The FMLN and Post-War Politics in El Salvador

From Included to Inclusive Actor?

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IPS Paper 14

Abstract

The Peace Accords that put an end to the armed conflict in El Salvador, signed in 1992, laid the foundations for the reconstruction of the Salvadoran State and the launch of a social contract based on respect for the rules of representative democracy. The Government elites, the insurgent political-military movement and the international community were the protagonists of the initial dialogue, the ensuing peace negotiations and the design of new rules, while the political parties were the protagonists of the transitional period. Thus, the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) successfully transitioned from a guerrilla movement and opposition army to a negotiator of the rules of Salvadoran democracy, and then, to a political party which has been in power since 2009.

In that process of transition, some of the original reasons for the protest, such as poverty, inequality and the precarious living conditions of a great majority of Salvadorans, were given less priority in the peace negotiations – postponed until more favourable times, when the opposition party had sufficient share of power to push for change at economic and social levels. The nature of the Peace Accords, and of the particular transition they gave rise to, was fundamentally political. The process did not seek to overcome the causes of the social conflict or existing inequality, but rather focused on a legal-institutional reform in which the political parties would be the protagonists of the new forms of struggle for state power. Economic and social issues, and their intervening actors, served as a stabilising factor that enabled the process aimed at achieving peace and modernising the political regime.

Twenty-two years after the signature of the Peace Accords, the Front has the greatest share of power in the country: first, as a legal and legitimate party that can aspire to each and every one of the popularly elected positions from which it is possible to carry out the expected changes; and secondly, as the governing party – after winning the presidential elections for a second time and having obtained several mayorships, as well as ample and at times majority presence in the Legislative Assembly. In this transition from an excluded to included political actor, has the FMLN continued to be an inclusive force? Has it internally allowed citizens to express their different positions and participate in leading the State and the country? To what extent have the needs of the excluded groups of Salvadoran society been placed on the agenda of this new Front? These are the questions to be addressed in this paper.

About the Publication

This paper is one of two case study reports on El Salvador produced in the course of the collaborative research project 'Avoiding Conflict Relapse through Inclusive Political Settlements and State-building after Intra-State War', running from February 2013 to April 2015. This project aims to examine the conditions for inclusive political settlements following protracted armed conflicts, with a specific focus on former armed power contenders turned state actors. It also aims to inform national and international practitioners and policy-makers on effective practices for enhancing participation, representation, and responsiveness in post-war state-building and governance. It is carried out in cooperation with the partner institutions CINEP/PPP (Colombia, Project Coordinators), Berghof Foundation (Germany, Project Research Coordinators), FLACSO (El Salvador), In Transformation Initiative (South Africa), Sudd Institute (South Sudan), Aceh Policy Institute (Aceh/Indonesia), and Friends for Peace (Nepal). The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Berghof Foundation, CINEP/PPP, or their project partners. For further information, please contact the project research coordinator, Dr. Véronique Dudouet, at v.dudouet@berghof-foundation.org.

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This project has been funded with support from the International Development Research Center in Ottawa.

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Centre de recherches pour le développement international

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To cite this paper: Ramos, Carlos Guillermo, Roberto Oswaldo López & Carolina Quinteros 2015. The FMLN and Post-War Politics in El Salvador: From Included to Inclusive Actor? *Inclusive Political Settlements Papers* 13, June. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

Via internet: www.berghof-foundation.org. This paper is also available in Spanish.

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List of Acronyms

ARENA	*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* / Nationalist Republican Alliance
CPM	*Coordinadora Político Militar* / Political-Military Coordinating Committee
CRM	*Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas* / Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses
ERP	*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* / People's Revolutionary Army
FES	*Foro de Concertación Económico y Social* / Forum for Economic and Social Consultation
FMLN	*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* / Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
FPL	*Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* / Popular Liberation Forces
PCS	*Partido Comunista Salvadoreño* / Salvadoran Communist Party
PDC	*Partido Demócrata Cristiano* / Christian Democratic Party
PRTC	*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos* / Central American Revolutionary Workers Party
RN	*Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional* / Armed Forces of National Resistance
TSE	*Tribunal Supremo Electoral* / Supreme Electoral Tribunal
UCA	*Universidad Centroamericana* / Central American University
UDN	*Unión Democrática Nacionalista* / Nationalist Democratic Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1 Introduction

In addition to achieving a ceasefire and the disarmament of the insurgent groups, the Peace Accords of 1992 also set out a new path for El Salvador's future, by bringing about profound changes to the political, military and legal system, which provided favourable conditions for the reconstruction of the State. The primary features of the new political settlement were based on the legitimate rule of law and the strengthening of representative democracy; the primacy of civil over military power; respect for human rights (especially civil and political rights); and the strengthening of democratic culture. These transformations were accomplished on the basis of political and military negotiations between the main power contender – namely, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* – FMLN) and the Government. To date, there is significant consensus regarding those changes among the elites and the citizens at large. In sum, the Peace Accords were a far-reaching national agreement that laid the foundations for the current Salvadoran social contract.

Nevertheless, the scope of the Accords was limited to overcoming structural problems and responding to citizens' demands aimed at eradicating poverty, and achieving greater human development. The prevailing economic and social model responsible for generating a situation of exclusion for the majority of the Salvadorian population was not changed by the Accords. Without denying the fact that the respect for human rights and improved access to justice benefited citizens as a whole, formal inclusivity was virtually only achieved for the opposition elites in strictly political terms. Social and economic issues were left pending and have not yet been solved. Additionally, the shortcomings of the political system have, over the years, had a negative impact on the strengthening of Salvadoran democracy. Indeed, the Peace Accords granted great power to the political parties, with few responsibilities in terms of accountability to party members and citizens at large.

This assessment raises the following guiding questions: is it possible to make that same critique of the FMLN, which successfully transitioned from a guerrilla movement to political party? Did the FMLN lose some of its initial drive to achieve better living conditions for the Salvadoran population on its path towards progressive inclusion in the political system? Now that the Front is fully integrated into representative democracy, does it act as an inclusive political force?

The objective of this paper is to analyse issues related to the transition of the main power contending group (i.e. the FMLN) and its contributions in terms of providing communities affected by the conflict with the necessary mechanisms to be granted access to the country's governance, whether through direct participation in the decision-making processes or by having their demands heard and placed on the policy agenda.

To that effect, the analysis is organised into three main sections. Section 2 provides an account of the main stages of the armed struggle in El Salvador in the 20th century, in particular since the 1970s. Section 3 reviews the history of the FMLN as a political party, since its beginnings as a radical opposition force to the Salvadoran capitalist model, until its participation as a governing party since 2009. Finally, Section 4 critically examines the role of the FMLN during its exercise of the Presidency, from 2009 until the time of writing (late 2014). The content of this paper was developed on the basis of documentary information and the compilation of interviews with key policy actors carried out for other studies, such as Córdova (2002); Cruz (2013); Martínez (2012) and Ramos (1998).

2 Development of the Opposition Forces from the 1970s to 1992

Strictly speaking, the armed struggle in El Salvador began in the 1970s, however, the history of demonstrations of discontent with military governments, the political system's unresponsiveness to dissident or opposition forces and an exclusionary economy date back to earlier times. For instance, an early attempt to change the status quo through armed peasant and indigenous uprising was violently repressed in a practically genocide-type action in 1932. The Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Salvadoreño* – PCS) was also established in the early 20th century. However, most political (and later political-military) opposition organisations were formed during the 1970s as a result of the shrinking of political space. This was achieved by taking advantage of domestic and international situations favourable for escalating the struggle against the successive oligarchic regimes which ruled El Salvador.

2.1 The origins of the FMLN

According to the sociologist Raúl Benítez Manaut (1989), the first stage of the Salvadoran armed conflict (1970-1981) was characterised by the emergence and consolidation of the five political-military organisations that would lead to the formation of the FMLN in October 1980: the aforementioned Communist Party (PCS), founded in 1930; the Popular Liberation Forces (*Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* – FPL), which appeared in 1970; the People's Revolutionary Army (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* – ERP), created in 1971; the Armed Forces of National Resistance (*Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional* – RN), which arose in 1975; and the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (*Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos* – PRTC), established in 1976. According to Benítez Manaut (1989), the relations among political fronts, military fronts, and mass organisations were organised as outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Order of Appearance and Relations between Parties, Armies and Mass Organisations within the FMLN

Political-Military Organisations		Mass Organisations
Party or Political Front	**Army**	
PCS (1)	FAL (3)	UDN (2)
FPL (1)	FALP (3)	BPR (2)
PRS (2)	ERP (1)	LP-28 (2)
RN (1)	FARN (3)	FAPU (2)
PRTC (1)	FARN-LP (3)	MLP (2)

Source: Benítez Manaut (1989)

Note: The numbers indicate the order in which these organisations were formed

Up until 1977, the strategy of the PCS was to participate in elections, and it was the last of the organisations to join the military revolutionary struggle. In 1979, the party did not yet have a military wing, a fact that led to the repeated defection of members in the 1970s, who went on to create other organisations and political-military movements. These defectors were clearly in favour of the armed struggle as the appropriate strategy for the revolutionary struggle.

The first PCS spin-off group was the FPL in 1970. It promoted armed struggle in the form of a protracted people's war as the fundamental driver of the movement. As Benítez Manaut (1989) states, "according to the ideological principles of the FP, the revolution in El Salvador must be anti-oligarchic, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist, and the revolutionary strategy should be that of a protracted people's war", characterised by armed mass struggle.

The ERP emerged in 1972 as another spin-off of the PCS, later joined by youth from the Christian Democratic Party (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano* – PDC). While its marked preference for armed confrontation led the PRT to opt for the strategy of insurrection, some of its dissidents went on to form two other groups that placed the primacy of struggle on political activism: the RN emphasised work with the masses, while the PRTC primarily worked through party structures.

All of those organisations set up popular fronts for the political struggle (mass movements made up of worker, peasant, and student organisations – whereby sectoral struggles, e.g. for the rights of labour or peasant unions, were subordinated to the revolutionary struggle), as well as military fronts, each one of which was strengthened according to the specific organisation's focus. Thus, if the chosen strategy was a protracted people's war, as in the case of the FPL, working with the masses was emphasised, but if the strategy was insurgent action, as in the case of the ERP, the priority was to strengthen the revolutionary armies. This did not necessarily imply a hierarchy within the organisations but rather meant that they distinctly targeted their efforts and strategic commitments.

Individual members selected which political-military structures to participate in according to the sector they belonged to. However, they could be transferred by the leadership from a mass organisation to a military structure, which was considered to be a more demanding level of struggle – since it required strict underground operations. The five political-military organisations included university and high-school students in their mass sectors. Four of the organisations (FPL, ERP, RN and PRTC) also included workers and peasants. Two of them (FPL and RN) included teachers' associations; two others (FPL and ERP) included street vendors; and the FPL also included members from the artistic community.

According to Benítez Manaut (1989), based on the US State Department calculations – which might not be very reliable due to the underground nature of the guerrilla struggle – by 1980, there would have been a total of 3,500 armed guerrilla members. This figure excludes those not organised into mass movements or non-military political party structures, since for these groups it is impossible to establish exact numbers.

2.2 The road to the armed struggle

The military struggle escalated gradually towards the end of the 1970s, starting with an urban guerrilla war and turning into a military confrontation between standing armies from 1981 onwards. The political events that triggered this escalation were the electoral frauds of 1972 and 1977. In the case of the former, some of the dissident organisations that would later become part of the opposition forces (including the Communist Party) participated in the presidential elections through a broad alliance of political parties known as the Nationalist Democratic Union (*Unión Democrática Nacionalista* – UDN), that had opted for the traditional means of representative democracy to reach power and bring about structural change. The existing documentation (such as Benítez 1989, Córdova 2002, González 2009, Martínez 2012 and Ramos 1998) indicates that this coalition won the elections, however, the military prevented the rise to power of this new political actor by resorting to a serious electoral fraud which led to widespread protests that were subsequently brutally repressed. The military thus embarked on a period of greater repression and authoritarianism, imprisoning opposition leaders and closing spaces for any form of dissidence. For example, the University of El Salvador was taken over by the military, causing irreparable damage to its infrastructure and scientific equipment.

Strikingly, the military Government, following the lead of other South American reformist military regimes, attempted an agrarian reform in order to somewhat minimise enormous inequalities, especially in rural areas, and palliate the generalised discontent of Salvadoran society. However, the then President, Colonel Armando Molina,

was forced to cancel the project in light of pressure exerted by the country's economic elite – made up of an oligarchy that had grown strong from the cultivation and export of coffee, but also had strong links to the banking sector. This oligarchy was made up of families (mainly European immigrants and nationals descended from the *criollos*[1] of the colonial period which ended in 1821), who concentrated the country's wealth and, consequently, economic and political power, throughout the 20th century. In fact, most presidents who had taken office before the military rose to power in 1931 belonged to these families of coffee growers. Such groups came about as a result of the liberal reforms at the end of the 19th century. These reforms promoted the cultivation of coffee through the expropriation of communal land, indigenous *ejidos*[2], land belonging to poor peasants, as well as financial loans that facilitated the purchase of land and the cultivation of coffee (Menjivar 1995). Subsequently, in the 1960s, these groups diversified and started planting sugar cane and cotton, though coffee continued to be their main crop until the 1990s, when these families settled in the banking and financial services sector.

The agrarian reform, which had been announced in 1975 through the creation of the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Transformation, and ratified a year later by the Agrarian Transformation Decree was suspended after less than three months. The reason for this was the intense offensive launched by the country's most representative business association and by what Ignacio Ellacuría (2005) calls "the most reactionary elements of bourgeois capitalism". According to this author, by proposing the agrarian transformation, the Government showed signs of autonomy with respect to the oligarchy, and thus the possibility of ceasing to be the guardian of their interests, to instead "become the incipient promoter of the rights of the oppressed by attempting a real change in the structure of land tenure".

The closing of spaces for expressions of disagreement and for reforms was further confirmed in 1977, when a broad coalition of opposition parties once again participated in the elections, hoping to put an end to military governments. Yet, once again, electoral fraud prevented their access to power, keeping the military in control of state administration. As a result, repression increased and the opposition forces gathered up strength. They went on to design strategies for a new level of struggle.

The prevailing trend among political-military organisations during those years was the strategy of guerrilla warfare. According to Benítez Manaut (1989), guerrilla struggle was characterised by sudden surprise attacks carried out by a few combatants; though they had tactical advantage, they lacked strategic superiority and it was still too early to talk of an army that could maintain a relative equilibrium with respect to the State's military force. At the end of the 1970s, however, the levels of social dissatisfaction with the regime dramatically increased and dissident organisations transformed into clear revolutionary movements.

In 1979, one year before the FMLN was established, there was a new attempt to reform the system. Several social and political organisations, including the revolutionary ones, convened a 'People's Forum' – a political coalition platform aimed at making reform proposals to the Government. However, the military Government ignored the forum while further intensifying its repression. On 15 October 1979, a group of young officers, together with forward-looking civilians who were unhappy with the generalised repression and the repeated electoral fraud, carried out a *coup d'état* (the last one in Salvadoran 20th century history), and set up a civil-military Junta to guide the transition towards a democratic regime. Known as the Revolutionary Government Junta, it was made up of the President of the *Universidad Centroamericana* (UCA), two social democratic civilians and two Colonels from the Armed Forces.

In its issue of 12 October 2009, the newspaper *Contrapunto* published a very good summary of the reasons for the coup, in which it points out:

> *In their proclamation, the coup leaders acknowledged El Salvador's political evils – frauds, resistance to change, economic and social chaos, lack of democracy – and proposed a series of measures that, in their*

[1] In colonial times, the term *Criollos* referred to a social class and ethnicity applied to descendants of Spaniards born in America. They went on to become a powerful group who led the independence process.
[2] Indigenous communal lands.

> *view, would pull the country out of its difficult situation: end of violence and corruption, which meant dismantling (the repressive bodies) and combating the extremist organisations that violated human rights; eradicating corrupt practices in public administration and the administration of justice; guaranteeing respect for human rights; creating a favourable climate for free elections; allowing ideological pluralism in order to strengthen democracy; recognising the right to unionise; adopting measures leading to a better distribution of wealth; laying the foundations for a process of agrarian reform; promoting reforms of the financial sector; and guaranteeing the right to housing*. (Gonzalez 2009)

Nevertheless, this democratisation attempt at transformation failed once again. Two months later, the Revolutionary Government Junta was dissolved due to pressure from the elites and the military, who increased their repression. A new Junta was established, leaving behind the reformist nature of the previous one, leading the revolutionary forces to regroup in a new dynamic.

According to the FMLN website, in December 1979, three of the political-military organisations (PCS, FPL and RN) created the Political-Military Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora Político Militar* – CPM), and in January 1980, the same organisations, together with the PRTC and the ERP, formed the Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses (*Coordinadora Revolucionaria de Masas* – CRM), which proclaimed popular insurrection as the strategy for seizing state power. According to the same source, in May the same year, four of these five organisations opted for an integrated leadership with "a single military plan and a single command, that is, a single political-military line". On 10 October 1980, they created the FMLN and two months later the PRTC joined them.

2.3 Open armed conflict

In January 1981, the FMLN launched a general offensive that marked the beginning of the military confrontation between the State army and the revolutionary forces. According to Benítez Manaut (1989), the general offensive strategy that was officially adopted by the FMLN between January 1981 and August 1982 was aimed at strengthening the insurgency path. The Armed Forces, on the other hand, resorted to a 'rapid deployment' strategy aimed at quickly destroying the guerrilla forces and expediting a military victory, with the open support of the Government of the United States.

It soon became evident that neither of these strategies was successful and that the parties would have to modify their approach. The FMLN switched to a 'protracted people's war' that involved permanent actions aimed at wearing down the enemy, professionalising its army, and establishing political and military control in some regions of the country. With a clear and ever increasing involvement of the USA, the State army began a war of attrition against the FMLN.

The war was to last until 1991, affecting the country's politics, peaceful coexistence and all aspects of national life. The entire economy was subordinated to the war effort and its condition of dependency increased due to the fact that it was sustained artificially by US aid. This economic and military assistance was crucial for maintaining the equilibrium of the conflicting military forces and preventing the advances of the FMLN. As a result, El Salvador reached a condition of almost absolute economic dependency and its military apparatus steadily grew. This situation was compounded by the human cost in terms of human rights violations, emigration, internal displacement giving rise to refugee populations, and the indefinite postponement of the construction of a democratic and inclusive state.

3 FMLN as a Political Actor in the Post-War Party System

3.1 The supremacy of politics

The Peace Accords of 1992 marked the beginning of a new political cycle for El Salvador. They included key measures such as the demilitarisation of the State and the creation of a new electoral and party system which enabled the insurgents to enter the conventional political arena.

In December 1992, the FMLN became a political party formally recognised by the official authorities, thus legitimising its participation in elections as the way to reach state power.

The initial stages of the peacebuilding process ran smoothly, especially during the ceasefire that was directly supervised by the United Nations (UN). However, things became more complicated when the time came for the demobilisation of the revolutionary army's fronts, the reinstatement of Government presence in the regions controlled by the guerrillas, the surrender of arms (including heavy weapons such as surface-to-air missiles), and the purge and downsizing of the Armed Forces.

Martínez (2012) affirms that the transformation of the FMLN into the main opposition party shows that this was not a question of an insurgent movement that had been defeated and now needed to be reinserted into society against the wishes of the Army and the Government, who had demanded the disarmament of the rebels and a unilateral ceasefire as preconditions for negotiation. Rather, the way the Accords were reached shows that the FMLN was a key stakeholder in the Salvadoran political system. The author also points out that after demobilisation, the former combatants had several options with respect to their reintegration: joining the new National Civil Police, participating in the land transfer programme, receiving training in order to set up their own businesses, getting involved in the work of NGOs, or working in the structuring of FMLN cadres.

The Peace Accords were truly inclusive in political terms, insofar as they guaranteed the presence of all political ideologies within the Salvadoran political spectrum. The transition to democracy began in 1992. It established institutions that fostered respect for the human rights of citizens, the expression of dissidence, and competitive, legitimised elections.

However, it should be highlighted that the peace negotiations were primarily carried out by the ruling and incoming elites. This was reflected in the very nature of the Accords, which mainly focused on political reforms aimed at integrating former combatants into the country's civil and political life – by institutionalising the FMLN as a political actor. After the Colombian experience in which a number of leaders from the former guerrilla group M19 were assassinated once the organisation had been dismantled, it was essential to guarantee that the same would not occur in El Salvador. However, this does not deny the fact that the needs of the leadership were prioritised during the negotiation and implementation of the Accords, over and above the demands of the rest of the Salvadorans. This was reflected in the decreased participation in elections, especially between 1999 and 2000, demonstrating the growing discredit of the institutional expressions of democracy, such as the political parties and the Legislative Assembly, despite the democratisation of the political system enabled by the Peace Accords.

Another consequence of the negotiations carried out by the elites was the control they themselves would have over the institutions responsible for building the new Salvadoran State. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), for example, was dominated by the political parties which controlled all matters regarding elections, thus inclining the TSE to be partial to the interests of the parties, to the detriment of other actors that would represent not only the dissident political groups, but the general interests themselves. The TSE, for instance, has had no problem interpreting electoral laws in ways that are detrimental to public finances. Such was the case in 2009, when both a new Legislative Assembly and a new President were to be elected on the same date. However, the TSE decided to carry out the two elections separately, in order to ensure that the processes favoured the largest political parties.

The constitutional reform resulting from the Peace Accords made clear that the political parties were the only legal means of political representation available to citizens. Taking advantage of their supremacy, the political parties repeatedly refused to adopt a preferential voting system, one in which citizens could vote for the candidates to the Legislative Assembly who would best represent them. In the electoral system that prevailed until 2010, the party leaders selected the list of candidates and the order in which they would access the Legislative Assembly; deputies to the Assembly were, therefore, not those who received the most votes but those chosen by the party leadership. Thus, the deputies owed loyalty not to their constituencies, but to their party leader. In 2011, a resolution issued by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice decreed that this system was unconstitutional and that electors had the right to vote for the candidate of their preference. The parties did their best to avoid compliance with this resolution and ended up partially adopting it for the 2012 elections. It is still not certain whether these changes will be maintained in the future.

The supremacy of the political parties is not only reflected to aspects relating to the electoral process. All second-level civil servant positions are controlled by the political parties, who establish a quota system to distribute key positions among themselves, such as the Office of the Comptroller of the Republic, the Office of the Attorney General, the Supreme Court Justices and the TSE itself. The ineffectiveness of those offices in fighting and preventing corruption, bad governance practices, and party control, has been one of the main obstacles to their appropriate operation – a situation that has remained practically unchanged since 1992. Since the appointment of new Justices to the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice in 2009, however, the political parties' control has been challenged, and a new political environment is taking shape with the potential of enhancing the rule of law.

As the de facto elites of the Salvadoran Government, the political parties seem to ignore any general interest that might undermine the scope of their action and control. They even refuse to be accountable to the citizens regarding the funds they receive and the decisions they make. To date, there are no regulations requiring that they account for the money they receive and the amounts they use for their campaigns. Due to international pressure, a law is currently being drafted against money laundering, however, the Government has been reluctant to include political parties within the purview of such a law.

3.2 Internal inclusivity

It proved challenging to transition from a coalition of five political-military organisations emerging from an intense and protracted conflict, with their different ideologies and leaderships, into a single parliamentary party set-up according to formal procedures. One of the first challenges was related to unifying the ideological line. For this reason, they opted for a plural tendency party that would make it possible to gradually transform from the diverse party lines. However, internal differences dating back to the 1970s continued to be present and caused constant disputes among the different leaders.

Each one of the five political-military groups that had formed part of FMLN as an insurgent movement and army (PC, FPL, ERP, RN and PRTC) continued to exist as a block within the FMLN as a political party. However, the equilibrium of power that had been possible during the war, despite their differences, was impossible to maintain in times of peace. The first division came about in 1993 when the ERP unilaterally and separately signed new agreements with the Government, endorsing certain economic measures, such as the increase of the Value Added Tax (VAT), which were not approved by the other FMLN blocks. According to Joaquín Villalobos, one of the FMLN leaders representing the ERP, there were flaws in both the Accords and the subsequent process, as outlined below:

> *The Accords had gaps that could endanger the process. The agreement regarding the ad hoc Commission responsible for purging the Army did not establish how this would be carried out or whether the process should be made public or not. There were no specific reinsertion programmes for guerrilla leaders, some of whom had spent over 20 years in the movement; the State did not guarantee the security of FMLN leaders; no*

> *measures had been adopted for reinsertion into civilian life of the purged Army officers; no date was set for implementation of the amnesty; and there was no guarantee that highly productive lands in the hands of the guerrillas would be transferred to former combatants. The security of FMLN leaders was vital for the process, which faced a crisis when two leaders were assassinated in October 1993*. (Villalobos 1999)

According to Villalobos (1999), this is why it became necessary to renegotiate the agreements and their timeline in early 1993, though this was impossible due to the reluctance of the leaders of other FMLN organisations to approve a more gradual process – in the case of purging the Army and approving an amnesty law.[3] Villalobos negotiated on his own with the President of the Republic and the Army, reaching an agreement known as the "Pact of San Andrés", named after the archaeological site where it was signed. This caused the first serious dispute within the FMLN, just a few months before it transformed into a political party. As a result, Villalobos was expelled from the FMLN in 1994 and accused of being a traitor. Since then, he has been living in England, where he studied at Oxford University and served as an advisor on governance issues to various Latin American governments. The ERP, on the other hand, broke off from the FMLN and, together with seven of the 21 elected congressmen, formed its own faction in the Legislative Assembly, thus producing the first public schism within the Front.

This division was an indication that the tendencies within the party were more than simple lines of thought and that they remained strong. Later on, the division between the so-called "renovator" wing and the "orthodox" wing became evident. The latter group, made-up of former PC leaders, were more concerned with maintaining their ideology, while the former group featured party leaders involved in government and public administration, especially in the municipalities. The leader of the "renovators" was Facundo Guardado, an FMLN presidential candidate in the 1999 elections and the former leader of the FPL – one of the parties that made up the FMLN during its phase as a revolutionary army.

The tensions between the renovator and orthodox wings led to a second secession from the group in 2001, when Facundo Guardado was expelled from the party with accusations of contempt. By 2002, he had already founded a new party which was joined by six other deputies from the renovator wing who had also been expelled from the FMLN. This, however, did not entail the separation of the FPL from the FMLN but rather its assimilation to the predominant orthodox line of the PC, as was the case with other parties such as the PRTC and the RN.

The road to democracy and inclusivity within the FMLN was thus paved with difficulties. On the one hand, it was difficult to handle internal disagreements and although there was supposed to be respect for the various tendencies and leaderships, dissidents from the predominant line were consistently subjected to sanctions. On the other hand, although an internal election process was established to elect candidates, it was not always effective at adequately managing the different internal tendencies. The election of candidates became a scenario of constant confrontation, mutual disqualifications and internal dissidence, often resulting in spin-offs or expulsions, even of the most charismatic leaders.[4]

According to Puyana Valdivieso (2005), the tendencies and differences within the FMLN are reflected in the organisational development of the party, which by 2005 had already undergone five statutory reforms that entailed increasing control of the orthodox wing, exercised through expulsions and sanctions which often led to withdrawals:

> *The party was characterised by its integration into the democratic contest, which contrasted with its rather unstable and undemocratic internal dynamics. This contradicts the generalised idea that the FMLN was one of the parties with the highest levels of internal democracy in El Salvador. Such a statement is supported by*

[3] The Inter-American Court of Justice declared the amnesty law to be in violation of human rights and requested that the Salvadoran State repeal it. Different administrations have opposed this measure, arguing that the amnesty is the cornerstone of the Peace Accords (despite the fact that it is not included in the agreements) and that it has made national reconciliation possible. On the other hand, human rights organisations insist that this law fosters impunity and leaves victims unprotected.

[4] The fact that conflicts within the FMLN became public knowledge during its internal elections, placed the party at a disadvantage with respect to its political opponents. Thus, internal FMLN elections were eliminated in 2006.

> *the institutional design of the party, which, in 2000, had included in its Statutes the selection of candidates and authorities through internal elections.* (Puyana Valdivieso 2008)

However, this electoral mechanism did not turn out to be very transparent in practice and was finally discarded in 2006.

It is also interesting to observe that the FMLN as a political party has not managed to establish any clear processes aimed at generational renewal. The leaders of the Front are basically the same political and military leaders of the war period. Indeed, the Vice-President for the 2009-2014 term and President elected for the 2014-2019 period was one of the principal members of the Front's General Command during the war and a signatory of the Peace Accords. The same is true for the deputies and internal party authorities. Fortunately, progress has been made with respect to gender. Though there are still gaps to close, the FMLN now has rules regarding quotas for positions filled by popular vote (35% of the nominated candidates must be women), and it has included more women in its party structures – even at the highest level.

The above-mentioned deficiencies do not pertain exclusively to the FMLN. Its main opponent in the political field, the Nationalist Republican Alliance (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* – ARENA), also faced dissidences and strong internal debates, which intensified since it lost the elections in 2009.

3.3 Inclusivity with respect to the civil society reform agenda

In times of conflict, the struggle of the FMLN as an insurgent movement was carried out with the support of diverse civil society organisations and groups, such as labour unions, peasant organisations, women's organisations etc. However, the specific demands of these groups related to exclusionary social and economic structures, and the unequal distribution of land, were not included in the peace negotiations and the subsequent agreements for the post-conflict period. Rather, these demands were relegated to entities such as the Forum for Economic and Social Consultation (FES), which was created through the Accords, or handled through palliative measures as part of the so-called structural adjustments initiated during President Cristiani's Administration in 1989.

The FES was a necessary but limited effort that engaged social actors in the formulation of economic and social proposals that had not been addressed in the Peace Accords. It was made up of representatives of labour unions, business associations and state entities, whose members did not necessarily belong to the organisations involved in the guerrilla groups or revolutionary army. Its agenda included issues such as the distribution of land in conflict zones; transfer of lands exceeding 245 hectares and state-owned lands which were not natural reserves to small farmers without farmland; the creation of effective mechanisms to protect consumers; and the promotion of workers' access to the property of privatised companies.

However, the FES did not receive the decisive support of the signatories of the Accords – not even of the FMLN, which was primarily focused on consolidating its integration into the formal political party system. Although the FES achieved some changes with respect to labour rights and most specifically, to the freedom of association and the right to collective negotiation, which materialised in a reform of the Labour Code, it failed to become a permanent mechanism for social dialogue on economic and social issues.

Another pending issue that the FMLN has to resolve is the inclusion of women. As Morena Herrera (cited by Martínez 2012) points out, women accounted for 30% of the combatants and 60% of the people organised into mass organisations or political fronts. This contribution, however, was widely ignored for many years, especially during the negotiation of the Peace Accords. The revolutionary armies featured a gendered division of labour, in which women were considered to be assistants to their male counterparts and had very little chance of being promoted to leadership positions. Additionally, according to the predominant socialist ideologies of the time, women's demands were considered to be less important (or even bourgeois) than class or party demands. Nor were

women the first beneficiaries of land transfer programmes, since men were given priority – including the sons of former female combatants.

Women's demands have become increasingly important, especially those related to maternity protection and the prevention and punishment of gender violence perpetrators. There is still a long way to go, however, in achieving full respect for sexual and reproductive rights, and at the time of writing, there is no indication that the FMLN is committed to making them a reality. For example, during the 2014 presidential campaign, the FMLN objected to amending regulations criminalising every type of abortion, including therapeutic abortion. Furthermore, the President of the Legislative Assembly for the 2012-2015 period, a prominent member of the FMLN, refused to reinstate a female employee of the Assembly who had been fired for rejecting the sexual harassment she was being subjected to, despite the fact that the judicial authorities, including the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice, had already ruled in favour of the female worker. In sum, much has to be done so that women's rights become part of the FMLN's agenda.

4 The FMLN as a Governing Party

As previously mentioned, the Peace Accords created the conditions for the establishment of competitive and legitimised elections, through which the formerly excluded political opposition forces were to become part of the institutional structure.

The FMLN first participated in elections in 1994, emerging as the second strongest electoral force and thus the most important opposition party. The first three Presidential Elections that followed the Peace Accords were successively won by ARENA (with 68.3% of the votes in 1994, 52% in 1999 and 57.7% in 2004).

However, after 20 years of rule, ARENA had grown stale. The participation of an external candidate, who was extremely popular due to his career track as a journalist, opened up a real possibility for the opposition to gain control over the Government, thus closing the circle with its full inclusion in the political system. Mauricio Funes Cartagena ran for presidency in 2009 on an FMLN list (to abide by a law requiring candidates to belong to a political party), although he was not a traditional party militant. He won with 51.3% of all votes.

This FMLN victory marked the beginning of the first leftist government in El Salvador. Many FMLN members entered the Government, in particular in the social affairs and security cabinets. Independent scholars and even members of other political parties were appointed to manage the economic cabinet and other social programmes. This inclusive approach towards non-party members did not signal a strategic shift within the party but was rather an electoral tactic. President Funes always separated his policies from those of his party, and the FMLN itself described the Government as a coalition and not as an FMLN administration. The following statement by a director of the FMLN government programme team for the 2014-2019 term, illustrates this point: “The opinion of the FMLN is one thing and government politics is another” (Arauz 2014a). The FMLN won the elections in 2014 with Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a candidate that is not only an FMLN member but one of its historical leaders (a member of the Comandancia General and one of the signatories of the Peace Accords). For the new Presidential term (2014-2019), FMLN authorities no longer consider the Government as a coalition, but as an FMLN Government. For this reason, the Press Secretary of the FMLN held that the “real power of the FMLN” (Arauz 2014b) will be made evident in the new administration.

4.1 Public policies regarding social exclusion

Expectations with respect to the first leftist government in Salvadoran political life were high, especially in the socio-economic domain. While the Peace Accords had brought about significant political and institutional

transformations, a leftist government seemed to provide an opportunity to drive relevant and high-impact economic changes to tackle social exclusion and inequality.

However, the FMLN Government seems to have brought about only minimal reforms. The economic system based on financial services and trade remains unchanged, with little or scarce development of the domestic productive sector – there are few indications that it will evolve in the near future. No noteworthy transformations have taken place concerning the practice of social exclusion.[5] The majority of the population still lives in poverty and faces the increasing deterioration of their living conditions. According to the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Report for 2013, in over 50 years of public policies it has now been possible to identify "three unresolved situations in Salvadoran society: a) Salvadoran society has not systematically invested enough money and will to take advantage of the wealth and potential that its people represent; b) it tolerates the loss, waste, and drain of its main wealth: people; c) public policies are still being designed without taking into account the aspirations, hopes, needs, and rights of the people" (UNDP 2013).

According to the same report, over half of the workforce is under-employed or unemployed, and more than 60% live in households with at least one significant unsatisfied need. Only one out of five jobs classifies as a decent job according to established parameters; access to services such as education and health is highly unequal; living conditions are precarious for most people; and the opportunities and possibilities of improving their situation are to be most likely found abroad (between one fourth and one third of the Salvadoran population currently reside abroad, particularly in the USA). The report sadly concludes that "people have only been [used as] a means to obtain wealth" (UNDP 2013).

In the social area, some innovations can be observed with respect to social programmes targeting vulnerable groups living in extreme poverty, however, there are no general policies aimed at achieving the well-being of the population at large or overcoming the historically unsatisfied needs of large segments of the population. Despite the fact that the FMLN Government has not pursued liberal strategies, it has also not moved beyond populism[6] and, consequently, the population has not developed a culture of rights and citizenship. Instead, a culture of patronage continues, and, once again, this favours the political parties.

4.2 Security challenges

Another great problem faced by the country is the lack of citizen security and the difficulties posed by gangs, which have become criminal networks involved in the trafficking of arms, drugs and people. They are perceived as the main cause of deaths in the country, and they have, in fact, created broad networks dedicated to the extortion of families and small and medium businesses, thereby controlling entire territories and neighbourhoods.

Gangs have infiltrated the family, school and community environments, and have transformed social and solidarity networks. Consequently, they have affected the life expectations of many people, particularly youth, who turn to crime and transgression at an early age. It will take decades to minimise or reverse these effects. This issue needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

By 2011, crimes against property had become a serious issue for El Salvador, with an index of 328 crimes per 100,000 inhabitants, while the extortion rate was 53 per 100,000 inhabitants. Between 2005 and 2011, the homicide rate was approximately 62 per 100,000 inhabitants, and in 2012, it reached 70 (FundaUngo 2012). The

[5] Social exclusion is understood to be the result of processes of extreme disempowerment of certain social groups, generated by inequalities in access to, and participation in, the basic markets (labour, capital, insurance, land and knowledge). If this is not neutralised through access to social citizenship, it results in a lack of participation in the basic dynamics of belonging to a society (Pérez 2012).

[6] Following Reygadas and Filguera (2011) in their study of public policies in Latin America, we understand liberal strategies as those which focus on equality of opportunities, and include conditioned transfer programmes and the delivery of public services through quasi-markets (such as in Chile). On the other hand, populist strategies promote social campaigns to supply basic services, such as literacy programmes, health, etc.; targeted policies; subsidies; strong state intervention in the economy through the control of foreign exchange rates, prices and inputs; nationalisation and the imposition of salaries (such as in Venezuela). Social democratic strategy, which lies between liberal and populist strategies, emphasises equal capacities and fosters universal rights, tax reforms and development promotion programmes (as in Uruguay).

Government's response to this extremely serious problem has been two-fold: on the one hand, the militarisation of citizen security (as described below), and on the other, negotiation with gang leaders, granting them prison privileges in exchange for their commitment to reduce homicides caused by inter-gang conflicts.[7] The result of this negotiation was almost immediate: the homicide rate plummeted to 40 per 100,000 inhabitants. However, the medium and long-term negative effects of empowering criminal structures in the neighbourhoods, such as stronger territorial control and links with international organised crime, soon became evident. The negotiation with criminal gangs was both approved by the Armed Forces and carried out with their participation. A Salvadoran scholar assesses the so-called "truce between gangs" as such:

> *The fundamental problem with the truce achieved by the Funes Administration is that it was not based on an institutional strategy for the reconstruction of the rule of the law in the country, but on the desperate pursuit for political legitimacy through the handling of homicides. In a context in which the President did not organically belong to or represent a political party, and in which the party that led him to power showed little interest in helping him govern, the President and his Administration had to first reach agreements with the military and some political parties in order to be able to negotiate with the gangs and thus show results in terms of public security. (*Cruz 2013)

4.3 The relationship between the FMLN and the Armed Forces

Despite its initial resistance to change, especially before and during the negotiation of the Peace Accords,[8] the army is one of the institutions that have undergone the most transformation, and whose compliance with the Accords has been most successful. According to Córdova (2002, 71), "within the framework of the peace processes carried out in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, a first generation of military reforms has taken place, promoting a process of demilitarisation and laying the foundations for the subordination of military power to civil power". These reforms modified doctrinal principles, reduced the number of troops and military budgets, promoted investigations and purges, reformed the military education system, reorganised the State's intelligence services and reformed the military service as a whole. Consequently, the Armed Forces acquired legitimacy and became an apolitical, obedient, and non-deliberative institution.

Curiously enough, the military enjoyed greater privileges and opportunities for participation in state policies during the FMLN Administration than they had done so during the earlier post-conflict period. However, it is not clear whether this new alliance is supported by the whole party or whether there are internal discussions on the matter. The following facts illustrate this trend:

- In 2011, it was reported that the military had increased their troops by 57% since the FMLN rose to power (Arauz 2011). These troops would be used to carry out prevention patrols in zones controlled by gangs in order to protect the population. Moreover, in 2012, two members of the military were appointed Minister of Security and Justice and Head of the National Civil Police, respectively. This policy clearly contradicted the civilian spirit of the citizen security strategy – one of the pillars of the Peace Accords –, and violated the Constitution of the Republic. In mid-2013, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice ruled these appointments unconstitutional and the President had to rectify his decision by removing the officers from their positions, assigning them instead to roles within the Armed Forces.
- In January 2012, during an act commemorating the victims of the Massacre of El Mozote (one of the worst massacres perpetrated by the Armed Forces against the civilian population during the war), the President promised to re-visit the history of those considered heroes by the Armed Forces and guaranteed that there

[7] The Government has not admitted to negotiating with the gangs but merely to having facilitated a truce among them. However, investigations carried out by the media, together with the declarations of former Government officials, make it possible to conclude that those negotiations did take place and that the Government took on commitments with respect to those leaders.

[8] According to CIA communications that were made public by the El Faro newspaper on 12 January 2012, the Army had attempted to rebel against President Cristiani in 1989, in order to prevent the peace negotiations.

would be no more honours for perpetrators of human rights violations. To date, however, those members of the military (including the commanders in charge of the aforementioned operation) are still publically honoured by the Armed Forces and their names have not been removed from monuments and public buildings.

- In 2013, the military also ignored two summons issued by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice requiring the Minister of Defence to appear and explain the involvement of members of the military in child disappearance cases which occurred during the conflict. These cases were being handled by the Pro-Búsqueda organisation. Their files were set on fire a week before the military were due to appear.
- In 2013, the Armed Forces purchased an aircraft fleet dating back to the Vietnam War from Chile, despite the objections of many sectors, that pointed out the uselessness of such an expenditure (given that El Salvador was not subject to any military threats and the age of the aircraft) and voiced their suspicions regarding the way in which the purchase was handled.
- Also during 2013, one of the Government plan advisors for the FMLN presidential candidate, who was a member of the military, had been, according to the Truth Commission Report, involved in the assassination of Jesuit priests and two female workers during the war. That officer harboured other officers indicted for these actions, in the context of the judicial proceedings being carried out in Spain, in the facilities of the Second Infantry Brigade. Interpol issued a Red Notice against them.

On the overall Latin American continent, the subordination of the military to civil power seems to have achieved stability. According to Pión-Berlin (2008), the Armed Forces across the region engage in diverse activities at the request of democratically-elected public servants and not against them; they participate in domestic security operations without diminishing civilian control; and national defence does not appear to be a priority for the current Latin American governments. This researcher did not foresee any "serious military threats to democracy and to civilian control of the Armed Forces in Latin America". However, he failed to mention the need to monitor these armies' growing involvement in domestic security tasks, since it is not unreasonable to assume that "[if] governments depend on the Armed Forces to carry out domestic missions, the latter will ask for more in exchange, pressuring to obtain more resources or acquire greater power" (Pión-Berlin 2008). This analysis does not necessarily apply to all Latin American countries, however, it is important for the case of El Salvador, where a leftist party born out of a guerrilla organisation that had fought in a civil war, came into power, leading it to become exposed to multiple pressures in its exercise of power. In a context of aggressive opposition from the political parties on the right and of urgent and increasing security concerns, is an alliance with the military a valid option or a threat to watch out for?

5 Conclusion

The opposition forces in El Salvador have taken several qualitative leaps over the last half century. They transitioned from dissident political-military organisations that rebelled against the established order through guerrilla actions, to a revolutionary army capable of challenging the power of a state army supported by the continent's hegemonic power (the USA). They were also capable of negotiating new rules for the State and subsequently turned to non-violent politics, fully integrating into the country's legal life, and eventually, they became the ruling party. The FMNL's transformation thus represents a true example of successful transition from being excluded from state decisions to gaining full political inclusion. The Peace Accords of 1992 were the catalysts of this transformation. However, despite the fact that political inclusion was achieved for the FMLN, inclusivity with respect to the demands of society and of the groups that supported its political and military struggle has not been achieved.

The original demands of the organisations that made up the FMLN were related to the poverty of the majority of the population; people's deficient work and living conditions; the lack of space for the full political participation of

dissidents; and the building of a socialist society in which these injustices would be mitigated and a better distribution of wealth would be achieved. However, these demands failed to be addressed by the Peace Accords. Very probably, the war situation and the pressing need to end it with guarantees of inclusion for the rebels, did not make it possible to achieve these demands. It is also probably true, as the UNDP (2013) described it, that the Peace Accord was essentially a political agreement of which not much could be expected in the social and economic spheres, at least not in the short run. Nonetheless, the Peace Accord and the experience of the following ten years do coincide with the objectives set down by the parties when they began to negotiate: peace, respect for human rights, democratisation, and reconciliation. In the words of the Secretary General, the Peace Accord is "a master plan" to achieve these objectives. The political will required to continue to build on the basis of this plan is the responsibility of all Salvadoran women and men.

Twenty-two years later and with the FMLN as the ruling party, can we finally expect inclusivity for the population and their demands? There are no clear signals yet. Public policies in El Salvador are of the populist type, which means that the concept of citizenship[9] has still not found its place in the country. The shadowy pacts with the military in order to alleviate the issue of insecurity might well compromise the subordination of the military to civil power. In addition, the prevailing system has given political parties too many powers with few controls, thus leaving unmonitored spaces open to profit seekers and to the elite's cooptation of institutions. The FMLN is now part of those very elites.

All of the new developments that have taken shape in the last years seem to indicate that although the Peace Accords have already provided all that they could with respect to democratisation, certain challenges that are crucial to the process of democratisation continue to reappear, repositioning themselves as priorities: the economic system that excludes the majority of the population; an elitist political party system that is also exclusionary; social problems that surpass the Government's capacity for action; and the ambivalent role of the military. Perhaps it would be necessary to think further about the need for a second generation of Peace Accords.

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[9] The concept of citizenship implies an awareness of rights. Thus, people are not perceived to be the beneficiaries of the Government's magnanimous will, but rather, as bearers of rights that belong to them and which the Government must guarantee. Citizens are patrons, not clients.

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