

RISK ASSESSMENT BRIEF

GUATEMALA



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CONFLICT BACKGROUND

Throughout its history Guatemala has been one of the most iniquitous and violent societies in Latin America. Poverty is particularly acute in rural and indigenous communities, where illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition are pervasive (BBC, 2004a). Reforms to address these issues began in the 1940s, but were brought to an abrupt halt in 1954 when a right-wing government came to power in a military coup. Confronted by an emerging guerilla campaign, the government responded with ruthless counter-insurgency measures which precipitated 36 years of entrenched civil conflict. By 1966 both the government/army and guerillas were targeting not only each other, but also civilians considered to be sympathetic to one side or the other. In addition, politically motivated, extreme right-wing “death squads” were also responsible for many civilian deaths. Despite the defeat of effective armed resistance by the 1970s, government forces continued to use violent means to suppress political opposition. Violence climaxed in the 1980s, with as many as 800 killings or disappearances per month. In addition to indiscriminate killings, the government also specifically targeted political opponents, relocated civilians, suspended constitutional guarantees and, when human rights organizations emerged in the mid 1980s, targeted them also. In 1982 four guerrilla armies united as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG). By the 1990s international condemnation and domestic pressure finally led the government to consider peaceful means of ending the conflict. In 1994 both sides agreed to the creation of a UN mission in the country (the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala – MINUGUA), and in 1996 the government and URNG signed a peace agreement that officially ended the armed conflict (Amnesty International). Over the course of the war, between 100,000 and 200,000 people died, and as many as one million were made refugees. A 1999 UN-backed commission determined that government or government-sponsored security forces were responsible for 93% of the deaths (BBC, 2004b).

STRUCTURAL INDICATORS

I. History of armed conflict

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Accord (PA) signed in 1996; UN Verification Mission established to monitor implementation of the Accords Mandate has recently been extended to end of 2004 (BBC, 2004b) • PA outlines sweeping judicial and land reforms • Commission to Investigate Illegal Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatuses (CICIACS) established in January 2004 by UN and Guatemalan government. Still to be approved by parliament, this UN-led commission will investigate and prosecute organized crime groups and clandestine security organizations. It is also intended to have a long-term effect in strengthening local capacities in security and justice (BBC, 2004c) • Most of the estimated one million mostly indigenous refugees who intend to return to their homes have done so (US Committee for Refugees, 2002) • Rigoberta Menchu appointed as “goodwill ambassador” – indigenous Nobel Peace Prize winner will oversee PA implementation (BBC, 2004d) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the PA has been slow. Although as many as 200,000 were killed during the war, very few cases have been brought before the courts • Although Guatemalans are no longer prevented from returning home due to conflict, the UNHCR is concerned that lack of political will and resources to assist returnees is a barrier to their reintegration (US Committee for Refugees, 2002) • 2002 MINUGUA report declared a deterioration in the human rights situation (MINUGUA, 2002) • Berger has made no formal commitment to make land reform a priority • Decision to provide back-pay of ex-PAC members is creating new tensions (Helweg-Larsen, 2003a)

II. Governance and Political Instability

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oscar Berger (GANA) elected President and inaugurated 14 January 2004; defeat of ex-General Rios Montt and FRG party • Historical Clarification Commission report published February 1999. • Court case opened against General Rios Montt on January 20, 2003 (Helweg-Larson 2004) • <i>National Compensation Program</i> instituted by President Portillo to compensate victims of civil war (Freedom House 2003) • Guatemala is a recent signatory to the Protocol of the Convention Against Torture (Sept. 2003) and a State Party to the Mine Ban Treaty (Sept. 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread impunity continues for human rights violators and perpetrators of crime; human rights organizations continue to be targets of death threats and victims of violence (Freedom House 2003). • Access to the political process still limited for over half of the population (CIDCM, 2002b) • Judicial system remains ineffectual for most legal and human rights complaints (Freedom House 2003). • Journalists continue to face intimidation and harassment for their work; all four of Guatemala's private television stations are owned by one individual (Freedom House 2003) • Hard-liners forced to retire from the military have attempted to maintain power by creating criminal cartels implicated in illegal drug trade (CIDCM, 2002b)

V. Militarization

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New president Berger stated that he will limit the military budget of 2004 to 0.66% of GDP as required by PA, and that he will cut military spending to \$158.5 million (Helweg-Larsen 2004) • In 1999 Guatemala devoted lowest percentage of GDP to military spending in Central/South America (Nationmaster.com 2002) • Berger stated that he would reduce the armed forces by one third (10,000 soldiers) (Helweg-Larsen 2004) • Armed forces per 1000 people – 2.33 – is near the Central and South American average of 2.36 (Nationmaster.com 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military expenditure as percentage of GDP has increased from 0.7 to 1.0 between 1997 and 2001 (FIRST 2003) • Military expenditure in constant USD (2000) has gone from \$123 to \$185 million between 1997 and 2001 (FIRST 2003) • Military still involved in police activities and narco-trafficking (Helweg-Larsen 2003a,b)

III. Population Heterogeneity

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No religious rivalries (US Dept. of State 2001) • Absence of overt government repression towards the indigenous community since 1996 (MAR 2002) • Ethnic identity represented by the Guatemala National Revolutionary Unit (URNG), which became a political party in 1998. Labour and land rights are represented by the National Federation of Peasant Organizations (CNOC) and the Equality Committee on Indigenous People's Land Rights (Ibid.) • 1999 Referendum on Indigenous Rights was a step towards political inclusion (AI 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 ethnic groups and languages, aprx. 42% indigenous (CIA 2003) • Ladino, the non-Mayan group, dominant since the Spanish conquest. Historical exclusion of indigenous groups. (MAR 2002) • Political discrimination, social exclusion and limited land access suffered by indigenous groups who claim less than a quarter of total income and consumption (WB GUAPA 2003) • Slow implementation of the Agreement on Identity and Rights for Indigenous People signed in March 1995 (AI 2003)

IV. Environmental Stress

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arable land accounted for 17.5% of total in 1998. Central American & Caribbean average was 16%, and world average was 11.3% (WRI 2003a) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of deforestation between 1990 and 2000 was 16%, Central American & Caribbean average was 11%, and world average was 2% (WRI 2003b) • As of 1999, there were 172 ha of cropland per 1000 people. Central American & Caribbean average was 255 ha, and world average was 251 ha (WRI 2003a)

VIII. Economic Performance

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good macroeconomic management by Central Bank (DFAIT 2003, US Dept. of State 2003) • Relatively low debt (World Development Indicators 2003) • Stable debt servicing arrangements, accounting for only 9.0% of exports; world average is 37% for developing nations (World Development Indicators 2003) • Increasing foreign direct investment, quadrupling between 1990 and 2000 (UNDP HDR 2003), though recently stalled (World Development Indicators 2003, US Dept. of State 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDP per capita low for the region, and ranked 120th in terms of purchasing power parity (World Bank International Comparison Program Ranking 2001) • GDP currently not keeping pace with population growth (US Dept. of State 2003) • GDP growth not being distributed equally, with preponderance of growth going to the rich; growth in rural areas sluggish or non-existent (<i>Poverty in Guatemala 2003</i>) • Income distribution is extremely unequal, with a Gini ranking of 55.8, ranked 15th worst in the world (UNDP HDR 2003) • Poverty estimates range from 50 – 80% of the population, with 15% living in “extreme poverty;” moreover, much of rural poor considered to be in a position of chronic poverty (<i>Poverty in Guatemala</i>, US Dept. of State 2003, World Development Indicators 2003) • Rural poor, largely dependent upon cash crops, are vulnerable to vagaries of the market; e.g. the 2001-02 coffee crisis (US Dept. of State 2003, ICO 2002)

VI. Human Development

Peace-generating factors	Conflict generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of the material living standards over the past decade: 92% of total population has sustainable access to an improved water source, and 81% has access to improved sanitation (UNDP HDI 2003) • Increase in primary school enrolment since the PA to 84% (Ibid.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranks poorly for health standards, among the worst in LAC countries; average life expectancy at birth is 65 years (CIA 2003); infant mortality rate is 43 per 1000 live births; maternal mortality rate is 190 per 100 000 live births (UNICEF 2001), number of adults (age 15-49) living with AIDS has increased to 1% (UNAIDS 2001) • Secondary school enrolment is 26% and children (10-14 yrs) comprise 12.6% of the labour force; an issue particularly among rural and indigenous populations (UNDP HDI 2003) • Ranks 119/175 in the Human Development Index (Ibid.)

VII. International Linkages

Peace-generating factors	Conflict-generating factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA); mandate extended to end of 2004 (US Dept. of State 2004b) • UN-led Commission to Investigate Illegal Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatuses (CICIACS), 2004 (Freedom House 2004) • US and EU governments are providing financial assistance to implement the PA and strengthen civil society in Guatemala (Human Rights Watch, 2003) • OAS Special Program of Support for Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Guatemala established with international support in July 2001 (OAS 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transnational crime

- Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with the US, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras, December 2003. The Agreement will purportedly help foster economic growth, improve living standards, and create higher paying jobs in Guatemala by reducing and eliminating regional barriers to trade and investment. It remains to be seen whether free trade will reduce or aggravate inequality in Guatemala (US Dept. of Agriculture 2004)

STAKEHOLDERS

Key Actors/ Stakeholders	Peace-generating	Conflict-generating
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oscar Berger and GANA (Gran Alianza Nacional) • NGOs/Civil society • Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) • United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) • National Civilian Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rios Montt and FRG (Frente Republicano Guatemalteco) • Clandestine groups • ex-PACs (Civilian Self-Defence Patrols) • Corrupt officials
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of American States (OAS) • United States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transnational drug cartels
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations • European Union • International civil society 	

OUTCOME SCENARIOS

Worst-case scenario:

At the end of 2004 the Peace Accords are still far from being fully implemented, but MINUGUA nevertheless pulls out as planned. Protests in reaction to still-unresolved grievances surrounding land and judicial issues grow in strength and violence, precipitating government crackdowns. Meanwhile, lack of progress in strengthening civil police and the judicial system means that violence and other human rights abuses continue to go unpunished. A weak and increasingly unpopular government is unable to halt the re-emergence of armed groups on both the left and the right. All progress on the Peace Accords ceases.

Best-case scenario:

Under the new government, implementation of the Peace Accords continues apace, with particular emphasis on land reform and indigenous and worker's rights. MINUGUA continues to extend its mandate until implementation is complete. Accountability is established through the increasingly efficient investigation and prosecution of human rights abuses and other crimes. With the transfer of resources from military to civil police the level of violence gradually subsides. Trade liberalization under the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) promotes economic growth and new jobs. Within a year or two Guatemala is firmly on the road to political stability and (further down the road) economic redistribution.

Most likely scenario:

Berger will tackle some reforms with more energy than others. In the face of violent backlashes he will push ahead in strengthening the police and judicial systems and, together with the Commission to Investigate Illegal Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatuses (CICIACS), work to address the human rights situation. However, human rights abuses, assassinations and intimidation will continue for some time, and may even increase in the near term before declining. Berger will carry out reductions in the size and budget of the military, reducing fears of a return to the government violence of the past. Land reform and other efforts to improve the situation for Guatemala's indigenous population will be less forthcoming. Political stability and economic growth will not significantly improve the country's vast inequality. In short, progress towards implementation of the Peace Accords will continue to be slow and uneven.

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