and its territorial integrity, basically the defense against an external threat According to Caesar D. Sereseres, the army seeks a broader role in rural development, international peacekeeping – one battalion has already participated as part of the UN mission to Haiti – and nontraditional security areas – environment, resource

---

88 Thomas Bruneau, Professor of Political Science at the Naval Postgraduate School, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 3 February 1998.

management, immigration, contraband, and international crime.[89] Defining the role of the Guatemalan army in the future will require civil society to answer the following question: what is it that Guatemalans want the military to do based on the strengths and weaknesses of other governmental institutions? The military cannot be left alone to answer this question.

E. MILITARY EXPENDITURES

Table 2. Military Expenditures (ME) as a Percentage of GNP for the Guatemalan Army in 1995 constant U.S. dollars, (by millions).

Year	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1998
Military expenditures in U.S. Dollars	154	160	167	173	138.2	131.2	130.8
ME as a % of GNP	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.4	.99	.74	.65

Sources: Information on Military Expenditures for 1987, 1989, 1991 and 1993 found in World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1996.

Information on Military Expenditures for 1995, 1997, and 1998 found in Guatemalan Armed Forces. Summary of the Implementation of the Peace Accords. Online. HTTP://members.aol.com/agremilusa/implementation.html. 25 January 1998

Table 2 illustrates the level of defense expenditures in the Cerezo and Arzu administrations. The significant factor is the percentage of gross national product relative to defense expenditures. In Guatemala, from 1987 to 1993, the percentage of gross national product remained below two percent. One factor that might influence the low figure would be the bad state of the economy at the time and the lack of military

[89] Caesar D. Sereseres, p. 220.

coming from the United States. Nevertheless, since 1995, the defense budget has continued to decrease. Defense spending has been reduced to .65% of GDP, which is less than the 1995 figure of less than 1%. These reductions in the armed forces budget shows the military's compliance with the reforms specified in the peace accords.

During the early 1980s, with the cut-off of U.S. military assistance, the Guatemalan military looked elsewhere for military aid and found Israel as a major supplier of equipment and training assistance. The Guatemalan military became the only country in Central America to develop a modest defense industry, assembling a wheeled APC vehicle called the Armadillo. Today, they maintain production of the Armadillo vehicle only for internal use by the armed forces and not for export purposes. Also, in 1998, the army maintains the *Fabrica de Municiones*, which produces small arms ammunition, the *Industria Militar* which produces uniforms and boots, and the *Servicio de Material de Guerra* (SGM) in Guatemala City which is tasked to maintain army vehicles, trucks and armoured vehicles.[90]

[90] LTC John Churchill, Assistant Defense Attaché, U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, interviewed by author, Monterey, CA, 9 June 1997.

F. CONCLUSION

The progress made in the four civil-military issues reviewed in this chapter is due in part to the army's program of modenization and professionalization that began back in 1983. In light of such progress, the future is bright for Guatemala's civil-military relations. The military has become a professional institution committed to support the democratic state, and civilians at the grass root level are becomimg interested in civil-military issues. The window of opportunity to make some of the changes specified in the civil-military section of the Peace Accords is wide open. The military's political influence has waned, not by civilian imposition but by its own internal reforms. Therefore the time is now for the Congress to come through with the constitutional amendments required to implement some of the civil-military changes. These changes will give civilians the opportunity to institutionalize their control over the military and consolidate democracy.

The road towards democratic consolidation, however, remains problematic despite the progress made in the civil-military issues presented in this chapter. Civilians must commit themselves to strengthen the newly formed Civilian National Police in order to regain the confidence of the Guatemalan people and reestablish the rule of law. Also, civilians must figure out who will deal with the myriad of security issues that have come to the fore as a result of the new international order. Whatever role civilians decide to give the military in the future, it must not undermine other civilian institutions and should enhance democratic consolidation.

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis had several purposes. First, it inquired into the relationship between civil-military relations and democratization at an important time in Guatemala's history. Second, it assessed the willingness of the Guatemalan military to undergo internal reforms in order to become a professional military institution committed to the full democratization of the country. Third, it examined the significant progress in the issue areas of domestic intelligence, internal security, size, role and missions of the military, officer professional education and military expenditures. This thesis could be relevant to other cases as more countries throughout the world try to structure their civil-military relations in order to consolidate democracy.

The pervasive participation of the Guatemalan army in politics was due to the ineffectual and weak political institutions that failed to exert their influence in a society that was highly oligarchic and feudal. As a result of this societal structure, civil society became politicized and the military stepped in to fill the political vacumm left by the weak government institutions. This led to a "praetorian society."

Despite the pervasive participation in politics, the cost of govering became too high for the Guatemalan military. By 1982, the task of governing was tearing the institution apart. The country faced a serious threat from the insurgency and the democratic façade (*Esquema Politico*) that had been established twelve years before had fallen apart. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan call the Guatemalan military withdrawal from

politics "extrication from rule by a hierarchical led military. The Guatemalan military institution realized that if it wanted to survive, the business of governing had to be turned over to the civilians. Therefore, through a carefully crafted politico-military strategy, the military guided Guatemala's return to democracy.

As part of the politico-military strategy, the army sought to become an essential part of the state by modernizing and professionalizing its forces. This process consisted in a series of initiatives such as *Fortaleza 87*, *Unidad 88*, and *Fortalecimiento Institucional 89* to educate its officer on issues related to military discipline, human rights, military education and the role of the military in a democratic society. These initiatives designed by General Hector Gramajo imbued the Guatemalan officer corps with a professional attitude and commitment to the democratic process.

While the army implemented its professionalization and modernization plan, the peace process began to put an end to 36 years of civil war. The peace negotiations in Guatemala took nine years, nine accords and four declarations before the government and the URNG agreed to sign a final agreement of firm and lasting peace in December 1996. Despite the fact that the Peace Accords had little to do with civil-military relations, the military decided to negotiate with the guerrillas because it wanted to carry out its modernization plan for the year 2000 and beyond. The only way to do so was by reaching a peace settlement with the guerrillas. Also, the army wanted to legitimize itself not only in Guatemala, but also in the eyes of the international community. At the same time, the Army did not want the peace process to direct which military institutional reforms had to

be made. By the time the civil-military accords were signed, the army had implemented its reforms as agreed with the URNG.

There is a significant contrast in civil-military relations between the governments of Cerezo and Arzu. On the one hand, the Cerezo administration had to deal with a military that wielded significant political influence, primarily in matters related to the security of the state. In addition, the military had guided the transition, and was able to maintain the useful counterinsurgency meachanisms that had helped them defeat the insurgency in the battlefield. On the other hand, the Arzu adminstration came to power with a military that had already reverted to more professional military matters and had developed an attitute among its officers supportive of the democratic state. Also, democracy had undergone a maturing process. The failed self-coup by President Serrano showed that the major democratic insitutitions in Guatemala were willing to follow the rules and procedures stated in the constitution to solve any democratic crisis. At the same time, Arzu was not tainted by allegations of corruption and commanded the respect of the army. In summary, Cerezo dealt with the intial challenges of governing a new democracy and a military that viewed itself as successful in returning stability to the state. In contrast, Arzu's enjoyed political leverage because his predecesors lay the conditions for better civil-military relations and a more stable democracy.

The theory of civilian supremacy developed by Felipe Aguero is quite relevant to the Guatemalan case. In Guatemala, as in Spain, civilian supremacy has not occurred by civilian imposition but rather by the commitment of the Guatemalan military itself to revert to a role more restricted to professional military matters.

In this thesis I found that Guatemala has increasingly sound civil-military relations, with civilian control having a significant impact on the democratization process. I define civilian control in the case of Guatemala as the ability of the executive branch of government to maintain control over the military. Currently, however, Guatemala does not have the institutional mechanisms with which to control the military. Nevertheless, civil-military relations are stable and the military fully supports the democratization process.

The military institutional reforms initiated by the Guatemalan army in 1983, the efforts by the army and civil society to preserve democracy in 1993, and the signing of the peace accords have shown that Guatemala's democratic consolidation has become an attainable goal. As long as the civil-military alliances continue to work toward solidifying the democratic process and the Guatemalan Army continues to be an institution committed to the support of the democratic state, military involvement in politics will be a thing of the past.

This thesis has barely scratched the surface in trying to analyze the state of civil-military relations in Guatemala. Guatemala is undergoing an unprecedented political transformation, democracy has survived now for more than twelve years, a long civil war ended with a series of Peace Accords and the military stands ready to support the civilian government. Moreover, civil society has begun to reassert itself and is willing to deal with the myriad of issues affecting Guatemala today. Future research is recommended to investigate the role of the democratic institutions in the monitoring and implementation of defense policy.

APPENDIX

Chief Executives of Guatemala: 1838-1996

Character of Governance	Chief Executive	Years in office	Form of Succession
Conservative	Rivera Paz	1838-39	Overthrown
Liberal	General Salazar	Jan.-April 1839	Overthrown
Conservative	Rivera Paz	1839-1844	Phased out
Conservative	Jose Rafael Carrera	1844-48	Resignation
Conservative	Mariano Paredes	1849-51	Overthrown
Conservative	Jose Rafael Carrera	1851-65	Died in bed
Conservative	Gen. Vicente Cerna	1865-71	Overthrown
Liberal	Miguel Garcia Granados	1871-73	Forced resignation
Republican Dictatorship	Justo Rufino Barrios	1873-85	Killed in battle
Republican Dictatorship	Manuel Lisandro Barrillas	1885-92	Served extended constitutional Term of office
Republican Dictatorship	Jose- Maria Reina Barrios	1892-98	Assassinated
Republican Dictatorship	Manuel Estrada Cabrera	1898-1920	Overthrown
Unionist	Carlos Herrera	1920	Overthrown
Republican Dictatorship	Gen. Jose Maria Orellana	1921-26	Died of heart attack
Republican Dictatorship	Gen. Lazaro Chacon	1926-30	Died of illness
Provisional	Baudilio Palma	12 December-16 December 1930	Overthrown
Provisional	Gen. Manuel Orellana	31 December 1930	Resigned

Character of Governance	Chief Executive	Years in office	Form of Succession
Provisional	Jose Maria Reina Andrades	31 December 1930 14 February 1931	Resigned
Republican Dictatorship	Gen. Jorge Ubico y Castenada	1931-1944	Resigned
Provisional Junta	Gen. Federico Ponce Vaides	1 July- 20 October 1944	Overthrown
Provisional Triumvirate	Major Francisco Arana Captain Jacobo Arbenz Jorge Toriello Garrido	20 October 1944 - 14 March 1945	Concluded term with elections
Reformist	Juan Jose Arevalo Bermejo	1945-50	Served electoral term of office
Left-wing Reformist	Col. Jacobo Arbernz	15 March 1950- June 1954	Overthrown
Military junta	Cols. Elfego Mozon And Castillo Armas	27 June- 29 June 1954	Phased out
Conservative	Col. Carlos Castillo Armas	8 July 1954 July 1957	Assassinated
Provisional	Luis Arturo Gonzalez Lopez	July-October 1957	Resigned
Provisional	Guillermo Flores Avendano	October 1957- 2 March 1958	Concluded term with elections
Archaic Republican Dictatorship	Gen. Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes	1958-63	Overthrown
Military Constitutional Reformist	Col. Enrique Peralta Azurdia	1963-65	Concluded term with elections
Protected Democracy	Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro	1966-70	Served electoral term of office
Repressive Republicanism	Col. Carlos Arana Osorio	1970-74	Served electoral term of office

Character of Governance	Chief Executive	Years in office	Form of Succession
Repressive Republicanism	Gen. Eugenio Kjell Laugerud Garcia	1974-78	Served electoral term of office
Repressive Republicanism	Gen. Romero Lucas Garcia	1978-82	Overthrown
Military Constitutional Reformist	Military junta (triumvirate)	March 1982-June 1982	Phased out
Military Constitutional Reformist	Gen. Efrain Rios Montt	June 1982-August 1983	Palace coup
Military Constitutional Reformist	Gen. Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores	August 1983-January 1986	Concluded term with elections
Nascent Democratic	Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo	January 1986-1990	Served electoral term of office
Democratic	Jorge Serrano	January 1990-93	Resigned
Democratic	Ramiro De Leon Carpio	May 1993-January 1996	Concluded term with elections
Democratic	Alvaro Arzu	January 1996-Present	

Source: *Guatemala's Political Puzzle*, by Georges A. Fauriol and Eva Loser

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aguero, Felipe. *Soldiers, Civilians and Democracy: Post Franco in Comparative Perspective*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Aguilera Peralta, Gabriel. "El Proceso de Paz en Guatemala 1987-1996." *Revista Estudios Internacionales*, Ano 7-Volumen7-No.14, (Julio-Deciembre 1996), Guatemala, C.A.

Byrne, Hugh. "The Peace Process in Guatemala: Key Issues," *WOLA* (November 21, 1996).

Child, Jack. *The Central American Peace Process, 1983-1991: Sheathing Swords, Building Confidence*. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992.

Fauriol, Georges A., and Eva Loser, eds. *Guatemala's Political Puzzle*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 1988.

Gleijeses, Piero. *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1991.

Gramajo Morales, Hector Alejandro. *De la Guerra.....A La Guerra: La Dificil Transicion Politica en Guatemala*. Guatemala: Fondo de Cultura Editorial, 1995.

Grieb, Kenneth J. "The Guatemalan Military and the Revolution of 1944." *The Americas* No 4 (April 1976).

Huntington, Samuel P. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Atepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Nordlinger, Eric A. *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1997.

Nyrop, Richard F. "Introduction," *Guatemala: A Country Study*. Washington D.C.: American University, Foreign Area Studies, 1983.

Padilla, Luis Alberto. "La Nuevas Relaciones Civico-Militares bajo el Cuadro del Proceso de Paz." *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* Ano 7-Volumen 7-No.14, Julio-Diciembre 1996, Guatemala, C.A.).

WOLA, *Report on Military Intelligence and Human Rights in Guatemala: The Archivo and the Case for Intelligence Reform*, Washington Office of Latin America, Washington, D.C., in April 1995.

Reyes Illescas, Miguel Angel. "Guatemala: Una Negociacion Madura?" Los Complejos Senderos de la Paz: Un analisis comparado de las negociaciones de paz en El Salvador, Guatemala y Mexico. *INCEP, Temas y Documentos de Debate* No. 2/97, Panorama Centroamericano, Guatemala, Junio de 1997.

Schlesinger, Stephen, and Stephen Kinser. *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1982.

Sereseres, Caesar D. *Guatemala Civil-Military Relations and Regional Cooperation: The Interplay of Internal War and Democratization Since 1982.* Edited by. Ricardo Mares. *Civil-Military Relations: Building Democracy and Regional Security.* Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, Forthcoming 1998.

Sereseres, Caesar D. Report on Guatemala: Findings of the Study Group on United States-Guatemalan Relations, in Philip Geyelin, editor, *The Guatemalan Legacy: Radical Challengers and Military Politics.* Number 7, Boulder Colorado: Westview Press with the Foreign Policy Institute, School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University, 1985.

Sereseres, Caesar D. *The Highlands War in Guatemala.* Edited by George Fauriol. *Latin America Insurgencies* The Georgetown University, Center of Strategic and International Studies., 1985.

Sheehan, Michael A. "Comparative Counterinsurgency Strategies: Guatemala and El Salvador." *Conflict* (New York, 9:2, 1989).

Toruno, Monsenor Rodolfo Quezada. "El Proceso Guatemalteco de la Paz: Antecedentes y Perspectivas," La Contruccion de la Paz en Guatemala, *Compendio de Acuerdos de Paz por el Gobierno de Guatemala y la Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca; y de las ponencias presentadas en el Seminario-Taller, realizado en Antigua Guatemala Sacatepequez*, 10 al 12 de octubre de 1996.

Villagran de Leon, Francisco. "Thwarting the Guatemala Coup." *Journal of Democracy* Volume 4, No.4 (1993).

Weaver, Jerry L. "The Political Elite of a Military-Dominated Regime: The Guatemalan Example." *The Journal of Developing Areas* 3 (April 1969).

U.S. Department of State, Guatemala Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 1996.

U. S Department of State Background Notes on Guatemala, March 1997.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

No. Copies

1. Defense Technical Information Center.....2
   8725 John J. Kingman Rd., STE 0944
   Ft. Belvoir, VA 22060-6218

2. Dudley Knox Library.....2
   Naval Postgraduate School
   411 Dyer Rd.
   Monterey, CA 93943-5101

3. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.....1
   Western Hemisphere Branch
   Political-Military Policy and
   Current Plans Division (N523)
   The Pentagon, Room 4E519
   Washington DC 20350

4. Dr. Thomas C. Bruneau, Code NS/BN.....2
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, CA 93943-5100

5. Dr. Scott D. Tollefson, Code NS/TO.....1
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, CA 93943-5100

6. Dr. Caesar D. Sereseres.....1
   2827 Penasco
   San Clemente, CA 92673

7. Rafael A. Berrios..... 1
   Ext. Alhambra A-20
   Ponce, Puerto Rico 00731

8. LTC John Churchill..... 1
   Assistant Defense Attaché
   U.S. Emb-DAO
   Unit 3310-APO AA 34024

9. Maj. Mitch Bohnstedt.....1
14 Shubrick Rd.
Monterey, CA 93940

10. Maj. Stephen Kobrich.....1
United States Military Academy
Department of Foreign Languages
West Point, New York 10997

11. LTC Carlos Betances, U.S. Army Retired.....1
300S. Sykes Creek Pwy Apt 402C
Merritt Island, FL 32957

12. Maj. Jose Cristy USMC.....1
222 Laine St Apt #8
Monterey, CA 93940

13. CPT Carlos G. Berrios.....1
U.S Embassy-Venezuela
Unit 4980-MilGroup
APO AA 34037-0008

14. Prof. Mary P. Callahan.....1
Code NS/CM
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, CA 93943