Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context

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Abstracts

Democratization Through Peace: The Difficult Case of Guatemala
The Guatemalan peace process provides an excellent opportunity to revisit a number of discussions about political democratization and social justice in Latin America. It is the premise of this article that fulfillment of the peace accords, particularly on demilitarization, is the necessary precondition for full development of political democracy in Guatemala. The article first summarizes how, beyond ending the war, the peace process has contributed to Guatemala's democratization, and then analyzes the Guatemalan experience since the early 1980s as a means to address some of the broad theoretical debates.

Demilitarization and Security in El Salvador and Guatemala: Convergences of Success and Crisis
The Salvadoran and Guatemalan cases correspond to a new model of public security that is widely shared across Latin America. The more localized processes of demilitarization in the two countries, moreover, appear to share a similar dynamic. In the midst of real reforms, however, the deterioration of public security as directly experienced by much of the population is cause for worry. An examination of the reforms established in the peace accords leads to an interpretation of these experiences in a comparative regional framework.

Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context
Drawing on theories of regime change, revolution, and democratization, this paper proposes a process theory to account for the 12 major regime transformations that have occurred in Central America since 1970. Political regimes, coherent systems of rule established among a coalition of dominant political actors, change when their prevailing political rules and their ruling coalitions undergo transformation. External forces are important to this process. The focal case is Guatemala and its prospects for democratic consolidation.

Global Forces and Regime Change: Guatemala in the Central American Context

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It took the United States almost two centuries of political evolution, punctuated by three wars, to move out from under Britain's authoritarian rule to constitutional democracy with voting rights for the whole populace. Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, by contrast, have traversed that great distance in just two tumultuous decades, albeit by divergent paths. That these four countries have moved so far toward democracy so rapidly highlights how many times Central America's political regimes have changed over this period.

Just a decade ago, social scientists were struggling to explain why revolutionary insurrections had occurred in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s while two neighboring countries had escaped such violent turmoil (Booth and Walker 1993; Selbin 1993; Wickham-Crowley 1992). Since then, geopolitical change, the efforts and cooperation of Latin American powers, international institutions, Central American governments, and domestic forces have ended the lengthy civil wars in Nicaragua (1990), El Salvador (1992), and Guatemala (1996); Nicaragua's 1990 election terminated the Sandinista revolution. Elections during the 1980s replaced the military regimes of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala with civilian governments. Four of the region's five nations thus underwent dramatic, multiple regime changes from the military authoritarian status quo of the 1970s to formal civilian democracy by the 1990s.

This article attempts to explain the region's far-reaching political transformation and to examine Guatemala's place in it. It sets forth a theory that incorporates and tries to analyze several disparate phenomena: political stability, guerrilla insurgency, military reformism, personalistic authoritarianism, socialist revolution, and civilian-led liberal democracy.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The literature of regime theory defines regimes as coherent systems of rule over mass publics established among a coalition of a nation's dominant political actors. The coherence of the system of rule refers to the existence of a persistent and identifiable set of political rules that govern

access to power and decisionmaking.[1] Regimes are thus distinct from the separate governments or administrations that operate under the same general rules. For instance, Costa Rica has had a single civilian democratic regime since 1949, consisting of a series of constitutionally elected presidential administrations. Guatemala during the 1970s had a military authoritarian regime, subdivided into governments headed by various president-generals.

One regime may be differentiated from another when it changes both the fundamental rules of politics and the make-up of the ruling coalition. The occurrence of both changes constitutes a regime shift. Seven basic regime types encompassed the Central American experience between 1970 and 1998:

- Military authoritarian, dominated by a corporate military establishment in coalition with a narrow range of civilian sectors
- Personalistic military, the only case of which is Nicaragua, dominated by the Somoza family and the military in coalition with the Liberal and Conservative Parties and key financial sectors
- Reformist military, dominated by reform-oriented military elements and intent on a liberalizing or democratizing political transition
- Civilian transitional, with elected civilian rulers backed by a strong military and mainly incorporating center and rightist parties
- Revolutionary; in this case, Nicaragua's Sandinista-led center-left coalition
- Institutionalized revolutionary, the Nicaraguan regime that established an electoral system in 1984 and a new constitution in 1987
- Civilian democratic, with elected civilian constitutional governments, broad coalitions, and political competition open to parties from left to right.[2]

Using these fairly broad categories, table 1 arrays Central America's regimes since 1970. Across these three decades, only Costa Rica remained politically stable; that is, it did not change regimes. Among the other four countries, twelve regime shifts occurred. Nicaragua's 1978–79 insurrection led to a de facto Sandinista government from 1979 through 1984, followed by an institutionalized regime constructed through the 1984 election and a new constitution in 1987. This institutionalization of the revolution permitted citizens to oust the revolutionary government in 1990. The Honduran military regime, anxiously eyeing neighboring El Salvador's and Nicaragua's revolutionary turmoil at the end of the 1970s, moved quickly toward transitional civilian rule. A civilian democratic regime was eventually established around 1996, when reforms of the Honduran armed forces took effect and reduced military power. El Salvador and Guatemala traversed three similar stages after military authoritarian rule: a military-led reformist regime embroiled in civil war

Table 1. Central American Regime Types, 1970–1998

Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua
CD[a]	MA	MA	MA	PM
	RM (1979)[b]	RM (1982)	RM (1980)	RV (1979)
	CT (1984)	CT (1985)	CT (1982)	IR (1984–87)
	CD (1992)	CD (1996)	CD (1996)	CD (1990)

[a]Uninterrupted, 1949–present.
[b]Regime inception date.
Note: CD = civilian democratic, MA = military authoritarian, RM = reformist military, RV = revolutionary, IR = institutionalized revolutionary, CT = civilian transitional, PM = personalistic military.
Source: Booth and Walker 1999.

replaced itself with a transitional civilian regime. The settling of each war eventually ushered in a much more inclusive, formally democratic civilian-led government.

These regime shifts occurred through quite divergent processes and means. Military coups d'état ushered in reformist military episodes in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, while a broad-based mass insurrection initiated the revolutionary regime in Nicaragua. Hoping to manage change and thereby protect their interests, transitional military regimes voluntarily began holding fairer elections that eventually returned civilians to power in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The first Nicaraguan revolutionary government established an election system and new constitutional rules that allowed citizens to vote out the FSLN in 1990. Negotiated settlements of three civil wars admitted previously excluded actors into the political arena.

These multiple and complex regime changes necessitate a broad, inclusive explanation of how most of Central America has moved from authoritarian stasis through geopolitical crisis to emerge hugely transformed and unprecedentedly democratic. Of particular interest is whether the region's revolutionary turmoil and its democratizing steps were distinctive and unrelated processes or similar products of a larger common process; and why the ultimate outcomes have been so similar despite the different regime changes illustrated in table 1.

Central America's small, neighboring nations have marked commonalities of history, global context, and political and economic development. These similarities in themselves suggest that much that affects Central America is likely to be part of larger world dynamics (Chase-Dunn 1989, 1998; Robinson 1996). Just as common forces led to Central America's rebellions, many of the same forces shaped the overall process of regime change and democratic evolution.

A Theory of Regime Change

An explanatory argument integrating Central America's insurrections and democratization may be developed within a framework of regime change theory and may draw on the political science literature on democratization and revolution.

Students of regime change have focused on causes, processes, and outcomes. Moore (1966) explores how the characteristics of several established regimes and the interaction of their various challengers led to the particular characteristics of new regimes. O'Donnell (1973) examines the role of military–middle class coalitions as bureaucratic authoritarianism replaced civilian governments in Argentina and Brazil. The contributors to Linz and Stepan's *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (1978) look at the nature of democratic regimes and the causes and processes of their collapse into authoritarian rule. Some decades later, O'Donnell et al.'s *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986) performs a similar exercise for authoritarian governments of southern Europe and Latin America. Gasiorowski (1995, 1996) employs quantitative analysis to account for factors that contribute to regime change.

This literature tells us that regime coalition members benefit from inclusion in the regime. Whether driven by global or domestic forces, socioeconomic change can generate and mobilize political actors to seek inclusion or reaccommodation in the ruling coalition, and its concomitant benefits. Socioeconomic change can dramatically affect the resources available to the regime. Contented, indifferent, unorganized, or effectively repressed populations do not struggle for inclusion in the regime, nor do they violently rebel. Strong, flexible, resource-rich regimes with satisfied domestic allies rarely collapse or wage war against their populations.

In a classic formulation, Anderson (1967, 1992) argues that Latin American regimes have corporatist tendencies, one implication of which is that new actors are admitted to the regime coalition only when they prove themselves capable of destabilizing it. Regime transformations in the region are therefore often highly conflictive because excluded forces have to fight for inclusion.[3] This accounts for the well-documented case of Costa Rica's last regime shift. The narrowly based, coffee grower–dominated quasi-democracy of the 1930s was disrupted by emergent working- and middle-class actors. Middle-class forces took the lead in forging a new regime after winning a brief but violent civil war in 1948 (see, for instance, Peeler 1985, 1998, 50–53; Yashar 1997; Booth 1998; Wilson 1998, 28–36).

The literature on political violence and revolution perforce also examines regime change. For a rebellion or "national revolt" (Walton 1984, 13) to occur, there must be a fundamental basis of conflict, defin-

ing groups or categories of affected persons that provide "recruiting grounds for organizations" (Kriesberg 1982).[4] Many scholars concur that rapid economic change and evolving class relations typically drive the mobilization required for a violent challenge to a regime (see Olson 1963; Paige 1975; Skocpol 1979; Walton 1984; Foran 1997a. As applied to Central America, see Brockett 1988; Wickham-Crowley 1992; Williams 1986; Booth 1991; Torres Rivas 1981). The inclusion of agrarian societies in the world capitalist economy through heavy reliance on export agriculture may harm large segments of the peasantry, the urban poor, and the middle sectors—creating large numbers of aggrieved citizens.

Once motivated, groups must organize and focus their struggle for change on some target, most likely the state or the regime. Aya (1979) and Tilly (1978) emphasize that the state plays a key role in shaping rebellion. The state or the ruling coalition is typically the target; but in reciprocal fashion, the state both represses rebels and promotes change (Kriesberg 1982, 66–106; Tilly 1978; Aya 1979; Foran 1997a). Once a contest over sovereignty begins, political factors such as organization and resource mobilization by both sides eventually determine the outcome (Walton 1984; Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991; Gurr 1970). Goldstone (1991) and DeFronzo (1991, 7–25) emphasize factors that may weaken the state's capacity to act, such as the contribution of foreign actors and domestic interelite competition and alienation.

The third relevant literature is the rapidly growing body of scholarship on democratization. Here a minimal procedural definition of democracy—Robinson's "polyarchy" (1996)—can serve as the criterion for a democratic regime.[5] The literature offers four main explanations for democratization (the process of moving from an authoritarian to a democratic regime): political culture, political processes, social structures and forces (both domestic and external), and leaders and elites. The cultural approach argues that the ideal of political democracy may evolve within a society or spread among nations by cultural diffusion among elite and mass political actors (see Inglehart 1988; Seligson and Booth 1993; Muller and Seligson 1994; Diamond 1994a, b). Elite and mass preference for democracy promote its adoption and help sustain a democratic regime. In contrast, process approaches examine the mechanics of and paths toward democratic transition (for instance, Rustow 1970; Przeworski 1986; Huntington 1993; Seligson and Booth 1995; Casper and Taylor 1996). In these emphases, process theories resemble and somewhat overlap the regime change literature.

One set of structural theories emphasizes how shifts in the distribution of critical material and organizational resources among political actors lead to democracy (for example, Lipset 1959; Vanhanen 1992; Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Putnam 1993, 1995). Structural approaches contend that democratic regimes emerge when the distribution of polit-

ical and economic resources and the mobilization of actors permit for-
merly excluded actors to disrupt the extant authoritarian coalition.
Another type of structural approach involves the imposition of democ-
racy by external actors (see Whitehead 1991). A fourth type examines
the roles of leaders (Peeler 1985; Diamond 1989; Higley and Gunther
1992; Huntington 1993). Key societal elites must engineer specific dem-
ocratic arrangements (elite settlements) and agree to operate by them.
The broader the coalition of elite-led political forces involved, the more
stable and consolidated a democratic regime will be.

Each of these fields, plus a substantial literature on foreign policy,
recognizes that international constraints affect regime change (see
Lowenthal 1991; Carothers 1991; Huntington 1993, 85–106; Moreno
1995; Walker 1997; Robinson 1996; Prevost and Vanden 1997). Foreign
governments or intergovernmental organizations may act as players in
domestic politics, supporting or weakening a prevailing regime through
opposition or withheld support. External actors, furthermore, may
supply resources to domestic actors; they may pressure domestic actors
to adopt certain policies or regime types, employing as inducements
such vital resources as money, trade, business opportunities, arms, and
political cooperation. The international context may also constrain a
nation's regime type by demonstration or contagion effects. For exam-
ple, having mostly democratic neighbors makes it easier to adopt or
retain a democratic regime.

Political regimes persist because of at least two factors. They must
constantly satisfy an endogenous objective of managing the state and
economy so as to benefit coalition members enough to retain their loy-
alty. They must also continuously satisfy the exogenous objective of
keeping actual and potential outside actors (both domestic and exter-
nal) content, indifferent, or, if neither of those, disorganized, unmobi-
lized, or otherwise effectively managed or repressed.

A regime experiences a crisis or "critical juncture" (Casper and
Taylor 1996, 23–24) when such forces undermine the loyalty and coop-
eration of coalition members, undermine the regime's resource base and
capacity to respond to challenges, or mobilize enough outside actors in
opposition. Regime crises may take various forms. Coalition members
may renegotiate the regime's political rules and benefits and deny sig-
nificant adjustments to outside actors. They may change policies to mol-
lify aggrieved outside actors; or they may initiate co-optative incorpora-
tion of new coalition members to quell a disruptive challenge. This
typically involves some reform of existing political rules and payoffs.
This last combination of alterations—changing the coalition member-
ship plus adjusting the political rules—constitutes the minimum neces-
sary to be classified as a regime change.

The stronger both the regime and its challengers and the more

equal their respective material, political, and human resources, the longer and more violently they will struggle for power. The dominant actor (such as the military) in a weak to moderately strong regime confronted with a weak but potentially growing opposition might initiate a regime change (co-optative reform and inclusion of new actors) to minimize expected damage to its interests. Other factors being equal, a strong, flexible, resource-rich regime will be most likely to reform, successfully repress, or continue to exclude its opponents and survive. A weak regime confronting a strong opposition coalition may be overthrown and replaced by a radically different, revolutionary regime that will subsequently exclude some or all of the old regime's coalition. A protracted regime crisis, especially a lengthy civil war, eventually increases the likelihood of a negotiated settlement and major regime transformation with new political rules, redistributed benefits, and the inclusion of both the challengers and key old-regime actors.

The consolidation of any new regime will derive from the eventual "resolution of forces" among the old guard and the challengers, which may in turn depend heavily on the role of foreign actors. A single regime shift may not bring enough change to permit political stability. Military reformism, for instance, though intended to pacify a polity by including certain new actors and policy reforms, nevertheless may fail to satisfy opponents with antagonistic ideologies. Despite establishing a new coalition, new rules, and new policies, a revolutionary regime may quickly attract direct or indirect opposition. To the extent that important actors, domestic or foreign, remain unsatisfied or unsuccessfully repressed, a new regime will probably fail to consolidate. For a newly constituted regime, moreover, protracted instability increases the likelihood of failure and further regime shifts.

The importance of global forces to regime change should by now be clear. Although regime change is a domestic political event in a nation-state, external forces shape regimes in myriad ways. Analysis of regime change, therefore, must attend to global as well as domestic factors. Drawing on the common elements of all these theories, the following propositions attempt to interpret regime change in Central America since the 1970s.

EXTERNAL ACTORS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The geopolitical and ideological contexts in which Central America's regimes and actors operated evolved substantially from the early 1970s through the mid-1990s. The geopolitics of the Cold War predominated on the world scene in the 1970s and set the context for geopolitics in Central America. U.S. policy was preoccupied with the Soviet Union and its perceived threat to expand its influence in the Western Hemisphere. The United States therefore tended to regard the region's political and eco-

nomic reformists and the opponents of Central America's friendly, anti-communist, authoritarian regimes as unacceptable potential allies of pro-Soviet and pro-Cuban communism. Those regimes themselves usually enjoyed U.S. political, military, and economic support; civilian democracy, although an ideological preference of the United States, remained secondary to security concerns in this tense world environment.

U.S. policy thus weakened and marginalized Central America's outside-the-regime moderates and ultimately encouraged many of them to ally themselves with the radical left, which viewed civilian democracy and elections as tools by which an unjust capitalist political-economic system manipulated the lower classes of dependent nations.

In the late 1970s, however, U.S. thinking on Central America began to change. Congress and the Carter administration came to view as unacceptable the inhumane anticommunist authoritarianism of Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. This policy shift briefly created a permissive international environment for regime change, which marginally weakened internal authoritarian coalitions, encouraged Central America's reformists and revolutionaries, and sparked an upsurge in opposition mobilization.

After the Sandinista victory in 1979, the United States reverted to its previous Cold War hard line; but during the Reagan and Bush administrations, Washington gradually moved toward accepting electoral democracy. In the mid-1980s, the United States encouraged elections per se to promote limited reform that might strengthen the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala against their revolutionary challengers. Subsequently, the end of the Cold War reduced the perceived geopolitical threat of communism in general and, therefore, the perceived danger of the Central American left. This permitted the longstanding U.S. second-order preference for civilian democracy to surface and become a vehicle for the promotion of peace settlements acceptable to U.S. policymakers.

In Central America, many leftists had long regarded electoral democracy as a tool of capitalist domination, but the ideological contradiction between models of electoral democracy and revolutionary socialism began to diminish when Nicaragua's Sandinistas came to power. Once in government, the FSLN began to view electoral democracy both as a form compatible with the economic and participatory democracy it preferred and as a political framework that would enhance the revolution's acceptability to the hostile United States and Nicaragua's own Central American neighbors. For these reasons, in 1984, the Sandinistas began to institutionalize the revolution by altering the political rules to include elections and by writing a new constitution.

The ideological politics of democratization evolved further in El Salvador and Guatemala during the 1980s. The FMLN and URNG also

began to express the view that electoral democracy would be acceptable if they were allowed to participate freely and compete fairly for office. Increasingly taxed by the long civil wars and seeing no prospect of outright victory, the two insurgent groups embraced electoral democracy as a key goal for peace negotiations. The armed forces of each nation, also exhausted, decided by the early 1990s that they, too, could accept including the leftists in exchange for peace and their own institutional survival.

European nations, other Latin American nations, and such international organizations as the United Nations and the Organization of American States, which once had largely deferred to U.S. influence in the region, during the 1980s feared that the isthmian civil wars and U.S. intervention could escalate further. These external actors therefore embraced and promoted electoral democracy as a mechanism for pacifying Central America.

The Catholic Church in the Isthmus was influenced by the liberation theology of the 1960s and 1970s, which encouraged social mobilization and even some Catholic participation in insurgency. By the 1980s, however, the institutional church had disavowed liberation theology but endorsed democratization and improved human rights as means toward achieving social justice.

EVOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIMES

In the early 1970s, only Costa Rica among the region's nations had a broadly inclusive, constitutional, civilian-led democratic regime. The other four nations had military-dominated authoritarian governments. Nicaragua's personalistic military regime was dominated by the Somoza clan and a narrow coalition composed of key business interests and parts of the two major parties. Guatemala and El Salvador had military authoritarian regimes, allied with some business and large-scale agricultural interests, which enjoyed the collaboration of weak political parties. Honduras had a military authoritarian regime linked to one of the two strong traditional political parties, yet it tolerated a strong but anticommunist labor sector.

A wave of globally driven economic problems afflicted all five Central American countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rapidly escalating world oil prices and resultant domestic inflation, the deterioration of the Central American Common Market in the mid- and late 1970s, and natural or economic catastrophes, including the 1972 Managua earthquake, the 1978–79 Common Market trade disruptions, and the Latin American recession of the 1980s, greatly reduced real income and employment among working-class and some white-collar sectors.

The grievances caused by these events and the political dissatisfactions of would-be competing elites led, in the mid- and late 1970s, to bur-

geoning agrarian, labor, neighborhood, and community self-help, oppo-
sition party mobilization, reformist demands on the state, and protests
over public policy. Regime coalitions experienced some defections, and
the economic resources of all five regimes eroded (Booth 1991).

The regimes responded quite differently to these developments.
The divergences were most striking in the short run. When regimes
responded to reform demands with policies to ease poverty and permit
the recovery of real wages, with political reform, and with low or
modest levels of force or repression, protests failed to escalate or sub-
sided (Booth 1991). Costa Rica's broadly based, capable, and flexible
regime managed its challenges and survived intact. Honduras's military
authoritarian regime voluntarily enacted ameliorative economic policies
and gradually returned power to civilians. In contrast, the regimes of
Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, which responded in the short
run by rejecting ameliorative policies and intensifying repression, saw
opposition protests, organization, and resource mobilization increase,
national revolts occur, and regime crises ensue.

In Nicaragua, the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle lost U.S. and
regional support and vital economic resources, permitting the Sandin-
istas to oust him and establish the revolutionary regime with a center-
left coalition and revolutionary rules. Soon, however, the excluded
Somocista Liberals, ex–national guard elements, and an increasing
number of other disaffected economic and political groups formed var-
ious outside-the-regime forces, including the U.S.-backed Contra rebels.
The Sandinistas' response to their own regime crisis and the counter-
revolutionary war featured nearly continuous economic and political
improvisation, including the electoral and constitutional reforms of
1984–87. Soviet economic and political support waned thereafter, how-
ever, as did U.S. support for the Contras; the 1987 Central American
(Esquipulas) Peace Accord facilitated a cease-fire and eventually a nego-
tiated end to the war. Nicaraguan voters replaced the FSLN government
in the 1990 election, ending the revolution. This ushered in a new, non-
revolutionary civilian regime, with both the left and elements of the
right participating. In the 1996 election, Liberals returned to the arena
(many from exile) and the Liberal Alliance won, consolidating a postrev-
olutionary regime.

Facing domestic turmoil and the Nicaraguan revolution next door,
the Honduran military regime made a quick, preemptive change to tran-
sitional civilian rule. The traditional Liberal and National Parties domi-
nated the fairly inclusive regime. The armed forces, flush with massive
political, economic, and military resources earned by cooperating with
U.S. efforts to defeat the revolutionary left in Nicaragua and El Salvador,
loomed large in the regime until the mid-1990s. In 1996 the government
of Carlos Roberto Reina restructured and demilitarized the police, cut

military spending, and implemented other key military reforms (Ruhl 1998, 17–20), ushering in civilian democratic rule.

In El Salvador and Guatemala, coups instituted reformist military regimes that repressed outside-the-regime centrists but failed to defeat leftist rebel coalitions (Montgomery 1995; Baloyra-Herp 1995; Jonas 1991, 1995). The failure of this strategy, plus pressure from the United States (a major resource supplier to the Salvadoran regime), led both nations to institute civilian transitional governments with broader coalitions and liberalized rules. This strategy won over some of the political center in each country, depriving the rebel coalitions of important allies and resources and helping to bring the civil wars to a stalemate. The 1987 regional peace accord fostered eventual negotiations in those conflicts.

New elite economic groups linked to transnational capital emerged as powerful contenders for influence, rising to dominate such key political parties as El Salvador's Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and Guatemala's new National Advancement Party (PAN). Assisted by international economic reformers, these elites sought to negotiate an end to the economically debilitating civil wars and to promote formally democratic regimes that would facilitate their access to the international marketplace (Robinson 1998).

GUATEMALA'S DEMOCRATIC PROSPECTS

Our broad theory about Central American regime change suggests many possible views of the prospects for Guatemala's new civilian democratic regime. To a great extent, Guatemala's regime crises and shifts have been shaped by global political and economic forces, and such forces seem likely to continue significantly to shape Guatemala's chances for democratic consolidation. Recent data on the nation's political economy, Guatemalans' attitudes and behaviors, and the geopolitical context provide a means to examine this thesis.

Table 2 compares Guatemala's overall recent economic performance to that of the other Central American nations. The fundamental and obvious lesson in the data is that Guatemala is a poor nation, with 1998 GDP per capita of only $949 (in constant 1990 dollars); it made only modest progress in earnings per head over the previous decade. From 1987 through 1998, Guatemala's relative economic performance remained stable compared to the trends of Latin America overall and to its neighbors. Guatemala's GDP per capita was roughly 32 percent of Latin America as a whole in both 1987 and 1998. Similarly, Guatemalan GDP per capita was roughly 45 percent of Costa Rica's in both 1987 and 1998.

Guatemala's mean growth rate of GDP per capita from 1990 to 1996 was 1.1 percent per annum, second-best in the region behind El Salvador's average of 2.6 percent. El Salvador's growth rate, which accelerated notably after 1992, when that country's civil war ended, was fueled

Table 2. Gross Domestic Product per Capita (in 1990 US$), Central America, Selected Years 1987–1998

	1987	1989	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Mean annual growth 1990–98 (%)
Costa Rica	1,860	1,909	1,915	2,074	2,114	2,113	2,050	2,062	2,145	0.8
El Salvador	1,015	1,006	1,049	1,089	1,202	1,249	1,248	1,270	1,286	2.6
Guatemala	839	856	863	887	897	915	916	929	949	1.1
Honduras	638	654	632	674	644	648	654	658	659	0.6
Nicaragua	599	495	464	456	460	468	474	486	494	0.8
Latin America	2,706	2,620	2,607	2,679	2,781	2,755	2,807	2,906	2,932	1.7

Sources: IADB 1997, 221; 1998, 1999.

partly by a "peace dividend" of new investment and partly by large quantities of international aid. Guatemala apparently began to experience its own peace dividend after the war's end in 1996: its 1997 and 1998 per capita GDP growth rates of 1.4 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively, were each above the country's mean for 1990–96. Guatemala's peace dividend, however, appears likely to remain smaller than El Salvador's because of relatively smaller inflows of foreign assistance.

Table 3 provides data on recent Guatemalan economic trends. GDP growth remained relatively healthy throughout the period, averaging over 4 percent, but was attenuated by a population growth rate that lowered the mean GDP per capita increase to only 1.1 percent (table 2). The government ran modest deficits during most of this period, but the 1998 fiscal deficit jumped to 2.1 percent. The government steadily reduced the burden of its external interest payments, so that projected 1998 foreign interest payments were only one-fifth as great as in 1988 (table 3). Guatemala's terms of trade generally improved from 1987 through 1998, contributing to a relatively positive economic performance for a nation plagued by so much political turmoil. Guatemala's worst economic performance was price inflation. Driven by a sharp drop in the value of the quetzal in 1990–91, consumer prices increased 41.2 and 33.2 percent in those years. From 1992 on, however, inflation was contained to between 7.0 and 11.9 percent. The consumer price jump of 1990 and 1991 caused a sharp drop in real wages, but subsequent real wage increases in most years from 1992 through 1998 more than made up the lost ground.

High levels of prosperity and economic growth are not prerequisites for successful democratization or democratic survival, but each can facilitate democratic consolidation (Diamond and Linz 1989, 42–47). The more resources a state can deploy in the public policy arena, which is to some extent a function of general national economic health, the better the chances for democracy's successful founding and survival. Given these conditions, the data in tables 2 and 3 suggest that Guatemala in the late 1990s had reasonable prospects for democratic survival and consolidation. The economy was relatively poor, but considerably stronger than those of two other newly democratic regimes in the area, Honduras and Nicaragua. Recent economic trends (real wages, terms of trade, GDP and GDP per capita, foreign debt burden, and deficits) suggested a reasonably favorable economic trajectory for democratic politics.

Another question about Guatemala's democratic prospects is the nature of its accumulated social capital, particularly whether the attitudes and behaviors of its citizens may support the civilian democratic regime. Mass culture cannot assure democracy; but to the extent that a nation's citizens embrace democratic norms, eschew authoritarian

Table 3. Selected Economic Data on Guatemala, 1987–1998 (percentages)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Change in GDP	3.5	3.9	3.9	3.1	3.7	4.8	3.9	4.0	4.9	3.0	4.3	4.9
Central government deficit (-) or surplus	-1.3	-1.7	-2.9	-1.8	0.0	0.5	-1.3	-1.4	-0.6	-0.0	-0.8	-2.1
Change in consumer prices	12.3	10.8	11.4	41.2	33.2	10.0	11.9	10.9	8.4	11.1	9.2	7.0
Change in real wages	6.7	5.2	6.5	-14.8	-6.3	16.3	10.8	7.2	12.0	-0.9	1.0	2.0[a]
Terms of trade (1990 = 100)	99.7	98.8	97.6	100.0	104.3	103.8	97.7	106.7	115.5	105.7	110.4	109.3
Interest payments as percent of goods/ nonfactor services	13.6	13.9	11.3	11.2	7.1	8.8	6.2	5.9	3.9	5.0	4.2	2.7[a]

[a]Projected 1998.

Sources: IADB 1997, 280; 1998, 1999.

values, and participate peaceably in politics, the prospects for demo-
cratic consolidation are enhanced (Diamond and Linz 1989, 42–47; Dia-
mond 1993, 7–15). Data from two major surveys provide some insight
into Guatemala's situation.

Table 4 compares Guatemalan social capital to that in four other
Central American nations based on public opinion surveys conducted in
the early 1990s.[6] Nearly identical questions on numerous attitudinal and
participation items were asked of the urban residents of each nation.[7]
The Guatemalan portion of this survey was conducted in 1992, during
the second period of the transitional civilian regime that had begun in
1985, but four years before the negotiated settlement of the civil conflict
that had afflicted the country since the 1960s. The survey thus provides
a benchmark assessment of urban Guatemalans partway through the
series of regime changes that led to civilian democracy in 1996.

The table presents data on Guatemalans' and other Central Amer-
icans' responses to questions on five indexes, the first of which asks
their level of commitment to democratic norms. Each of the four dem-
ocratic norms is a ten-point scale ranging from very low commitment
(1.0) to very high commitment (10.0); a score above 5.0 represents a
prodemocratic response. The data reveal that each country's urban citi-
zens averaged in the prodemocracy end of the scale on all but one of
the measures. Yet Guatemalans had the lowest overall support for
democracy (virtually tied with El Salvador) in the region. Guatemalans
also had the region's lowest levels of support for general participation
rights (that is, participating in an association, legal demonstration, or
political party) and for political rights for regime critics (meaning critics'
right to vote, protest, run for office, and broadcast their views on radio
and television). Indeed, on the latter index, Guatemalans scored slightly
in the antidemocratic end of the scale.

Well before Guatemala had completed its transition to civilian
democracy, therefore, its urban citizens demonstrated what might be
described as cautious support for democratic norms. They did so
despite the high levels of political repression the country had experi-
enced, repression still extant in Guatemala when the survey was con-
ducted. Regime repression in Central America has been shown power-
fully to depress support for democratic norms (Booth and Richard
1996). What should be emphasized, therefore, is not Guatemalans'
lower democracy norm scores in the region but their remarkably high
prodemocracy sentiments in 1992, despite their hostile environment.

Table 4 also reveals urban Guatemalans' opinions on indexes that
may be labeled authoritarian or antidemocratic norms. Anticommunism
has been encouraged by Guatemalan regimes and has served as a pow-
erful justification for those regimes' political repression of opponents.
Despite this, urban Guatemalans' anticommunist opinions were only

Table 4. Attitudes, Values, and Political Participation of Urban Central Americans, Early 1990s (by survey year)

	Guatemala (1992)	Costa Rica (1995)	El Salvador (1991)	Honduras (1991)	Nicaragua (1991)	Region[a]
Democratic norms						
Support for general participation rights (1 = low, 10 = high)	7.06	8.22	7.47	8.07	8.32	7.83
Support for regime critics' rights (1–10)	4.80	6.12	5.21	6.99	5.69	5.75
Opposition to government suppression of civil liberties (1–10)	6.25	7.04	5.25	5.82	6.45	6.16
Overall support for democratic liberties (mean of above 3) (1–10)	5.97	7.13	5.98	6.96	6.82	6.58
Authoritarian norms						
Anticommunist opinions (3 items) (1 = weak, 6 = strong)	3.78	4.31	3.59	4.23	2.91	3.78
Promilitary attitudes (12 items) (1 = disagree, 2 = agree)	1.27	—	1.34	1.27	1.23	1.28
Justification of military coup (10 items) (1 = disagree, 2 = agree)	1.20	—	1.26	1.09	1.11	1.16
Support civil disobedience (1 = low, 10 = high)	2.01	1.93	2.12	3.41	2.42	2.38
Attitudes toward government						
Diffuse support for the system (1 = low, 7 = high)	4.14	5.06	3.97	3.53	4.51	4.24
Evaluation of treatment by government offices (1 = poor, 8 = good)	3.53	3.89	4.49	3.83	5.47	4.24
Political participation						
Voting (range 0–2)	1.51	1.91	1.39	1.86	1.62	1.66
Campaigning (0–2)	0.25	0.87	0.18	1.08	0.47	0.57
Contacting public officials (0–3)	0.41	0.56	0.32	0.77	0.17	0.45
Membership in formal groups (0–4)	0.66	0.47	0.33	1.05	0.46	0.59
Activity in community groups (0–3)	2.10	2.57	2.04	1.68	2.52	2.18
Overall political participation (all previous items) (1–4)	5.02	6.40	4.33	6.44	5.28	5.50

Notes: Values are country means on each index. National sample N's vary between 500 and 900, but all national samples are artificially weighted at 700 respondents to avoid distortions due to population size of country or particular sample.
[a]Regional mean is the unweighted country average (mean of previous column entries).
Source: Surveys conducted by John A. Booth, Mitchell A. Seligson, et al. (for details see Booth and Richard 1996).

average in the regional context. On an index composed of items tapping support of the armed forces, Guatemalans also scored in the middle of the Central American distribution (1.27 on a scale of 1.0 to 2.0), well below the midpoint of the index. When asked whether certain circumstances (such as economic hardship, student unrest) would justify a military coup, Guatemalans also averaged only 1.20 (index range 1.0–2.0), well toward the disapproving end of the scale. A strong majority of Guatemalans, like other Central Americans in the early 1990s, thus manifested a healthy skepticism toward the armed forces as a political actor.

The final indicator in this group is an index measuring respondents' tolerance of political participation tactics, including protest, confrontation, and even violence. Most Central Americans disapproved of such tactics, with Guatemalans manifesting the second-highest disapproval rate.

These results suggest that urban Guatemalans generally disapproved of these authoritarian, militaristic, or confrontational political norms in the early 1990s. These comparatively low levels of authoritarianism and militarism among urban Guatemalans and their democratic norms augur positively for Guatemala's democratic prospects.

Table 4 also reports on two other political attitudes, each an orientation toward government. It may be argued that positive orientations toward the state constitute a resource for government. Diffuse support for the political system, a sense of pride in various national political institutions, may be interpreted as a measure of regime legitimacy or patriotism. Among Central Americans, Guatemalans fell in the midrange of diffuse support; but on an index measuring how well they believed they had been treated by various government agencies, Guatemalans had the lowest scores in the region. Taken together, these measures suggest that although Guatemalans may have felt some pride in their country and its political system, overcoming the legacy of negative feelings about government treatment may constitute a significant problem for the civilian democratic regime. These data suggest that in 1992 Guatemala's civilian transitional government had only a small reservoir of goodwill from its citizens. Future democratic governments clearly will need to increase popular goodwill to build the legitimacy of the civilian democratic system.

Finally, political participation constitutes a key element of democracy. Democracy in its essence consists of citizen participation in rule, so that a country's democratic prospects are to some extent a function of its levels of popular political activity. Repression may sharply curtail participation (Booth and Richard 1996). Guatemala has had an abysmal human rights record for several decades and has been widely regarded as one of the hemisphere's most repressive regimes before the 1996 peace accord.

Given the importance of participation, the last group of variables
in table 4 measures it, in terms of voting (having voted and being reg-
istered to vote), campaigning and electioneering, contacting public offi-
cials (mayor, legislative deputy), joining formal organizations (union,
cooperative, civic, professional, and service associations), and commu-
nal activism (community betterment and self-help projects, school
PTAs). Urban Guatemalans reported the second-lowest levels of voting
and campaigning in the region in the early 1990s, a finding that squares
with the low levels of voter turnout observed there. Guatemalans were
close to the regional mean on the three other types of participation.
Overall, however, Guatemalans ranked second-lowest in the region in
political participation, a finding consistent with the high levels of repres-
sion before and at the time of the survey. For citizen participation to
flourish in Guatemala, as for democratic norms, political repression will
have to diminish.

A closer look at social capital on the eve of the 1996 peace accord
can be made through public opinion survey data from a stratified
national sample of 1,200 Guatemalans conducted in 1995 (ASIES 1995).
Prepared for the U.S. Agency for International Development by the Aso-
ciación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES) in Guatemala City,
the survey was conducted in Spanish and five indigenous languages,
covering both urban and rural areas and both indigenous and ladino
(mestizo or culturally hispanic) citizens.[8] The inclusion of indigenous
and rural citizens in proportion to their share of the national population
provides important insight into the impact of key social cleavages.

Table 5 breaks down various social capital indexes and other items
by ethnicity. As expected, the demographic data reveal sharp differences
between self-identified indigenous respondents and ladinos. The Indians'
living standards (based on the type and number of several household util-
ities, such as appliances and motor vehicles) were lower, and their mean
years of education were well below the ladino average. Given such sharp
interethnic contrast in key socioeconomic conditions, one might reason-
ably expect striking distinctions in various aspects of social capital. Table
5, however, reveals much the opposite: of the 19 social capital variables,
only two reveal a statistically significant difference between indigenous
and ladinos. Democratic norms, two of three authoritarian norms, and
political participation levels were statistically the same for both groups, as
were levels of confidence in government, national pride, perceived polit-
ical violence, and experience of political violence.

How do ladinos and Indians differ? First, the indigenous register a
significantly higher level of support for civil disobedience and confronta-
tional political means (although both groups remained well within the
disapproving range of the index). This finding squares with others from
the region that members of Central America's disadvantaged communities

(the poor, union members, community group members) manifest greater support than more advantaged citizens for certain confrontational political means. Multiple regression analysis of these data (completed by the author but not shown here) reveal that it was not Guatemalans' ethnicity or education levels, but low living standards that correlated with higher support for the confrontational political methods. Political confrontation and protest constitute key political tactics of the poor.

The indigenous also reported sharply higher levels of fear of participating in politics. Again, however, when controls for living standard and educational attainment were employed in regression analysis, these ethnicity differences vanished. Thus the two social capital differences detected between Indians and ladinos in 1995 appear to arise not from ethnicity but from different educational and economic status.

Other social capital findings for the 1995 national sample are largely consistent with the comparative 1992 Central American scores for urban Guatemalans. Guatemalans scored in the positive range of all three democratic norms indexes. While about 54 percent of the combined sample (indigenous and ladinos) agreed that "there needs to be a government with a strong hand," 46 percent of all Guatemalans believed that "problems can be solved with the participation of all." Nearly two-thirds of the 1995 national sample respondents (indigeous and ladinos combined) disagreed that "the only way to end political violence is for the authorities to use violence." Support for civil disobedience and confrontational political tactics were on the low end of the scale. Guatemalans averaged below the scales' midpoint on diffuse support and confidence in governmental institutions, and well below the midpoint on the perception that human rights are well protected. Fear of taking part in politics, surprisingly, was in the low to middle range of the index, with Indians reporting more fear (3.49 out of a possible score of 8.0) than ladinos (2.96). Once again, multiple regression analysis revealed that education levels rather than ethnicity accounted for the difference.

Reasons for fearing to participate may be seen in three findings; indigenous and ladino Guatemalans had no significant differences on three measures of the effect of violence. Pooling the ethnic groups, an average of 81.5 percent perceived high levels of political violence; nearly 10 percent reported that they or a family member had suffered some form of political violence; and about 7 percent reported a family member disappearing or fleeing such violence.[9] Somewhat surprisingly, these perceptions and experiences of political violence had little effect on Guatemalans' political participation and democratic norms. Regression analysis (the calculations are not shown here) revealed that more education contributed significantly to higher levels of political participation, but that perceived or experienced violence made no difference in most activities. One exception: activity in formal groups was higher

Table 5. Attitudes, Values, and Political Participation of Guatemalans
by Ethnicity, 1995

	Indigenous (N = 461)	Ladino (N = 617)	Significance
Demographics			
Standard of living index (ranges 0–14)	2.26	3.17	****
Mean years of education completed	3.29	5.60	****
Democratic norms			
Support for general participation rights (0 = low, 3 = high)	2.46	2.40	n.s.
Support for regime critics' rights index (0 = low, 4 = high)	1.95	2.02	n.s.
Overall support for democratic liberties (mean of above 2) (0 = low, 7 = high)	4.39	4.43	n.s.
Political participation			
Voting (range 0–2)	1.68	1.69	n.s.
Campaigning (0–3)	0.38	0.39	n.s.
Contacting public officials (0–3)	0.70	0.62	n.s.
Membership in formal groups (range 0–4)	0.42	0.46	n.s.
Activity in community groups (range 0–2)	0.67	0.66	n.s.
Overall political participation (mean of 5 above) (range 0–14)	3.83	3.79	n.s.
Authoritarian, confrontational norms			
Support for civil disobedience and con- frontational political means (range 0–4)	1.49	1.17	*
Strength of government[a]			
Strong hand	52.7%	54.9%	n.s.
Participation of all	47.3%	45.1%	n.s.
(N)	393	568	
Government use of violence[b]			
Agree	16.1%	15.4%	n.s.
Somewhat	21.4%	18.6%	
Disagree	62.5%	66.1%	
(N)	397	566	
Attitudes related to government and political violence			
Pride in being a Guatemalan (1 = low, 3 = high)	1.88	1.92	n.s.
Perception that human rights are well protected in Guatemala (well protected = 100, not well protected = 0)	37.35	33.09	n.s.
Fear of participating in politics[c] (low fear = 0, high fear = 8)	3.49	2.96	***
Confidence in governmental institutions (low = 0, high = 8)	3.55	3.57	n.s.
Experience of political violence[d]			
Yes	8.9%	11.0%	n.s.
No	91.1%	89.0%	
(N)	459	618	

Table 5. (continued)

	Indigenous (N = 461)	Ladino (N = 617)	Significance
Disappeared or refugee[e]			
Yes	7.4%	6.3%	n.s.
No	92.6%	93.7%	
(N)	461	617	
Amount of political violence[f]			
Much	81.4%	81.6%	n.s.
Some	15.5%	15.9%	
None	3.1%	2.5%	
(N)	446	602	

Significance levels (differences of means or Chi-square): **** ≤ .0001, *** ≤ .001, ** ≤ .01, * ≤ .05, n.s. = not significant.

Note: Values are mean of responses or percent of respondents. Respondents were self-identified indigenous (N = 461) and ladinos (N = 617); 132 respondents would not or could not self-identify by ethnicity and are excluded from the analysis.

[a]"Do you believe that in this country there needs to be a government with a strong hand, or that problems can be solved with the participation of all?"

[b]"Some say that the only way to end political violence is for the authorities also to use violence. Do you agree, somewhat agree, or disagree?"

[c]Index combining responses to 4 items: "If you decided to participate in some of the activities (community problem solving, voting, peaceful demonstration, running for office) would you do it with full freedom, some fear, or much fear?"

[d]"Have you or some member of your family suffered some type of political violence, such as kidnapping, murder, bombing, or threats?"

[e]"Has some member of your family disappeared or had to take refuge or leave the country because of political violence?"

[f]"Do you believe that in our country there is much, a little, or no political violence?"

Data source: ASIES 1995.

among those who perceived more political violence. A lower standard of living predicted greater support for democratic norms and for civil disobedience and confrontation, while education had no effect on either. As one would expect, those perceiving less political violence and reporting no personal or family experience of violence reported more support for the risky activities of civil disobedience and confrontational tactics (blocking streets, invading property, occupying a factory or government building, or violently overthrowing a government).

The urban-rural differences encompassed in the 1995 survey constitute another possibly meaningful social cleavage in Guatemala. Extensive comparisons of the urban and rural populations according to the variables in table 5 detected only a few statistically significant differences in means. Rural Guatemalans (43.3 percent of the survey respon-

dents) showed a mean of 2.06 out of 14.0 on the standard of living scale, compared to 3.37 for urban dwellers. Rural residents averaged only 3.11 years of education, compared to their urban counterparts' 6.00 years. Although no significant difference showed up in political violence victimization levels, rural residents reported perceiving significantly higher levels of political violence but nevertheless had significantly higher confidence in national institutions than did urbanites.[10] Finally (and logically), rural residents engaged in more communal activism than urban dwellers. In other political attitudes and participation categories, no significant urban-rural differences appeared.

The most striking finding from the 1995 national sample data is that the indigenous-ladino social cleavage does not demarcate the expected critical differences in social capital among Guatemalans. Indians are poorer and less educated, to be sure, but they are strikingly similar to ladinos in the attitudes, values, and participation levels measured here. This suggests that Guatemala, despite several decades of civil war, social turmoil, and its striking ethnic diversity, was, in 1995, much more integrated in its political culture than many observers would have anticipated.

On its face, this finding seems counterintuitive, so further research on the question is needed. Indeed, survey research may not be the best way to detect key social capital differences across ethnic lines. Nevertheless, the evidence in hand indicates that on the eve of its transition to formal democracy, Guatemalans—indigenous and ladino, urban and rural, victims of violence and those who escaped it—shared support for democracy, moderate levels of political activism and fear of political participation, and skepticism about government performance.

Scholars have argued that the international context may constrain democratization and democratic consolidation in a particular country (Diamond and Linz 1989; Huntington 1991, 273–74). Guatemala has certainly experienced such pressures during its transition. U.S. encouragement to improve human rights performance began to grow in the late 1970s, followed by a gradual escalation of pressure for elections and further formal democratization during the 1980s and 1990s. Guatemala's Central American neighbors, Latin American nations, international lenders, and international organizations all gradually escalated diplomatic pressures to adopt civilian democracy from the mid-1980s on.

Thus there remains in Guatemala's international environment considerable pressure to retain the civilian democratic regime, pressure that should help impede authoritarian reversion in some future regime crisis. Perhaps the best indication of the effectiveness of such pressure came from the coup attempted by Guatemalan president Jorge Serrano Elías on May 24, 1993. In addition to protests by Guatemalan citizens and interest groups, the United States and the OAS made their disapproval (and that of the international financial institutions they heavily influenced) clear to

Guatemalan political actors (Jonas 1995, 35–36; Booth 1995, 1). The international context thereby helped save the civilian transitional regime.

The new democratic regime experienced another serious challenge—but also reached an important milestone—as President Alvaro Arzú's term ended in 1999 and retired general José Efraín Ríos Montt, erstwhile leader of a de facto military government in the early 1980s, sought to become the presidential candidate of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG). This would have violated a constitutional ban on former coup participants' becoming president. The Supreme Court ultimately barred him from running. The FRG instead nominated Alfonso Portillo for president and Ríos Montt for a seat in Congress.

Portillo won the 1999 presidential election, and the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition victor represented a step forward for the democratic regime. Ríos Montt, however, also won his congressional seat and eventually became presiding officer of that body, leaving observers to wonder whether the old right-wing populist's antidemocratic past portended future problems. Another worry is the future of the constitutional revisions needed to implement terms of the 1996 peace accords; they failed to pass in a very low turnout referendum in May 1999.

CONCLUSIONS

Many common forces have battered Central America since the 1970s and, in the process, have shaped sociopolitical change. This paper has argued that both internal and external forces influence the internal process of regime change, the reconfiguration of a nation's dominant coalition of political actors, and the prevailing rules of the political game. While specific interactions among local actors and conditions determine many details of particular regime changes, socioeconomic and geopolitical forces operating at and beyond the nation-state level also significantly shape the resources and behaviors of local actors.

The work of many scholars has revealed how similar forces drove the widespread social mobilization in five Central American nations in the 1970s and the national revolts in three of them, including Guatemala. It has been argued here that regime change may be influenced by forces in the global context that are similar to those shaping national revolts and democratization. Indeed, there is ample evidence that this regional move toward democracy occurred partly because certain emergent elements among the elites of several Central American countries struggled domestically and internationally (within regional peace efforts) to promote formal democratization. The flurry of regime changes toward civilian democracy in Central America since the late 1970s, including Guatemala's, arose and developed from global economic strains and geopolitics, operating through local elite agents. Domestic actors' decisions and actions were not taken in a vacuum.

From the arguments and data presented here, Guatemala's demo-cratic prospects appeared better in the late 1990s than at any time since 1954. Most citizens manifested commitment to democratic norms, skep-ticism about military intervention, and disapproval of antidemocratic methods. While Guatemala's political participation was low compared to the rest of the region, the high repression that long kept citizens from engaging in politics had declined. Social capital that most observers assumed to be fragmented along ethnic and urban-rural fault lines was actually remarkably coherent. The geopolitical context now favors a for-mally civilian democratic regime. Economic conditions for the country were reasonably healthy during the 1990s, attenuating the prospects for protest and unrest.

Such positive factors notwithstanding, Guatemala's prospects must still be viewed with considerable caution because of the historical role of the nation's security forces and their unwillingness to remain on the sidelines of national politics. Added to that are the failure fully to imple-ment the peace accords and Ríos Montt's continuing influence. The most important question about the consolidation of civilian democracy in Guatemala is how much the domestic and global forces can constrain the military, and its antidemocratic allies inside and outside the govern-ment, until the military can institutionalize a new relationship of subor-dination to civilian rulers and until a consensus on democratic rules of the game can emerge among political elites.

NOTES

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the conference "Guatemalan Development and Democratization: Proactive Responses to Glob-alization," Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Guatemala City, March 26–28, 1998. The theoretical section and illustrations for the region draw heavily on Booth and Walker 1999. My thanks to Tom Walker for his very significant con-tributions to these ideas and arguments.

1. This concept of political regimes draws from those of Anderson (1967, 1992) and Higley and Burton (1989), and from Wynia's term *political game* (1990, 24–45). Peeler (1998, xii) employs a formulation that captures the same ideas: "Any political system has a broad range of structures—called the regime—that determine which actors actually have governmental authority; how political conflict and cooperation take place; which actors receive or lose resources; and what role, if any, . . . nonpowerful actors play." See also Casper and Taylor (1996, 16–37).

2. These categories by no means exhaust the range of possible types of regimes. They are proposed as a set that accounts for Central American cases during the period under scrutiny.

3. Peeler (1998, 192–93) argues that nonelite actors in Latin America play a greater role in provoking regime change toward liberal democracy than they do in the subsequent operation of liberal democracies.

4. Recent work on what focuses citizens' antagonism on the state has emphasized the formation of "cultures of opposition" (Foran 1997a, 1997b).

5. Modern political science typically defines democracy operationally in minimal procedural terms as constitutional, representative government with free, competitive elections. This approach has many critics, including Peeler (1985) and Robinson (see his chapter in this issue). Their assertion that the minimalist procedural model (Robinson's "polyarchy") limits both citizen participation and social justice has merit. Electoral democratic regimes, however, are much less repressive than authoritarian, military-dominated regimes and thus permit more citizen participation, more intense civil society, and citizen norms more supportive of democracy (Booth and Richard 1998a, b).

6. The earlier regionwide survey was collected in the early 1990s by a team of investigators led by the author and Mitchell A. Seligson of the University of Pittsburgh. For details on survey design, collaborators, and institutional and financial support see Booth and Richard 1996. The later Guatemalan surveys were financed by the United States Agency for International Development (See ASIES 1995; Seligson et al. 1998).

7. It is an important limitation of this data set that it does not include rural samples. The urban populations of the Central American countries, however, are closest to the seats of government and most easily mobilized into political participation that can affect national politics. Data from rural samples appear in the surveys discussed in table 5.

8. I thank Mitchell A. Seligson for providing the data. The questions in this survey were largely similar to those in the 1992 urban survey discussed in table 4, but coding of the responses on many items differed (for instance, in the number of scale points respondents could choose). Thus, while the survey topics are quite similar, their response schemes are not directly comparable and should be interpreted with caution.

9. Overall, 16 percent of Guatemalans reported either having experienced political violence or having a family member affected, or both. This level of victimization would probably be higher if the survey could have interviewed Guatemalan refugees or exiles who had fled political violence.

10. Because violence was unevenly distributed around the country, a more meaningful cleavage related to violence victimization appears to be based on regions. The following data indicate the wide variance in victimization index levels: Metropolitan Guatemala City 0.117; Northeast 0.147; Northwest 0.143; Southeast 0.206; Southeast 0.248; whole sample mean 0.169. These statistics point toward a fruitful area for future research. (Data from ASIES 1995; Seligson et al. 1998; analysis by the author.)

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