

WARID: Guatemala (FAR I, FAR II, OPRA, EGP, URNG) 1965-1995
STARDATE: 1 January 1965
ENDDATE: 31 December 1995
Related cases: El Salvador (FMLN) 1980-1991
Nicaragua (Contras, FDN) 1982-1990
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Conflict overview

Guatemala was under autocratic rule by General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes when violent conflict began in 1960.¹ Left wing guerilla movements fought against the right-wing government, or military rulers in some periods. The most important rebel groups were the Guatemalan Party of Labor (PGT), the Revolutionary Movement 13 November (MR-13), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), the Guerilla Army of the Poor (EGP) and the Revolutionary Organization of Armed People (ORPA). These diverse movements united to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) in 1982. They fought for a socialist and/or communist restructuring of the country, aimed at a fair distribution of land, equal rights for the Indigenas, and a civilian government. They were broadly supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba, the rebels in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Nicaraguan Government until 1990. The governments of Guatemalan were supported by the USA, Israel, Taiwan, Chile, Argentina and South Africa. The government conscripted 700,000 to 900,000 civilians for militias named Civilian Self-defense Patrols (PACs).² The war was the longest and bloodiest in Central America. Socio-economic inequality and the exclusion of the indigenous majority from political participation are considered to be main causes. Class divisions reflected the ethnic structures in Guatemala and have been defined as a “situation approaching de-facto apartheid” (Jonas 2000:20). According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the conflict reached at least 25 fatalities per calendar year in 1965, thereby passing the threshold for an armed conflict. In 1966, Cesar Mendez was elected president, leading to a civilian interlude from 1966 to 1970. However, the armed forces intensified the conflict using major counterinsurgency campaigns. The military gained more control in 1970, when Carlos Arana became president. Up until the early 1980s, the country was dominated by autocratic military governments repressing, in particular, guerilla groups and the indigenous population. General Montt seized gov-

1 Fuentes' presidency followed the murder of Colonel Castillo Armas, who overthrew the democratically elected government with strong support of the USA in 1954 (Jonas 2000: 20).

2 Human Rights Watch 1986 states that 700,000 combatants while the Project of the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI) 1999 estimates 900,000 combatants.

ernmental power on 23 March 1982 by overthrowing elected President Romeo Lucas García.³ Montt annulled the constitution, dissolved the Congress, and suspended political parties. He brutally fought the newly united URNG and a vast amount of civilians were killed, particularly indigenous communities constituting 60% of the Guatemalan population. The scorched earth campaigns of the 1980s initiated by Montt were carried out by Pérez Molina.

In 1983, Montt was deposed by Defense Minister Óscar Humberto Mejía Victores, who also made use of repression and death squads. However, he drafted a new constitution in 1985 and was overthrown in another coup one year later. 1986 marked a more definitive turn to civilian rule and the warring parties began talking to one another. After several breaks in negotiations, the war de facto ended at the end of 1995 (Aylward 2007; Jonas 2000; Krennerich 2000; Reiber 2009; Spence 2004). However, the civil war that had lasted over three decades was only officially terminated on 29 December 1996, when the URNG and the Guatemalan Government signed a peace agreement [**WARENDUC=1; WARENDOS=1**]. Since determining the start and the end of the civil war mostly relies on the recorded fatalities, our coding differs from case-specific literature and proposes 31 years of Guatemalan civil war [**WARDUR=372**].

In the post-war period, the rebel groups were represented by the URNG, whereas the former military government was embodied in the leading figures Efraín Ríos Montt (Guatemalan Republican Front, FRG) and Otto Pérez Molina (Patriotic Party, PP). Being that they also hold significant positions in these parties, the PP and the FRG are taken to be representatives of the former government during the civil war.

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Conflict Encyclopedia does not cover the whole period of the civil war but only twenty-one years of battle-related deaths (1975-1995) and only six years of one-sided violence (1989-1995). It reports 2,192 fatalities due to one-sided violence against civilians committed by the government or the rebels and 1,019 battle-related deaths. Since the UCDP defines armed conflict in terms of at least 25 fatalities per calendar year, we add 25 fatalities to the data per missing year. In sum, the UCDP states about 3,461 deaths during the Guatemalan civil war [**FATALUC=3000**]. Compared to case-specific literature, the death toll according to the UCDP is extremely low. The report by the Truth Commission in the post war period (CEH Report 1999: 13) and Jonas (2000: 17) estimate about 200,000 fatalities [**FATALOS=200000**]. Jonas emphasizes that during one of the most brutal periods during the civil war lasting from mid-1981 to 1983, about 150,000 civilians were killed and “440 villages were entirely wiped off the face of the map” by governmental forces in the genocidal period of the war (Jonas 2000: 24).

3 General García officially assumed power on 1 July 1978. The presidential elections were strongly accused of electoral fraud. Whereas under the previous administration the human rights situation in Guatemala had improved, the regime of Lucas Garcia brought strong repression to Guatemala (Amnesty International 1979: 63).

For 1964, the World Bank assumes a population of 4,610,000 people [**PREWARPO= 4600000**]. Applying the UCDP data to the death toll, the war killed 0.07% of the pre-war population [**INTENSUC=0.07**]. The figure of 200,000 fatalities amounts to 4.35% of the pre-war population [**INTENSOS=4.35**].

The military balance at the end of war

Case-specific literature is generally unanimous in a stalemate marking the end of the civil war (Armony 2000: 266; Malone 2012: 30).⁴ Goodwin underlines that the armed conflict ended with an impasse (2001: 195). Jonas reasons that the revolutionary movements were almost defeated twice, in 1968 as well as 1983, and were, despite the brutality and vast amount of state forces, able to initiate the rebels' resurgence again in the late 1980s. Hence, Jonas argues that neither side was able to win the war militarily and that the end could only be achieved through "genuine political settlement" (Jonas 2000: 18). The guerillas were still able to organize low-level insurgencies [**VICTORY=0**]. Cunningham et al. (2009) states that the rebels controlled territory during the civil war. Jeong (2009: 115) specifies that the rebel groups mostly controlled the western highland region. Being that predominantly indigenous communities lived there, who were strongly oppressed by the government – the population there supported the rebels in the late 1970s. The increased guerilla activity in the highlands led to the rebirth of the movement as an Indigenous rebellion (Jonas 2000: 20). The rebels had strong roots, particularly in the departments of Huehuetenango, Quiche and San Marcos, but lived as "mobile warriors" (Landau 1993: 170). The rebels financed guerilla warfare through abduction and extortion. In 1981, they fully controlled nine of 22 departments of Guatemala and partly controlled nine others (Corum 2004). Rural areas in the west and the south were firmly in rebel hands; occasionally they attacked the capital, Guatemala City. At the end of the war, state forces controlled more territory than the rebels (Jonas 2000: 17). After its scorched-earth warfare from 1980 to 1982, the army established a system of military surveillance over society that resulted in a permanent militarization of people's daily lives. The state militarily controlled the territories through 'Civilian Self-defense Patrols' that were paramilitary groups whose members were forced to control their own communities and 'development poles' (Landau 1993: 192; Sanford 2004: 90-108). As mentioned, state forces displaced about 100,000 to 500,000 indigenous people and killed about 150,000 civilians. Though later judged as genocide (CEH Report 1999: para. 122), in so doing, they were able to take control of the areas that were mainly supporting the rebels [**REBTERR=-1; MORETERR=-1**].

4 Fearon and Laitin (2007: 11) take the Guatemalan Government to be the military victor of the civil war. They state that the rebels were likely completely defeated militarily. Stanley and Holiday (2002: 429) are also convinced of the military defeat of the rebels.

Because of insufficient troop levels and internal fragmentation within the relevant rebel groups, Cunningham et al. (2009) label their fighting capacity as ‘low’ compared to the government; Jonas (2000: 18) supports this assumption [**REBFIGHT= -1**]. During the conflict, the army was professionalized by the USA and did not suffer significant losses. Thus, the government would have been able to continue fighting. Since the URNG was able to keep fighting by initiating low-level insurgencies, the guerilla group and state forces would have been able to continue the civil war [**CONFIGHT=0**].⁵

During the civil war, several leaders from different revolutionary movements were killed by army or paramilitary forces supporting the government (Jonas 2000: 20). However, no leader was assassinated shortly before the war ended [**LEADER=0**].

In sum, the military balance at the end of the war favored the government [**WARBAL= -0.5**].

The military balance in the post-war period

Neither former rebels nor former civilians fighting for the PACs joined the state army or police in the post-war period to any significant degree. The Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society (1996: para. 63b; Kingma 1997: 2) required the army to reduce its personnel and financial capacity by one third in 1997. Although the accords leading to the peace agreement in December 1996⁶ intended to reduce the military governmental power of the former warring party, the army still supported the police (Taft-Morales 2014: 13). Thus, it is plausible that no rebel forces joined the state forces substantially and that state forces continued to consist of the warring party governing during the civil war [**STATEFOR 1996-2012= -1**].

The rebels agreed to disarm their combatants since the demobilization process, which started in early 1997 and was supervised by the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). The rebels, united in the URNG, became a political party but were never part of the post-war government. The war-time government had the state forces at its disposal when the FRG was in office from January 2000 to January 2004, and the PP since 2012 [**SEPFORCE 1996=0, SEPFORCE 1997-1999=d.e., SEPFORCE 2000-2003= -1, SEPFORCE 2004-2011=d.e., SEPFORCE 2012= -1**].⁷

Since the disarmament and demobilization process started in 1997, each warring party possessed armed forces in 1996. At that time, the government employed about 44,200 active men into the ar-

5 Jonas 2000: 31.

6 Several accords were necessary to pave the way to the final Guatemalan peace agreement on 29 Dec 1996. The prior accords are listed by UCDP, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdata/gpcountry.php?id=66&value=#> (19 May 2015).

7 Brett 2008: 54; Jonas 2000: 93.

my and navy along with many paramilitary combatants. Between 800 and 1,100 rebels fought for the URNG in 1996, according to the IISS. However, it also states that about 3,600 combatants were disarmed in 1997 while the UN presents a figure of 2,928 (IISS 1996: 223; MINUGUA 2002: 2). In 1995, the IISS recorded precisely the same figures; there has therefore not been a change this number in favor of one side [**TROOPS 1996=0, TROOPS 1997-2012=n.r.**].

The United Nations states that 535,102 weapons were collected during the disarmament process.⁸ The IISS does not provide any information about the rebels' equipment [**ARMS 1996=n.d., ARMS 1997-2012=n.r.**].

The rebels did not have any considerable territory left in 1996 when the peace agreement was signed. As mentioned, the URNG transformed into a political party that was never part of the government. From January 2000 to January 2004, the FRG founded by ex-dictator Efraín Ríos Montt was in power; after 2012, the PP ruled the country under Pérez Molina [**TERRCON 1996= -1, TERRCON 1997-1999=d.e., TERRCON 2000-2003= -1, TERRCON 2004-2011=d.e., TERRCON 2012= -1**].

Even if the rebels still controlled areas for use as retreats at the end of the war, they were forced to hand them over to the government. This situation favored the former government warring party when in power during the post-war period [**TERRWIN 1996-1999=0, TERRWIN 2000-2003= -1, TERRWIN 2004-2011=0, TERRWIN 2012= -1; VULNERAB 1996-1999=0, VULNERAB 2000-2003= -1, VULNERAB 2004-2011=0, VULNERAB 2012= -1**].

The UN Verification Mission in Guatemala was the peacekeeping mission within the larger civilian and humanitarian MINUGUA mission. It started on 20 January 1997 and was withdrawn on 27 May 1997 [**PEACKEEP 1996=n.r., PEACKEEP 1997=0, PEACKEEP 1998-2012=n.r.**].⁹

The role of external actors was significant in the Guatemalan civil war as it represented a “Cold War civil war” (Jonas 2000: 17): the USA was in favor of the government while the Soviet Union supported the rebels. However, once the Cold War ended, the warring parties lost their support and were pressured to end the conflict, such as in the Central American peace processes in El Salvador and Nicaragua [**P5ALLY 1996-2012=n.r.**].

In sum, the military balance in the post-war period favored the former government during the FRG administration and during the PP government [**POSTBAL 1996= -0.33, POSTBAL 1997= -0.25, POSTBAL 1998-1999= -0.33, POSTBAL 2000-2003= -1, POSTBAL 2004-2011= -0.33, POSTBAL 2012= -1**]. This therefore led to an overall military balance that favored the former government [**BALANCE 1996= -0.42, BALANCE 1997= -0.38, BALANCE 1998-1999= -0.42,**

8 United Nations Peace Operations: Mission's Profile MINUGUA, <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/minugua.htm> (3 May 2015).

9 Fortna 2008; Pillay 2006: 4.

BALANCE 2000-2003= -0.75, BALANCE 2004-2011= -0.42, BALANCE 2012= -0.75].

Economy

The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita more than doubled in the post-war period.

Table: GDP per capita in current USD¹⁰

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population (total)</i>	<i>GDP per capita</i>
1996	10,214,623	1545
1997	10,449,636	1702
1998	10,691,090	1814
1999	10,941,913	1674
2000	11,204,183	1722
2001	11,478,984	1629
2002	11,765,738	1766
2003	12,062,835	1817
2004	12,367,800	1938
2005	12,678,919	2146
2006	12,995,374	2326
2007	13,317,931	2561
2008	13,648,307	2867
2009	13,988,988	2697
2010	14,341,576	2882
2011	14,706,578	3240
2012	15,082,831	3341

The scale of compromise in the post-war period

The URNG became a political party while the government was divided into numerous parties during the civil war. Guatemalan parliamentary and presidential elections took place in 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. The URNG never received double-digit percentage results in parliamentary or presidential elections and remained an opposition party.¹¹

It is common to distinguish between the far-right parties and the moderate ones, though all of them were still closely linked to oligarchic elites. The far-right political parties maintained substantially stronger connections to the former war governments in terms of personnel and ideology than the moderate parties did. We do not identify the governments under either Álvaro Arzú (1996-1999) representing the National Advancement Party (PAN), Óscar Berger (2004-2007) of the Grand National Alliance (GANA), or the National Unity of Hope (UNE) led by Álvaro Colom (2008-2011) as former opponents of the rebels. Since the PAN conducted the final peace negotiations and the UNE represents the social democratic party of Guatemala, we assume that the former military government did not influence them considerably. GANA was an alliance of the PP, the Reform Movement (MR) and the National Solidarity Party (PSN). During the first months of Berger's presidency,

¹⁰ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/guatemala> (14 Apr 2015).

¹¹ The URNG-DIA, an alliance of URNG and the Authentic Integral Development, DIA, achieved about 12% of the votes in the general elections in Guatemala in 1999 (Williams/Seri 2003: 320).

the PP broke with the alliance;¹² thus, GANA did not represent the military administration during the civil war (González 2013: 406).

Instead, governments led by the FRG, under the presidency of Alfonso Portillo (2000-2003), and by the PP, under Otto Pérez Molina of the PP (since 2012), had strong links to the war governments (Does 2013). The former dictator Montt – who founded the FRG in 1989 and is still a leading figure – was responsible for the acts of genocide and the massive human rights violations against the indigenous population in the early 1980s (Jonas 2000: 24). Thus, he is seen as a central figure of the former warring party fighting against the rebels during the civil war (Freedom House 2012: 9). Under Montt's rule, the army general Otto Pérez Molina carried out scorched earth campaigns in the 1980s.¹³ In January 2012, he became president as candidate of the PP [**GOVERN 1996-1999=d.e., GOVERN 2000-2003= -1, GOVERN 2004-2011=d.e., GOVERN 2012= -1**].

Due to the influence by the military lobby, it is likely that leading figures of the war governments had the possibility to informally veto political projects and reforms even though the presidents holding office used a pro-reform rhetoric to win the election (BTI 2012: 13). Moreover, the Guatemalan constitution enables presidents to veto bills. The congress is able to reject this by a two-third majority (Art. 178-179). Thus, there was a veto for political parties connected to the war governments when their leaders held the presidency [**VETO 1996-1999=n.r., VETO 2000-2003= -1, VETO 2004-2011=n.r., VETO=2012= -1; VETOSAT 1996-2012=n.r.**].

Jonas (2000: 17) explains that electoral politics were dominated by army and economic elites, leading to the political exclusion of the majority of the population, particularly the indigenous population; the latter did not have any opportunity to change the situation by electoral means. In this context, Brands (2010: 28) points out that “the country never really recovered from the civil war”. Freedom House states that the Guatemalan parties were allowed to take part in ‘basically free and fair elections’. However, the electoral structures in the country excluded large parts of the population through the electorate register, illiteracy and poor infrastructure [**ELECT 1996-2012=0**].¹⁴

The warring parties did not fight over the question which state certain territories should belong to, and they did not question the borders between federal or regional units [**EXBORDER 1996-2012=n.r.; INBORDER 1996-2012=n.r.; COMPETEN 1996-2012=n.r.**]

The rebels demanded an economic system different to the established one (Edwards 2008: 120). The peace agreement did not demand a drastic change to the economic system but considered limited reforms and measures such as the introduction of a progressive tax system, the increase of the

12 In absence of clear indications to the contrary, we assume that the former military government did not significantly influence the MR or the PSN.

13 Guatemalan Human Rights Commission: The Presidential Candidates, <http://www.ghrc-usa.org/Resources/2011/elections.htm> (19 May 2015).

14 Addicks et al. 2003: 20; Molkenntin 2002: 244; Freedom House labels Guatemala mainly as ‘partly free’, political rights are ranked by 3 to 5: <http://freedomhouse.org/country/nicaragua> (2 May 2015).

tax receipts, and raising public spending on education, health, social security and housing. Despite several fiscal reforms, the main goal of increasing tax revenues up to 12% of GDP was not reached until the end of the period under investigation. Another important element of the mentioned accord was a market-based land reform. Since the URNG was unable to accomplish a comprehensive land reform in the negotiations, a state-administrated land trust fund was established. However, the government was unable to manage the fund appropriately or address grievances of usurped land. Many peasants and returned refugees remain landless; the accord therefore contributed little to overcoming the enormous socioeconomic differences within the Guatemalan society (Jonas 2000: 78-80). To address the extreme inequalities in the country as well as income distribution, both conflict parties approved the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation. Although the accord did not demand extensive reforms, no substantial improvements could be achieved on account of strong opposition from the private sector **[ECONOMY 1996-2012= -1]**.¹⁵

Even though Article 66 of the 1985 Constitution implies the recognition of the Mayan population and demands respect for it, the indigenous population was excluded from the legal, political, economic and social systems of Guatemala.¹⁶ According to the Report of the Truth Commission, “agents of the state committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people” (CEH Report 1999: para. 122). It states that more than 200,000 people were killed during the conflict, 83% were Mayan and 17% Ladino. The report underlines that state forces were responsible for 93% of the violations documented (CEH Report: 1999 para. 15). The rebels fought for the political participation and civil rights of the indigenous population (Bendel 1995: 246). The peace agreement includes an extensive accord on indigenous rights and identity aimed at counteracting discrimination, racism, poverty and cultural vulnerability of the indigenous community. Although several of the important arrangements in this accord – such as the use of indigenous languages in public areas and the categorization of discrimination as a crime in the penal code – were implemented, central promises were, by and large, not kept. Along with around fifty other constitutional reforms essential for the peace agreement, the official definition of the Guatemalan nation as multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual were refused in a popular referendum held in 1999. The implementation of the peace accords’ main issues was blocked and discrimination was not eliminated on account of the rejection of this constitutional reform **[SPECPRO 1996-2012= -1]**.¹⁷

The warring parties did not fight over any other issues during the war **[ISSUE1 1996-2012=n.r.; ISSUE2 1996-2012=n.r.]**. No new issues emerged in the post-war period **[NEWCON 1996-**

15 Coleman 2013: 16-30; Porras Castejón 2008: 11; Stanley/ Holiday 2002: 451-454.

16 World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Guatemala Overview: Maya (updated July 2008) <http://www.minorityrights.org/2555/guatemala/maya.html> (3 May 2015).

17 Coleman 2013: 16; Elsemann 1999: 237; Freedom House 2012: 6; Porras Castejón 2008: 12-18; Stanley/Holiday 2002: 437.

2012=n.r.; NEWCON2 1996-2012=n.r.; BENEFIT 1990-2012=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1990-2012=n.r.].

In sum, political developments in the post-war period strongly favored the former government [COMPROM 1996-1999= -0.67, COMPROM 2000-2003= -0.8, COMPROM 2004-2011= -0.67, COMPROM 2012= -0.8].

Stability of peace

According to the UCDP, the ended civil war has not recurred nor have any other wars broken out in Guatemala [SAMEWAR=0; DATESAME=n.r.; ANYWAR=0; DATEANY=n.r.]. The situation after the civil war did not meet the criteria for a renewed civil war. Nevertheless, Guatemala was still suffering from high levels of (non-military) violence [PEACMON1=204; PEACMON2=204].¹⁸

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Annex

Table 2: Troops in post-war Guatemala (IISS 1995/96-1996/97)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Rebels</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	
1995	44200	950	46.53	1
1996	44200	950	46.53	1