Militarization and Democracy in Honduras, 1954-1963*

Kirk Bowman
The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0610
kirk.bowman@inta.gatech.edu

ABSTRACT

Honduras is often described as a perpetual basket-case with a tradition of military control of political power. In this paper, I present the results of an examination of newspapers and other archival data from the 1954-1963 period. One interesting finding is that a long-running and sophisticated public debate over the pros and cons of militarization appeared in the Honduran newspapers. This public forum demonstrated both a wide divide among Hondurans over military policy and also a sophisticated grasp of the ramifications of building up the armed forces. Evidence strongly supports previous claims that no coherent military institution existed in the country prior to 1954. I argue that prospects for democratic consolidation in the 1957-1963 period would have been quite favorable without the dramatic and sudden rise in military power and autonomy.

LASA98
Chicago

Note: This paper is part of a comparative historical study which includes Costa Rica. The Costa Rican section is not included due to length limitations. If you would like a copy of the Costa Rican component, please contact me.

*Field-work was funded by the Social Science Research Council's International Predissertation Fellowship Program with funds provided by the Ford Foundation and the Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies with funds provided by the Tinker Foundation.

Introduction

This paper re-analyzes democratization in Honduras in the 1950-1963 period. This is part of a larger project which seeks to explicitely explore the relationship between militarization and democracy in Latin America during the Cold War. The data are derived in large measure from archival research and a reading of the Honduran newspapers of the time-period. Two principal findings resulted.

Perhaps the most interesting and surprising finding is that the militarization issue engendered a long-running and serious national debate in Honduras. Hondurans were deeply divided over whether they should build a strong military institution or follow the Costa Rican model. Many editorials in the 1950s eerily predicted the results of the creation of a strong military caste in the country.

The second key point of the paper is that democracy in Honduras was not predestined to fail due to sociological or econonomic conditions. Indeed, many factors in the country were favorable for democracy. I conclude that the sudden and dramatic emergence of a strong and autonomous military institution was a principal factor in the breakdown of democracy in 1963.

Before I present the case, it is prudent to first introduce the logic of counterfactuals. The use of counterfactuals and the criticism of that strategy have been around for generations (see Tetlock and Belkin 1996a for a full discussion). Yet, many social scientists have concluded--and I think correctly--that counterfactuals are an inevitable element of any comparative research (Przeworski in Kohli 1995, 20). Even statistical research that purports to show that the dependent variable varies with changes in the causal variable is often interpreted by social scientists with counterfactual reasoning: If case A would have reduced causal variable X by 50%, then case A would have achieved a score of Z in the dependent variable. Tetlock and Belkin (1996b, 3) argue that we "can avoid counterfactuals only if we eschew all causal inference and limit ourselves to strictly noncausal narratives of what actually happened." The Honduran case is implicitly based on a counterfactual: Without an autonomous military in 1963, a golpe de estado would not have occurred and democracy would have endured at least another day. The issue in causal comparative research is not whether one uses counterfactuals, but whether it is explicit or implicit in the argument.

Tetlock and Belkin (1996b, 18) and Dawes (1996) provide advice on how to produce better counterfactual inferences. Dawes in particular insists that causally convincing counterfactuals must be derived or justified by statistical analyses; "I argue that good counterfactual inferences--again, productive, reasonable, helpful ones--should be point predictions arising from statistical expectations" (1996, 301). That is, stand-alone counterfactuals should not produce much confidence.

The counterfactuals detailed in this chapter are not presented in a vacuum but rather are supported by two sets of evidence. First, they confirm or are "point-predictions" of my previous work that statistically demonstrates that militarization has a strong, robust and negative impact on democracy in Latin America during the Cold War era (Bowman 1996). Second, the Honduran case study is part of a comparative project which includes Costa Rica. These two countries are most similar cases that fit Lijphart's matching procedure (1975) for maximizing causal inferences in comparative research with two cases. That is, Costa Rica and Honduras differ on the dependent variable (democracy) and the causal variable (militarization) and are similar on a large number of control variables.[1] Combined, the statistical study, the comparative-historical study, and the embedded and explicit counterfactuals generate as much causal inference as can be expected in non-experimental research. This paper serves to illuminate the causal mechanisms and establish agency and sequence in the causal relationship between militarization and democracy.

Theoretical Expectations

Democratic waves have been largely driven by changes in numbers of democracies in Latin America (Huntington 1991; Muller 1988, 55). Democratic collapse in Latin America has always featured military involvement. It is therefore puzzling that the militarization variable is often excluded from quantitative studies which seek to determine the optimal conditions for democratic regimes (either transition or endurance). One of the few exceptions is Muller's study which shows the link between U.S. military assistance and democratic collapse (1985). The other exceptions are Hadenius (1992) and Bowman (1996) which both establish a significant negative relationship between size of military and democracy. I maintain that large militaries undermine democracy in Latin America because the institutional power of the military can be used by economic and political forces to protect their interests; interests that can be threatened by democracy. During the Cold War, three principal sets of actors interacted with the military to the detriment of democracy. The first is economic actors, especially the oligarchy who have used and continue to this day to utilize the armed forces to protect their material interests. The second is political actors. Politicians who feel that the democratic cards are stacked against them--either due to electoral fraud or lack of popular support--may look to other means to gain or maintain power. That other means in Latin America almost always was the military when the regime was democratic. And finally, during the Cold War the United States' primary interest was to win the war against communism. Whenever this interest was perceived to be in conflict with democracy,

[1]These countries are very similar on many control variables. Bananas and coffee are the two leading exports and the countries have very similar resource endowments. Neither case had the forced labor conditions of El Salvador and Guatemala and to a lesser degree of Nicaragua. Both are Mestizo countries and lack large marginalized ethnic groups; although both have small marginalized ethnic groups. Both had agricultural frontiers and an "escape valve" for those seeking land. Neither had a history of a permanently strong military institution as did Guatemala and El Salvador. Neither experienced a civil war during the era of the Cuban Revolution. Both border Nicaragua and faced serious pressures from the US during the Sandinista years. Neither country had a violently repressive oligarchy. And Costa Rica and Honduras had the two strongest union movements in Central America circa 1950.

democracy was the likely loser. The US-Latin American military relationship was a strong negative force for democracy during this long era.[2]

Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992) argue that democracy results from certain power relations. The first and most important power relation is class. The oligarchy is oft-times opposed to democracy because they have power and resources and democracy may lead to an absolute decline of both. When threatened with a loss of power to middle class forces or new entrepreneurs and uncertain of protection through a strong party system, the oligarchy often opted out of democracy and utilized the military as their ally and tool (1992, 216). While progressive military coups have occurred, they are rare and ephemeral. According to one of the foremost observers of militarization and democracy, the Latin American military has generally "served to maintain the economic and social status quo of the oligarchs" and has "opposed social change whenever the social change involved the reduction of the power and privileges of the oligarchy" (personal interview with Oscar Árias, November 24, 1997, San José, Costa Rica). Even in countries such as Uruguay where military intervention is relatively uncommon, "the Uruguayan army has intervened in the political scene every time it was necessary for the dominant groups" (Minello 1981, 195). If this class-power argument is correct, we should find clear evidence that the elites called upon the military in Honduras to overthrow democracy when their interests where threatened. For the Costa Rican case, we should expect clear evidence that the elite were hampered in their attempts to overthrow Figueres because they had no heavily armed potential ally within the country.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that militaries do not typically seize power alone. "A military clique rarely launches a 'putschist' adventure without a sectional endorsement or without an alliance with civilian groups....Contrary to a view marked by liberal ethnocentrism...there do not exist two worlds entrenched like two camps prepared for battle, with civilians on one side and the military on the other" (Rouquié 1986, 133). Dana Munro noted in 1918 that in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala, military officers were usually tools of civilians and politicians (1918, 42-43).

The second important power relation for democracy is transnational power. In particular, the United States during the Cold War built up the repressive arm of the state and assisted the creation of oligarchic-military alliances which undermined democracy (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992, 227). The fear of communism spreading to Latin America resulted in the United States extending the Mutual Security Program of 1949 to Latin America in 1951. Building up powerful military institutions became a core component of the war against communism. The first pact was signed with Ecuador in January of 1952. In 1954, in preparation for the overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz, Mutual Defense Agreements were signed with Honduras and Nicaragua. In 1955, Guatemala under Castillo Armas became the 12th Latin American country to sign (Lieuwin 1965, 91-92). Since Costa Rica had constitutionally proscribed the military in 1949, the effect of U.S. policy was limited. The same was not true for Bolivia where the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR) wanted to emasculate the Bolivian military after the Revolution of 1952--soon after the change in U.S. policy (Malloy 1970,

[2]The literature on impact of militarization on democracy in relation to these sets of actors is immense. Some exemplars include Black (1986), Blasier (1985), Finer (1988), Lieuwin (1960, 1964), Loveman (1994, 1997), and Lowenthal (1991).

184). With U.S. encouragement and assistance the Bolivian military rose from the ashes and "became so powerful that they were able to overthrow Paz in November 1964" (Blasier 1985, 145). What was permitted in Costa Rica in 1948 was unacceptable in Bolivia only a few years later. The United States adopted anti-communism as their predominant interest--even above democracy--and strong militaries girded the policy. This chapter will demonstrate the linkage between US policy, military build-up, and the subsequent collapse of democracy; Honduras 1954-1963 is an exemplar.[3]

The third power relation that matters for democracy according to Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens is structure, strength, and autonomy of the state apparatus (1992, 292). The larger the military, the more it can dominate and overwhelm civilian sectors of the state. If "the organizations of coercion and violence--the military--are strong within the overall state apparatus, the situation is quite unfavorable for democracy" (67; see also Stepan 1988). A strong military with excessive power within the state can retard the development of state capacity and other political institutions. Politics can become dependent on military tutelage. This will be shown in the case of Honduras.

Of course these three power relations--classes and class coalitions, transnational power relations, and the state apparatus--are all interrelated. The Latin American military has often resided at the intersection of these three power constellations and where their impact has been strong, the results have been unfavorable for democracy. In Costa Rica, where the military has been effectively eliminated from that intersection, democracy has thrived.

The Case of Honduras

"Every time that our country's name appears with profusion in the international press, it is because something bad has happened. Never, or almost never, are we mentioned for some positive action, for something that would really make us proud" (Meza 1981, 23). Two negative images have dominated popular press accounts of Honduras: the banana republic and the militarized state. During the first half of this century, popular magazines regularly referred to this country as the quintessential banana-republic, and with good reason. Bananas totally dominated the country's exports and banana companies strongly influenced the country's politics. Political battles between Samuel Zemurrey (the Banana-Man) and the United Fruit Company (the Octopus) often helped determine the country's president and led to wars and regular intervention of U.S. marines.[4] Domestic and international peace were only possible after the banana arch-enemies fused in 1929 (Pérez 1988, 119).[5] Heavy reliance on bananas has long been pointed to as a weakness for Honduras. Torres-Rivas observes that the banana is in many respects an

[3]U.S. policy towards Latin America has critics and supporters. One of the most favorable interpretations of U.S. intentions is Tony Smith (1994) while a more damning picture is painted by LaFeber (1984). Pastor asserts that on balance, U.S. policy has helped Latin American democracy more than it has harmed it (1992, 200). Schoultz posits that U.S. policy has been sub-optimal because it is based on the historical U.S. perception that Latin Americans are inferior and less than trustworthy (1998).

[4]An excellent and dispassionate account of U.S. political and economic influence in Honduras in the 1907-1932 period is Barahona 1989).

[5]Zumurrey's Cuyamel Banana Company supported the Liberal Party and the United Fruit Company supported the National Party.

inferior product to the coffee bean,[6] for it pays lower taxes and evolves into the classic enclave whose economic logic is "incomprehensible" as it leaves few longstanding benefits for the host country (1975, 60-66).[7] In contrast to the earlier news reports, media stories in the 1960-1990 time-period most often focused on an intransigent and anti-democratic military caste, the human rights abuses of the security forces, and the U.S.-Honduran military alliance against the Sandinistas.

Whether dominated by the banana companies or the generals, Honduras has always been portrayed as a basket-case and a pliable and obedient dependency of the United States. The country has suffered from extreme instability, meddling from more powerful neighbors, poor soil, a dispersed population isolated by poor communication and transportation, slow development of national identity,[8] poverty, stifling debt,[9] and inadequate education. Democracy has not fared well in Honduras in the post-1950 period. Looking at the country's economic, political, and transnational challenges, it is easy to conclude that democracy never had a chance in the 1950-1980 period.

This section argues that, in fact, Honduras did have a chance to develop a democratic polity in the post-1950 period. In the 1950s there were many factors that favored democratic

---

[6]There are many explanations for the late-development of the coffee industry (see Williams 1994; Euraque 1996). I would argue that the Honduran state lacked the capacity to simultaneously nurture coffee and banana production and they chose bananas.

[7]There have recently appeared studies which contradict the notion that the banana-enclave had only negative effects on the local economy and that the decision to feature bananas as the prime export was illogical. Bulmer-Thomas (1993) shows that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Honduras had more total exports than any other Central American country and double that of Costa Rica. In 1930, Honduras had the highest per capita GDP on the isthmus (Bulmer-Thomas 1993). Posas (1993, 117-123, 126) disputes the oft-held view that the Honduran elites traded favorable tax laws in exchange for bribes. Honduras always followed Costa Rica's lead in terms and conditions for the banana companies and many times were able to obtain more favorable conditions than the Costa Ricans. The Honduran officials believed that the benefits of banana capital would be shared with local banana producers and small industrials. For example, banana lots be alternated between locally-owned producers and the transnational banana companies so that the locals could benefit from transportation. The banana companies also diversified and invested heavily in local businesses. The Vaccaro Brothers founded many companies including the most important bank in the country. Indeed, if an economist visited Central America in 1930, Honduras would be the success story. In addition to having the highest receipts from exports and the highest per capita GDP, it was also the only country paying its foreign debt. Honduras's banana miracle went sour with diseases and natural disasters that greatly reduced exports in the post-1930 period (Ellis 1983; Kepner and Soothill, 1949). Euraque (1996) reveals how banana money led to the emergence of a progressive, pro-democratic, and dynamic petite bourgeoisie on the Honduras North Coast. Barahona also concludes that the banana companies had an overall positive and "dynamizing" economic effect for the country (1989, 239).

[8]See Barahona (1991).

[9]In 1888 Honduran debt was higher than the land value of the entire territory (Euraque 1996, 4).

government: The country was finally relatively stable; there was no history of an aristocracy[10]; the landed oligarchy was relatively weak; labor unions were flexing their muscles; forced labor was not a problem; a progressive and dynamic new business class was evolving on the North Coast which had important pro-democratic effects; the military was nearly non-existent; two traditional political parties existed; and small-holding coffee production was exploding, leading Stokes in the 1940s to envision "the development of a kind of rural, agrarian democracy" (1950, 24). While Martz's 1959 portrayal of the country is less than optimistic, he noted that there was no inherent or structural reason for the country to flounder. He also saw "promise of an improved and more enlightened approach to Honduran problems" after the first year of the Villeda presidential term (1959, 163).

Unfortunately, this promise would be dashed as the emergence of a powerful military institution after 1954 negatively impacted all three of the power relations important for democracy. This case is useful for our purposes as it is an excellent contrast to the Costa Rican case and spotlights the causal mechanism whereby militarization's impact on class, transnational, and state power relations impacts democracy. When moderate progressive reforms were announced in the sexenio of President Ramón Villeda Morales, an alliance between the now-powerful military and the oligarchy tipped the democratic scales away from the emerging pro-democracy coalition of students, labor, and small capitalists. In Costa Rica, in contrast, the oligarchy did not have such an ally and was forced to seek one in Castillo Armas, Somoza, Pérez, and Trujillo. The United States and the United Fruit Company both nourished the expanding role of Honduran militarism and paved the way for the end of the six-years of civilian government. Try as they might, the United States was unable to build a professional military in Costa Rica. And finally, the Honduras case demonstrates quite clearly how the powerful and autonomous military can overwhelm the strength and autonomy of the state.

The Honduran case is also useful juxtaposed to that of Costa Rica because it provides an unambiguous answer to the oft-made proposition that the proscription of the military in Costa Rica was unimportant since the institution was weak and debilitated by 1948; the proscription merely formalized the situation. As we shall see, the military was much weaker in the Honduran case but in the environment that the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution provided, could grow rapidly into the dominant political actor in the country. We begin with a brief review of the Honduran military and Honduran politics.

Among Central American countries, Honduras has the longest tradition of two dominant parties--the Liberals and the Nationals. The Liberal Party was formed in 1891 by one the country's most successful presidents, Policarpo Bonilla. The National Party was originally a break-away group of Liberals led by Manuel Bonilla. Until 1948, the Nationals and the Liberals were the only official political parties in the country. The parties have largely served as mechanisms for gaining power and distributing patronage and have not held distinct visions for governing the country, save that the National Party has been more stridently anti-communist. For many years, the two parties were aligned with rival North American banana companies, the Liberals with Cuyamel and the Nationals with United Fruit. The military has been strongly allied

[10]During a mining depression in the 17th century, the wealthiest families abandoned Honduras. This is one of the principal factors for the lack of an aristocratic tradition and the absence today of last names of Spanish nobility that endures in other Latin American countries (Oquelí 1983, 8).

with the National Party. While Hondurans have shown displeasure with the corruption, nepotism, and failure of the principal parties, alternative parties have never captured a significant portion of the electorate. Among Central American countries, Honduras also has the strongest labor unions and organized peasant associations. As in Costa Rica, the Caribbean plains proved to be fertile not only for bananas but for organized labor. Labor and peasant organizations were largely wiped out under the rule of Tiburcio Carías (1932-1948). By the mid-1950s peasants and workers would become an organized force to be reckoned with; and the reckoning alternated between eras of cooptation/comprimise (1958-1962, 1972-1975, 1990s) and eras of conflict/repression (1963-1972, 1978-1980s). As in Costa Rica, even the most progressive political leaders worked to weaken the more radical organizations with even indirect links to communism and replace them with anti-communist unions and peasant organizations.

One of the common errors committed by observers of modern Central America is to believe that these countries were always saddled with powerful and professional military institutions. Yashar and others single out Costa Rica as the exception in Latin America for having a small military as measured by soldiers per capita (1997, 53). In fact, in the first half of this century, Costa Rica had more soldiers per capita than Honduras; the military was also more institutionalized in Costa Rica than in Honduras (Muñoz 1990, 167). Unlike any of the other five Central American republics, the military had no political influence in Honduras 1900-1950. Indeed, in Honduran newspapers before 1954, it is difficult to find any mention of the military institution. In Stokes's landmark 1950 study of the politics of Honduras, the armed forces are conspicuously absent from the discussion of important political actors. Honduras did not have an institutionalized and professional armed forces until the 1950s (Funes 1995; Ropp 1974; Salomón 1992). The lack of forced labor may have inhibited early militarization. "At any rate, the existence in El Salvador and Guatemala by the late nineteenth century of relatively strong military academies, supported by relatively solid financial ties with their respective states, permitted, generally speaking, more organic relationships between coffee oligarchies in these countries and 'their' governments. Such relationships resulted from the repressive police force and military necessary to sustain the exploitative labor relations" that did not exist in Honduras or Costa Rica (Euraque 1996, 49).

This does not mean that the country was free of militarist caudillos and civil war. There were 146 military engagements between 1870 and 1949, most having fewer than 50-100 deaths (Euraque 1996, 45). These revolts were simple and fierce quests for political power which for the most part resulted from the fact that winning presidential candidates rarely received the fifty percent of the vote necessary to win the elections. When the candidate with the most votes was denied office by the congress, a revolt often ensued. The opposing sides were not militaries but largely unorganized militias. The combatants were not professional soldiers, and are well described by a U.S. diplomat:

> Many, perhaps the majority of the men which made up the armies' litigants did not know why they fought....On the other hand many were primarily interested, which is natural given the circumstances, in ending up on the winning side; and when the momentum of the battle shifted, desertion was complete. The commanders had no uniforms, just armbands. The soldiers were not liberals or conservatives but merely blues or reds. It was not uncommon that a blue soldier carried in his

> pocket an armband of the reds or vice-a-versa, and he did not hesitate in changing when the moment arrived. (Quoted in Funes, 1995, 115)

In the 1924 elections, an attorney, farmer, algebra professor, and long time political militant named Tiburcio Carías was the choice of the National Party. An imposing figure with experience in many political rebellions, Carías won the election with 49,453 votes compared to 35,474 for the runner-up. Unfortunately, Carías was some 3,681 votes short of an absolute majority and crisis resulted when Carías opponents refused to attend the congress, denying a quorum and a Carías victory. After intervention from the United States and months of civil violence, Carías agreed to let his running mate take the presidency. In 1928 Carías ran again, and was the surprise loser to the Liberal Vicente Mejía Colindres. Carías sent his congratulations to the new president and peace reigned in the country. In 1932 Carías decisively defeated his Liberal challenger, Angel Zúñiga Huete and actually won more than the requisite fifty percent. The Liberals revolted and were quickly defeated. Carías remained in the presidency for the next sixteen years (see Argueta 1988).

Carías, who quickly gave himself the title of general, was a caudillo and a dictator who exiled his enemies, massacred protesters,[11] and clamped down on the press. He also built roads, balanced the budget, and brought a good deal of stability to the country. He saw little reason to build an army. "In a very deliberate manner, Carías was able to keep the military non-professional....This was so, because he distrusted, and the facts tend to confirm it, an autonomous and well-organized military, with the requisite amount of power in its hands to become the arbiter of Honduran political life" (Argueta 1988, 123).[12] "Two famous phrases are attributed to Doctor and General Tiburcio Carías Andino. One makes allusions to loans and the other to the military. On the first he said that he was not interested in taking loans because in the end Honduras would be robbed. On the second he expressed that he was not interested in forming an army because...it would be dangerous" (Funes 1995, 145).

The stability enjoyed by Honduras and the charisma and hospitality of the caudillo led Stokes to paint an apologetic portrayal of Carías and express high hopes for the political development of the country. The caudillo had set the foundation of stability and a rural democracy could now emerge (1950). When he left office in January 1949, his hand-picked successor took over after an unchallenged election.

> Juan Manuel (Gálvez) is the most honorable and honest man in my government. He is the only one to whom I can confer the power to soften the bitterness caused by my long term in the Presidential House; he is going to grasp a hot coal in his

[11]Carías was much less repressive and violent than his counterparts in Guatemala and El Salvador. In 1944, 100 protesters were massacred by the police in San Pedro Sula which contributed to Carías leaving office in 1949 (Weaver 1994, 144). Argueta and Quiñónes posit that the subservient Carías--"If Carías sinned, it was in being overly loyal to North American interests"--was eased out by Americans as the end of the Second World War and the Cold War made support of dictators suddenly embarrassing (1983, 127).

[12]There was an air force with U.S. planes and U.S. pilots that Carías used to maintain order (Argueta 1988, 116). Carías also had contracts with the commercial airliners so that they would drop bombs instead of delivering the mail if he requested (Argueta 1988, chapter 9).

> hands, which he will have to put out little by little. This is the only way to save the democratic institutions, the interests of the country, the lives and belongings of all of you. This is why I have arranged for him to arrive without obligations to the Presidency of the Republic. You should respect my decision made for the good of Honduras. (Carías quoted in Argueta 1990, 75).

The four years of Gálvez were years of great change for the country. Much more urbane and progressive than his predecessor, Gálvez allowed greater opposition, freer speech, labor organization, and oversaw the strengthening of the state apparatus with the founding of the Central Bank and a state investment bank, an income tax, agro-industrial entities, and a cotton gin (Argueta 1990, 76). He also paid off the onerous British railroad loan that had been on the books for over a century (Argueta and Quiñónes 1983, 128). Under Gálvez, "Honduras became more pluralistic and dynamic than ever before. New political interest groups developed among campesinos and urban laborers. And the army could do little about these changes because it was not yet a self-conscious, professional institution" (LaFeber 1984, 132).

In a daring and compelling interpretation of Honduran development, Euraque shows that by mid-century a strong commercial and industrial sector had emerged on the Honduran North Coast (1996). Rather than the enclave sucking out all capital and stifling local business dynamism, the banana companies of Samuel Zemurrey and others actually provided seed money and partnership for the development of new Honduran small industrialists independent of the established oligarchic land-holders and the political families. These new forces were in a many ways reformists who supported a modernized economy and democratic openings.[13] Coupled with increased student and labor activism, a strong pro-democratic coalition existed in the country for the first time.

In the annals of Honduran history, 1954 will always be a critical year of watershed events that shaped the future of the country; the great banana strike, the use of Honduran soil to launch the invasion against Arbenz, and the signing of the Bilateral Treaty of Military Assistance with the United States. The great banana strike began on 2 May 1954 when a workers' spokesman was terminated for demanding extra pay for work on Sunday. Within days, some 25,000 UFCO workers and 15,000 Standard Fruit workers were on a strike that would last sixty-nine days and would cost millions of dollars (Schulz and Schulz 1994, 20-23). Miners, brewers, and other workers soon joined the strike, letting loose pent-up frustration from the stifling Carías years; the modern Honduran working class was born. What is surprising, is that many among the national bourgeoisie and especially the North Coast emerging industrialists, who had received seed money from banana companies, supported the striking workers. North Coast elites donated large sums of money to the striking workers and many commercial and manufacturing elites formed the Committee to Help the Banana Strikers (Euraque 1996, 92-94). The strike was finally settled through repression and incentives and a U.S.-assisted campaign to smear the strikers as communists collaborators of the Arbenz government. The resulting settlement was a

[13]This industrial group was immigrant-controlled, largely Christian Arabs (Euraque 1996, 30-35). While successful in business and influential in politics, Hondurans of Arab decent were long excluded from political office. In recent years this has changed drastically and the 1997 election of Carlos Flores Facusse as president reveals the full integration of the Arab community into all activities.

disappointment, but the strike was a long-term victory as it resulted in the legalization of unions, an eight-hour day, paid vacations, and overtime pay (Schulz and Schulz 1994, 20-23).

The second important event in 1954 was Gálvez permitting the use of Honduran soil for the U.S.-inspired invasion of elected President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. The negative impact of Honduran involvement in this anti-democratic action goes far beyond the stain of shame for the country and the Gálvez regime. On 20 May 1954, in a quid pro quo for Honduran support for the Castillo Armas invasion and as a continuation of U.S. policy of military assistance treaties,[14] the U.S. and Honduras sign a Bilateral Agreement of Military Assistance (Salomón 1992, 7). The agreement calls for U.S. military aid in exchange for free access to any "raw and semi-processed materials required by the United States of America as a result of deficiencies or potential deficiencies in its own resources" (Ropp 1974, 504-528). The First Infantry Battalion is organized by the United States on July 20 1954--less than one month after the fall of Arbenz--and remains under U.S. jurisdiction until August of 1956 (Funes 1995, 160). With alleged communists in neighboring Guatemala and Leftists participating in the banana strikes, the U.S. wanted insurance for their many investments. In 1950, George Kennan detailed future U.S. strategy for Latin America in the face of communist threats:

> The final answer might be an unpleasant one, but...we should not hesitate before police repression of the local government. This is not shameful since the Communists are essentially traitors....It is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by Communists. (quoted in Smith 1996, 126).[15]

The United States had previously encouraged militarization in the country. The Lend-Lease program was used by Carías to improve the air force. In 1952 the United States helped found the Francisco Morazán Military Academy to train professional officers. And finally, at the height of the Cold War in Central America, U.S. actions in 1954 fully establish a military institution capable of "repression of the local government" and "strong" enough to topple any "indulgent" "liberal government".

U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Whitting Willauer provided the following analysis of the 1954 agreement:

> The Bilateral Treaty of Military Assistance, celebrated between Honduras and the United States is important for achieving the peace. A country that relies on a weak military force can never carry forward a plan of internal and international security. What is necessary is an organized military power that can respond to the

[14]In March 1950, State Department official George Kennan stated the three goals of U.S. policy in Latin America: the protection of "our" raw materials; the prevention of military exploitation of Latin America by enemies; and the prevention of the psychological mobilization of Latin America against the U.S. (LaFeber 1984, 107).

[15]U.S. efforts to enhance the internal focus of the Latin American military dovetailed with the historical development of these institutions. Loveman (1994), and Nunn (1995) have shown that the internal security focus of the Latin American military has deep roots going back to the colonial era.

techniques and the exigencies of national and international security. (Willauer quoted in Velásquez 1954).

By 1954, various new forces were emerging in the country which would translate into new power dynamics in the years to come. A new urban bourgeoisie was growing, demanding change, and flexing its muscles. In addition in 1954, "two new forces entered the scene, both with extraordinary energy, two actors called to carry out a very influential role in the political life of the nation: the Armed Forces and the Honduran working class" (Funes 1995, 160).

The Public Debate over Militarization

The Honduran press liberalized greatly during the Gálvez regime and political debates in the various newspapers becomes common. The professionalization of the armed forces did not occur without a healthy public debate in the editorial pages and news columns. The level of sophistication of the arguments is at times quite impressive, and at other times eerily prophetic. The total absence of news or commentary about the military ended abruptly with a piece about the military agreement with the United States:

> the spectacular notice that invites us to laugh that Honduras and the United States of North America will soon sign a military pact, and it makes us laugh because Honduras has never fought with anybody and has no one to fight with....and to think that we could be invaded by the Russian Soviets, this causes even more laughter because truth be told...it is easier to believe that we will be invaded by those that are now making treaties to protect us....we should seek another position...one misplaced comma can lead us to complete enslavement (by the U.S.) (Antonio Gómez Milla in Acción Democrática 22 May 1954).

An official spokesperson for the Liberal Party provides a different opinion shortly thereafter:

> among the stipulations figures or is specified the sending of an American military mission to Honduras with the goal of organizing a small army that truth be told, the country does not have outside of some militias under command of a few officials....we believe that for some time the Honduran armed forces should be technically organized, with substantial modernization....the best guarantee for the country is an armed forces well organized and equipped. If the Liberal Party triumphs, this will be our position of support for the national army. (Andrés Brown Flores in Acción Democrática 22 May 1954).

A year later the debate heated up with a long series of editorials and letters in El Cronista which appeared from May 1955 through June 1957. These commentaries well illustrate the absence of a military institution in the country and a keen understanding of the potential dangers of militarization.

> A few days ago I read in a certain newspaper from the capital something that appeared as a plan for a school of advanced military studies, which according to the announcement, should be established shortly in Honduras. In government circles and even amongst the public opinion it appears that there exists a favorable climate for this new factory of creole "Junkers". This would be the master work of our ignorance. My people need only contemplate the upsurge of an ambitious military caste and unproductive equivalents of the same in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia and

> Argentina who have used the golpe de estado to convert themselves into rulers and later reserve for themselves the greater part of the budget and the best positions in the bureaucracy...everything has its time and when that time has passed, nature has provided an end so that NOW IT SHOULD NOT EXIST. In ancient days militaries were necessary. However, today there is nothing to justify the existence of militarization....now that the budget is in tatters, now when it would be wise to be economical with government expenditures, it would be a stupendous measure if the government would eliminate the defense minister, and with him all the commanders and soldiers in the country and establish in their place an efficient civil guard, and a mounted police to insure individual security in a civilized manner. (Néstor Enrique Alvarado in El Cronista 9 May 1955).

René Zelaya Smith, an army captain responded with a phrase that would be heard for decades in the country: "If you want peace, prepare for war....The armed forces are necessary to oversee the order and tranquillity of the country" (El Cronista 30 May 1955).

Néstor Alvarado responded on 13 June with a most interesting argument, similar to the one made to this author some four decades later by Gonzalo Facio in Costa Rica. The United States is the hegemon in the region and we would be safer and have more money in the bank if we would free-ride on the U.S. and the security guarantees that the Panamerican system provides. After several more articles by Néstor Alvarado and defenders of the military, Andrés Alvarado Lozano, a school teacher from the Copán region, entered the fray.

> If there is one thing that Honduras has in common with Costa Rica...it is in the absence of a military caste which weighs on the politics of its people....from this national army, from this military academy that Señor Alonzo asks for, there will emerge an insolent military clique, that over time will become the great headache for Honduras for many years. It is better to be like Costa Rica with an army of teachers than to expose yourself to the creation of a military caste, which has caused bitter tears throughout the Caribbean. (El Cronista 7 July 1995).

Captain Espinoza countered that modern militaries are not like those of old, but are pro-democratic and non-political. And, added Espinoza, Costa Rica has 20,000 well trained men (El Cronista 9 July 1955).[16] A few days later, another pro-military argument appeared, and the key point would be echoed by Jeanne Kirkpatrick to the Costa Ricans some 25 years later.[17] "In Honduras a professional army is not only necessary but urgent. The truth is that we have no military. And since we have no military, it is doubtful that we have a state. This is the truth. The military does consume the budget. With a military other services will be reduced. But the

[16]Andrés Alvarado responds that Costa Rica does not have a military and it only appears to have lots of soldiers when teachers and volunteers take up arms to fight Somoza, Picado, and Calderonistas (El Cronista 19 July 1955).

[17]In 1981, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Jeanne Kirkpatrick informed Costa Rica that further U.S. economic aid would be predicated on the re-creation of a professional army (Black 1986, 186). Kirkpatrick chided the Costa Ricans telling them that "Costa Rica is not a viable country because it has no military" (Interview with Oscar Arias, 24 November 1997, San José, Costa Rica).

military guarantees the state" (El Cronista 12 July 1955). A week later, J. Simeon Alonzo of the military academy, confidently expounded pro-military arguments that he would later have to eat:

> To give you my final point which will end the debate I will use the following example: The Republic of Chile is one of the most civilized and cultured nations of South America, it has an armed forces that is a source of great pride, a complete democracy lives there, our first military mentors were from this exemplary nation and even today the teachings of the Chilean soldiers flow in our environment. If in Chile there has never been and there will never be the military caste that you so greatly fear, why can't Honduras structure a similar armed forces? (El Cronista 18 July 1955).

Néstor Alvarado reminded the country that the movement towards militarization was historic and asked his fellow Hondurans: "In what do you base your optimism which makes you believe that the situation in Honduras with a military will be the exception to the rule? In conclusion, our primary concern should be the full cultural and economic development of the country. It is easy to live in peace with our neighbors" (El Cronista 28 July 1955).

Alonzo and other military proponents continued to promise that modern militaries do not meddle in politics, that they do not deliberate. Professional soldiers only fight external enemies. Colonel Armando Velásquez gave one of the first official military comments carried by the press. Velásquez, who had penned La Fuerzas Armadas de Una Democracia in 1954 (The Armed Forces of a Democracy) and had received special training at Fort Leavenworth, would quite ironically participate in various coup attempts in the coming years. In El Cronista, the Colonel celebrated the emergence of a professional military institution and lauded the United States for assisting in its creation: "We should give our most sincere gratitude to the members of the missions of the United States armed forces that have provided such ample cooperation to our government in this stage of the restoration of the military system. With their cooperation, diverse courses of information and capacitation were organized in which the officers received many teachings on modern war, unifying doctrines and knowledge. With these contingents of officials and courses we are able to give a start to the embryonic organization of our armed forces" (3 October 1955).

By 1956, the Honduran military was sending the Defense Minister to the U.S.-sponsored meetings of Central American War Ministers. These meetings would be institutionalized in 1963 as the Consejo de Defensa Centro Americana (CONDECA), a U.S. tutelaged creation that Costa Rica never agreed to join nor to cease to criticize as anti-democratic. With astute vision, a commentary in 1956 identified the future role of this military cooperation on the isthmus: The reunion of war ministers in Guatemala is "the final comedy performed in Central America....In short, the recent meetings of Central American war ministers contribute nothing in support of the continental cause, neither for peace or for the likely acrimony....These councils have revealed the design of an especially strong egoism and support for the prolongation of dictatorships" (Hernán Robles in El Cronista 3 October 1956). And Robles was absolutely right. CONDECA's focus dealt strictly with internal security measures and was an instrument of U.S. policy (LaFeber 1984, 151) The same Robles also warned Honduras that the U.S. was arming and supporting dictators in the supposed defense of democracy. The people were unfortunately ignoring it but these same weapons of democracy will some day be used to put down those that exercise their democratic right to protest (El Cronista 22 February 1956). In a commentary entitled "The Crisis of

Democracy", El Cronista sharply criticized the U.S. and the militarization of the continent. "Instead of winning the support of our people with practical projects, they destroy the forces capable of defeating communism and opt instead for arming dictators with tanks, canons, and planes...Militarism is the wrong answer to Communism and Latin America will suffer for the U.S. policy" (6 April 1956). And finally in the following year, after the military had staged its first coup which was greeted with widespread support, another wise Honduran scolded his fellow citizens for having too much faith in" *los gloriosos*". You had better watch out, we can only have either a military or Honduran democracy and culture for a military and democracy are mutually exclusive (Humberto Rivera y Murillo in El Cronista 26 June 1957). By this time, Honduras had a strong military institution that would soon get much stronger with the Constitution of 1957. Honduras had chosen *los gloriosos* and democracy would be smothered by the same voices that so often promised that this was a new, pro-democratic, and non-deliberative force.

The public debate on the pros and cons of militarization confirms the claim by Funes (1995), Ropp (1974), and Salomón (1992) that Honduras lacked an institutionalized military at the mid-point of this century. It also reveals that the development of a professional armed forces did not happen unopposed and automatically. To have a strong military or to follow Costa Rica in only having a civilian-controlled police force was one of the dominant issues in the leading independent press in the 1954-1957 period. The articulate and far-sighted opponents of militarization gave a sophisticated and well-founded defense of the then visible and viable Costa Rican model: a military consumes too many resources; the U.S. is the hegemon and little Honduras should free-ride as the U.S. will not permit serious threats to regional stability on the isthmus; the Panamerican institutions such as the Rio Treaty can ensure the existence of the Honduran state; the founding of a professional military will evolve into a monster and will be a great headache for the country; and civilian leadership will be never fully develop as it will be smothered by the power of the military. Looking back at these arguments forty years later, the opponents to the militarization project were absolutely correct. With the U.S. actively pushing the militarization project, however, the debate was moot and the development of a military caste was unstoppable.

Political Development after Gálvez

In addition to providing room for an expansion of political, civil, labor, and economic forces in the country, President Gálvez oversaw a relatively free election in 1954. Martz, who disapproved of Figueres, wrote of Gálvez that he "was one of the most democratic Central American presidents of recent years--one of the very, very few" (1959, 129). The National Party selected the old Caudillo, 78 year old Tiburcio Carías, as their nominee. This split the party and the Partido Reformista resulted, which subsequently selected the former Carías vice-president and now arch-enemy, Abraham Williams, as its standard bearer. Ramón Villeda Morales, a pediatrician who had studied in Guatemala and Germany and who represented the pragmatic democratic-left, was nominated by the Liberals.

Villeda was cultured and well-read, and is often compared with José Figueres. "A self-styled urban petty bourgeois reformer, Villeda Morales at times was even linked with the liberal radicalism of Víctor Raul Haya de la Torre of Peru, Luis Muñoz Marín of Puerto Rico, Jose Figueres of Costa Rica, Juan Arévalo of Guatemala, Ramón Grau San Martin of Cuba, Juan Bosch of the Dominican Republic, Rómulo Bétancourt of Venezuela, Germán Arciniegas of

Colombia, Pedro Joaquín Chomorro of Nicaragua, and others.[18] In the 1950s he was supported and befriended (like Figueres) in the United States by well-connected, anticommunist liberals like Adolph A. Berle,[19] later a policy advisor to the Kennedy Administration" (Euraque 1996, 70). Like other liberals such as Figueres, Villeda was often smeared as a communist. Just before the 1954 elections, for example, El Espectador, the voice of President Gálvez repeatedly refers to the Liberal Party as the "Partido Liberal Comunista". In 1955, when Otilio Ulate was violently opposed to Figueres and was using all his energies to destroy him, his Diario de Costa Rica lumped Villedismo and Figuerismo in the same dangerous category--Leftist and to be destroyed: "Doctor Villeda Morales is intimately connected with the regime of President Figueres in Costa Rica. This is because of the similarity of their ideas, because people of the same ideology travel back and forth between the countries....the Honduran Liberal Party and the Costa Rican National Liberation Party share the same (Leftist) destiny" (reprinted in El Cronista 24 August 1955). The U.S. also feared some of the more radical views that Villeda had expressed and linked the Liberal Party with the Arbenz regime in Guatemala. The FBI was brought in to investigate charges that Communism ran rampant in the Liberal Party. U.S. Ambassador Whitting Willauer, a constant meddler in Honduran politics, was highly suspect of Villeda and worked tirelessly to forestall the 1954 elections which might, in his view, transfer the elected Leftist problem from Guatemala City to Tegucigalpa (Cruz 1982).[20]

In Honduras, the United States Ambassador had always been an extremely powerful position. In 1954, that post was held by the consummate anti-Communist, Whitting Willauer. Willauer had never stepped foot in Central America before he arrived to Honduras in February 1954. But, he had long experience with Communism, working for the CIA and the Chinese Nationalists in the late 1940s when Chairman Mao took power (Gleijeses 1991, 289). He did not want the same outcome in Central America. The new Honduran Ambassador had actually been originally nominated to go to Guatemala and oversee the overthrow of Arbenz but was switched to Honduras were he starred in a supporting role by keeping the Honduran government in line and supporting the training of the Castillo Armas forces. The Great Banana Strike hit Honduras soon after Willauer's arrival and he saw Pinkos as the source of the trouble. In a letter to General

---

[18]A remarkable large number of these men were at one time or another either deposed or exiled by the armed forces of their own country. The exception of course is Figueres, who did not face a military. Villeda is often portrayed as identifying closely with Figueres and wanting to follow the path of Costa Rica, for example see LaFeber (1984, 133). Villeda's desire to follow Figueres was so strong that he actually sent Don Pepe as the representative of Honduras to the Punta del Este Conference in Uruguay in 1961 to negotiate the Alliance for Progress principles (Vargas 1993, 457).

[19]Berle played a crucial role in supporting and saving Figueres when counter-revolutionary forces were attempting his overthrow. Berle was unable to help Villeda when a sudden and violent military coup occurs in 1963.

[20]Ramón Ernesto Cruz was a leading National Party official at the time and personally participated in meetings with Carías and Willauer. He was later elected president of the country in 1971 and was deposed in a coup in 1973. "Cruz was the pathetic example of the intellectual, with legal training, who participates in party politics without the capacity to establish his own style of political administration..." (Argueta 1990, 52). Considered honest and legalistic, his testimony of the events of 1954 are used here to understand the role of Willauer and the United States. Cruz based his account on written notes of meetings with Willauer.

Chenault of the Flying Tigers Willauer wrote: "We have a helluva situation down here and unless really forceful action is taken we are going to have a little Commie Chine (sic) right in our own backyard" (Willauer quoted in MacCameron 1983, 58). He also "had evidence that the Liberal Party had been infiltrated with Leftist elements and, the Leftists had organized various Communists cells within the Liberal Party and, in addition, with the fall of the Arbenz Guzmán government it had been confirmed that the Liberal Party had been receiving financial assistance from said fallen regime" (Cruz 1982, 17).[21]

---

[21]Of course the charge that Villeda was communist was absurd. Given the paranoia of the times, however, it was believed by many. Said paranoia and the unfair fabrication of evidence against people like Figueres and Villeda are apparent in the following conversation from a U.S. Congress Committee on Communist Aggression subcommittee hearing in 1954. Patrick Hillings is a congressman and John D. Erwin was the ambassador replaced by Willauer in 1954.
Mr. Hillings: Will you say that Morales (Villeda Morales), one of the leading candidates for the Presidency at the present time, has followed the Communist line in many of his statements and activities?

Mr. Erwin: I cannot say that because I heard none of his speeches during the campaign. I didn't see him quoted.

Mr. Hillings: Has he, as far as you know, in the past followed the Communist line on some issues where the Communists have taken determined stands?

Mr. Erwin: Well, he didn't hold political office, he was a doctor. He didn't have to vote on anything so it would be pretty hard to say about that. One thing I think helped him in his campaign, his wife was one of the first to champion women suffrage and this is the first year women have voted down there. Mrs. Morales (note the former ambassador's unfamiliarity with Spanish surnames even after serving two tours in Honduras) is a charming woman, daughter of a former foreign minister of the country now deceased--her father is deceased I mean--she was one of the people, one of he ladies who got out and organized the women voters of the country and Dr. Morales had quite a hand in it too.

Mr. Hillings: The fact that he supported women suffrage wouldn't mean he is a Communist?

Mr. Erwin: No. No. What I'm trying to get at there is in the elections he would naturally get a large block of women's votes--has nothing to do with Communism, of course.

Mr. Hillings: I don't know whether you are trying to evade my question or whether you just don't have any facts on it. You gave a definite inference in your statement that Morales may be a fellow that could be friendly to the Communists if he should be president of Honduras. That was the inference from what you said. I want you to tell me why.

Mr. Erwin: That is an impression I have.

Mr. Patrick McMahon: Could I ask you to clarify that?

Mr. Hillings: Just a minute. I want the witness to answer the question.

With the National Party split into Carías and Williams camps, the highly plausible election of Villeda at the head of a unified Partido Liberal made Willauer nervous. On 14 September 1954, the Ambassador met with Carías in an attempt to guarantee that the liberal Villeda would fail. His plan was to get the caudillo to withdraw his candidacy and support a constitutional change for the *continuismo* of President Gálvez. In 1952 Gálvez had attempted to push reforms permitting re-election through the congress, but the measure lost. Now, Willauer argued that such a change was necessary because the United States "desired to avoid that the Honduran political battle could result in the implantation of a regime like that recently deposed in Guatemala" (Cruz 1982, 16-17). Carías was opposed to a continuation of Gálvez and proposals to seek a unified candidate of the Reformist and National parties were fruitless given the extreme personal animosity between Carías and Williams.

In the weeks leading up to the elections, the country was inundated with floods that killed a thousand people and left many thousands homeless(El Cronista 7 October 1954). The three

---

Mr. Erwin: I think most of his friends in nearby countries were all pretty much on the radical side. For instance, we don't know how his campaign is financed, but it was very well financed.

Mr. Hillings: Who were some of his friends in those other countries that you say are very radical?

Mr. Erwin: Well, we have some word that the President of Costa Rica (José Figueres)--Betancourt down there in Venezuela--

Mr. Hillings: ...he was a former President of Venezuela; isn't that right?

Mr. Erwin: Yes.

Mr. Hillings: He was in effect kicked out of Venezuela?

Mr. Erwin: That is correct.

Mr. Hillings: Isn't he alleged to have made a speech one time in which he said, 'Yo soy Comunista'?

Mr. Erwin: That is right.

Mr. Hillings: Which means, 'I am a Communist'?

Mr. Erwin: So quoted.

Mr. Hillings: So that Betancourt has been a great friend of Morales?

Mr. Erwin: Whenever he went to San José to visit, which was often, we understood that he was usually in his company and was entertained by him.
(MacCameron 1983, 55-57).

contending parties asked for a postponement of the elections but Gálvez argued that the democratic process should continue without delay. Like so many other elections in Honduras, the election results provided both a clear winner and yet no winner. The final results were 121,213 votes for Villeda, 77,041 votes for Carías, and 53,041 votes for Williams. Villeda was a mere 8,869 votes short of the required majority and uncertainty ruled (Martz 1959, 140-148). Under Honduran law at the time, if no candidate received an absolute majority, the congress would decide the outcome by simple majority rule. Unfortunately, two-thirds of the deputies was necessary for a quorum to conduct business and when the National and Reformist deputies boycotted the proceedings in a ploy designed by Ambassador Willauer, a stalemate resulted (Argueta 1990, 110). The crisis deepened when on 15 November Gálvez abandoned the country, suffering from exhaustion and an apparent heart attack. On 6 December, an obscure vice-president and former book-keeper for the Rosario Mining Company named Julio Lozano seized dictatorial power. Lozano's assent to the presidency was salutary for the deathly-ill Gálvez who was instantly healed and returned from New York on 8 December to assume the presidency of the Supreme Court (Funes 1995, 178).

Lozano was an inept president who became more and more repressive as time went on. In July 1956, several opponents to his regime including Villeda were exiled to Guatemala. They were soon exiled from Guatemala and ended as Don Pepe's guests in Costa Rica. The move against Villeda sparked violent student demonstrations, business closings, and civil disobedience. In October Lozano held one of the most fraudulent elections in the country's history. El Cronista announced the results under the title: "Although You May Not Believe It: May the People Be The Judge". The elections results: the official Unión National Party with 370,318 votes, the Liberals with 2,003 votes, and the National Party with 41,724. In the Intibucá Department the ruling party won all 13,616 votes cast (El Cronista 19 October 1956). On 20 October, the military high command visited Lozano to warn him that they had detected a possible coup and that they would be flying air force planes around the capital in a show of support. Lozano was pleased. On 21 October, the planes began circling the skies of Tegucigalpa and the little dictator soon discovered that they were not there to support him, but to depose him. "I have been deceived" (Funes 1995, 186). The first coup of the century had been executed.

The country was ecstatic. This really was a new military at the service of the people. 21 October would be a national holiday and the name of various communities around the country. Hernán Robleto, who had previously warned of militarism, now used the pages of El Cronista to praise the honorable professional military: "The army will be the permanent custodian of the popular will" (10 December 1956). A three-man Ruling Military Junta gave strong signals that this was a progressive and modern military.[22] The junta was composed of Air Force commander Héctor Caraccioli, ex-President Gálvez's son Roberto Gálvez, and commander of the military academy General Roque Rodríguez. They abolished the death penalty in early November (El Cronista 3 November 1956), freed political prisoners, formed a cabinet with members from all political parties, and promised to stay in power only until a democratic government could be installed. On 11 November the Junta sent an Air Force plane to fetch Villeda from Costa Rica. Villeda's dignity in exile had made him a national hero and thousands greeted him upon his return.

[22]There were reactionary sectors within society and the military that viewed the Junta as too progressive. Colonel Armando Velásquez Cerrato headed a coup attempt in May 1957. The attempt failed and the colonel found refuge in the Guatemalan Embassy (Becerra 1990, 168).

Villeda was soon sent to Washington as the country's ambassador where he solidified friendships with progressives such as Adolph Berle and where he worked hard to rid himself of the "Communist" tag.

While the ousting of Lozano was welcomed, it also ushered in the era of the military as the final arbiter of politics in the country. The development of the institution was complete, going from nearly non-existent in 1954 to the dominant institution only two years later. As Funes notes, the rapid growth of the military suddenly overshadowed civil society and political institutions (1995, 192-193).

The 1957 Constitution

The requirements of an absolute majority to win the presidency had led the country from electoral crisis to electoral crisis. The country needed a new constitution and elections for the Constitutional Assembly were held on 22 September 1957. The Liberal Party dominated in a clean and honest balloting, gaining 209,109 votes and 36 deputies as compared to 101,274 votes and 18 deputies for the National Party and 29,489 votes and 4 deputies for the National Reformist Party (Funes 1995, 193; Becerra 1988, 168). On 21 October 1957, exactly one year after the ousting of Lozano, the Liberal Party-controlled Constitutional Assembly convenes.

For our purposes, only two highly related results of the assembly need be discussed, the autonomy of the military and the selection of Ramón Villeda Morales as president. Everyone in the country knew who would win a presidential election. Villeda was as popular as anyone had ever been in the country. The Ruling Junta had often declared that after the Constitutional Assembly met, a new election would be held to select the president. Dr. Villeda himself wanted the legitimacy of a direct election, and scoffed at the idea that the Constitutional Assembly could select the president (El Cronista 24 September 1957).

On 14 November 1957, the Ruling Military Junta and the Liberal Party suddenly reverse course and decide that there should be no direct election and that Villeda should be declared president. The Armed Forces decreed that "due to the difficult circumstances that affect the country, it has not been possible to strictly comply" with our promise to hold a second election (Oquelí 1981, 3). One member of the Ruling Military Junta--Roberto Gálvez--resigned in protest and was replaced by Oswaldo López Arrelano, who quickly became the strong man of the armed forces. The Liberals publicly argued that Villeda had won the two previous elections and that the country could not afford to have another election when the outcome was already known (Becerra 1988, 169).

For Villeda to agree to become president without a presidential election appears to be completely irrational. He was wildly popular and revered almost as a saint by the majority of the people. Pictures of the bookish doctor with thick horn-rimmed glasses appeared on newspaper front pages and were hung on the walls of homes throughout the country (Interview with Matías Funes 12 December 1995, Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Interview with Ramón Oquelí 24 July 1997, Tegucigalpa, Honduras). And before the sudden move to have him declared president, Villeda had unequivocally and publicly declared that he would not take the presidency without a direct election by the people (El Cronista 24 September 1957). What happened? A deal was made between Villeda and the military junta, the details of which remain a shrouded mystery of secret meetings, threats, and backroom deals. Most authors believe that a deal involving the U.S. State

Department, the United Fruit Company, the Honduran military, and the Liberal Party resulted in the naming of Villeda.[23]

"What happened is very simple: military officers and Liberal Party officials held various secret meetings and agreed to various important agreements" (Funes 1995, 194). But, these were not the only actors involved. Ambassador Whitting Willauer, executives of the United Fruit Company including company president Kenneth Redmond, and other State Department officials reportedly met at the UFCO's plush Blue Waters Villa and agreed to the "Pacto del Agua Azul" (Natalini de Castro et al. 1995, 144-154; Funes 1995, 194-197; MacCameron 1983, 97-98). This pact called for an exchange: the military and the U.S. would support the declaration of Villeda as president of the country, and in return Villeda would grant the military immense constitutional autonomy and power.

This explanation, however, remains unconvincing. Again, Villeda could easily win a direct election which would provide legitimacy that a selection by the Constitutional Assembly would not. Ramón Oquelí, the noted Honduran scholar and journalist, and an objective and dispassionate fountain of information on the country, provides the most logical explanation. According to Oquelí, the arrangement was masterminded by the calculating strong-man of the military, Oswaldo López. López had previously declared to the people that "on one day not very far off, the (armed forces) will become the maximum representation of the national conglomerate" and that the "armed forces could no longer be considered a fleeting phenomenon in the institutional life of the country" (Funes 1995, 92-93). To make this dream a reality, López tricked Villeda by telling him that the very popular Roberto Gálvez Barnes of the military junta would be the unified candidate of the military, the Nationalists, and the Reformists if a direct election were held. He also warned Villeda that the military would not be able to guarantee a clean and fair election. Villeda was left with no better option than to accept the deal. After the deal was consummated, Roberto Gálvez Barnes left the ruling junta to protest the decision to forego the presidential elections. In a conversation with Villeda, Gálvez told him that he had never contemplated plans to run for the presidency. Villeda discovered the trick, but it was too late (Interview with Ramón Oquelí, 24 July 1997, Tegucigalpa, Honduras).

Whether Oquelí's account is accurate or not, we are certain that a quid pro quo of monumental proportions was agreed to. The prize for Villeda was enormous, a six-year term as the president. The payback to the military was even greater. The Liberal pushed through Title XIII of the Constitution by a vote of 32 to 17 which gave the Armed Forces "more freedom of action (for a Latin American military) than any document since Paraguay's constitution of 1844" (Johnson 1964, 162).

---

[23]"Various commentators have noted a meeting on 9 November 1957 attended by Ambassador Whitting Willauer, local executives of the United Fruit Co., State Department representatives, and Villeda Morales....Only access to State Department archives or testimony of alleged participants will clarify this issue. However, State Department records later recognized that 'although the military supported the advent of power of the Villeda Morales regime, they did so with reluctance and only after being accorded special constitutional status making them semi-independent of the President' (Euraque 1996, 176 fn.64). This author attempted to arrange an interview with Oswaldo López Arellano who is rumored to possess a copy of *el Pacto de Agua Azul* but was unsuccessful.

> Article 318: The Armed Forces will be under the direct command of the Chief of the Armed Forces; **through hi** th**e** President of the Republic will exercise the constitutional function that belongs to him respecting the military institution.
>
> Article 319: The orders that the President of the Republic imparts to the Armed Forces, **through the Chief of the Armed Force** , must be adhered to**s When a conflict arise** , it must be su**b**mitted to the consideration of Congress, which will decide by a majority vote. This resolution will be definitive and must be adhered to.[24]
>
> Article 321: The Chief of the Armed Forces, upon taking charge of his position, will issue before the National Congress the following solemn oath: 'In my name and the name of the Armed Forces of Honduras, I solemnly swear that I will never resort to instruments of oppression; **even though our superiors command i** , **we will not respect orders that violate the spirit or letter of the Constitutio** : that we will defend the national sovereignty and integrity of our land...
>
> Article 330: The administration of funds assigned to the Defense Branch, will be controlled by the Bursar of the Armed Forces.

Article 330 has led to a secret budget, completely shielded from civilian oversight. The Constitution of 1957 allows the Chief of the Armed Forces to disobey the President and directs the soldiers to obey the Military Chief when he is in disagreement with the President. In addition, Title XIII of the 1957 Constitution provided for the Armed Forces to determine promotions and control the naming of the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.[25] "It is obvious that the autonomy conferred to the Armed Forces in 1957 converted the army into a sort of uncontrollable Frankenstein" (Funes 1995, 318). Even at the time, the implications of these concessions were obvious. Deputy Horacio Moya Posas characterized Article 319 as "a time bomb that will always be placed within the organization of the Government" (Quoted in Oquelí 1981, 3). It was only a matter of time before the time-bomb exploded. Democracy was guaranteed to fail.[26]

It is probable that the handwriting of the constitutional provision for the Armed Forces to disobey the President if they disagree with him was that of Ambassador Willauer. If Villeda turned out to be a replay of Arbenz, Willauer wanted weapons to work with. In 1954 the Ambassador had first attempted to deny a presidential victory to Villeda by pushing for a continuation of Gálvez and when that failed he urged the National and Reformist deputies to block Villeda's assent to the presidency in 1954 by preventing a quorum in the National Assembly

---

[24]In the Constitutions of 1894, 1906, 1924, and 1936 the President had direct control over the Armed Forces.

[25]This section is drawn from La Gaceta (Honduras 20 December 1957), El Cronista (1957), Johnson (1964, 162-163), Funes (1995), MacCameron (1983, 94-95), and Becerra (1990).

[26]The contrast between the Honduran 1957 Constitution and the Costa Rican 1949 Constitution is stark. The Costa Rican article dealing with the military states: "The army is proscribed as a permanent institution. For the vigilance and conservation of public order there will be the necessary police forces."

(see Cruz 1982; Oquelí 1995, 155). In 1957, the embassy gave approval of Villeda, but only after "Whitting Willauer was the composer of Article 319" of the Constitution (Oquelí 1995, 342).

The Sexenio of President Villeda

Villeda was an admirer of Figueres and would become a great admirer of Kennedy (Funes 1995, 230). Upon taking office, he began an ambitious program of school building and infrastructural development. He would also propose an ambitious program of land reform and challenge the oligarchy and the international banana barons (Woodward 1985, 255-256). He walked a political tightrope between those who accused him of being Leftist and those who accused him of being reactionary. With the U.S. leery, he, like Figueres, took every opportunity to demonstrate his anti-Communism; outlawing subversive material and breaking diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba. Villeda and Figueres had very similar lists of enemies: During his term Anastasio Somoza and Rafael Trujillo would both be involved in plots to overthrow Villeda (Euraque 1996, 112) and from the moment he took office "the ultraconservative groups...never abandoned their conspiracies and plans" to overthrow him. In his first year reactionary groups used bombs and a clandestine radio station--Liberation Radio which used the march from "Bridge over the River Kwai" as its theme--in an attempt to destabalize the country (Becerra 1988, 170).

The pediatrician turned president also inherited a basket case. The economy and the budget were in shambles (Martz 1959, 161-163). And as Villeda often proclaimed, Honduras was the "country of the 70s--70 percent illiteracy, 70 percent illegitimacy, 70 percent rural population, and 70 percent avoidable deaths." Given the backdrop, his work as president was impressive. Like his mentor Figueres, Villeda saw the state as the tool to build a new bourgeoisie. Villeda's priority was education (Posas and del Cid 1983, 176). During his tenure, the number of elementary education students rose from 146,000 to 259,000 and the numbers of teachers nearly doubled from 4,600 to 8,800 (Natalini et al. 1985, 85). The average annual increase in elementary schools was 30 schools per year from 1950-1957; and during the Villeda presidency explodes to 232 new schools per year from 1958-1962. The percent of the budget assigned to education rose from 8 percent in 1950 to 16 percent in 1963 and Villeda provided 50 percent more money for the public university in his six years than had his predecessors in 24 years (Posas and del Cid 1983, 176-177). As a doctor, Villeda also had a clear vision of the state of health services and the number of health centers more than doubled from 29 to 63 in his 6 years (Natalini et al. 1985, 87). The country also had a notable diminution in infant mortality (Argueta 1990, 187).

With the assistance of the Alliance for Progress,[27] Villeda oversaw the improvement of public services, the extension and paving of the highway system, reforms of the judicial system, and the first stages of industrialization. For example, the state opened a cement factory in 1959 and cement consumption rose from 600,000 bags to 1,046,000 bags in four years (Natalini et al.

[27]Honduras was the first Latin American country to qualify for development money under the Alliance for Progress. "By the fall of 1961, the government had formulated the mandatory four-year development program which, among its general social and economic goals, included agrarian reform, resource development, and highway construction" (MacCameron 1983, 112). Villeda was very optimistic about the Alliance for Progress and even sent Don Pepe Figueres as his representative to the Alliance for Progress Conference in Uruguay in August of 1961 (Vargas 1993, 457).

1985, 72). Human capital and infrastructure, the building blocks of sustained economic development, were being addressed as never before in the country.

Villeda also introduced a Labor Code in 1959. Copied largely from Costa Rica and Mexico, the emission of the Labor Code was met with protest from the representatives of the oligarchy and the banana companies (Posas and del Cid, 1983, 177-178). The 1961 creation of the National Agrarian Institute, mandated to oversee agrarian reform, was anathema to the landed oligarchy who had "continued conspiring the entire duration of the Villeda Morales government" (Rojas 1993, 130). Villeda and democracy however were now supported by a burgeoning civil society; including the strongest labor movement in Central America,[28] an active student movement which benefited greatly from Villeda's budgetary commitment to education and personal support of university autonomy, a free press, an emerging urban middle class, and--as Euraque so convincingly demonstrates--a pro-democratic small business and industrial sector on the dynamic Northern Coast. In addition, Villeda had emerged as the poster-boy of the Kennedy Administration's commitment to the Alliance for Progress and their hope for democratic government. The domestic oligarchy, especially the large landowners and the National Party were strongly opposed to *Villedismo*, but by themselves were far too weak to challenge the progressive changes occurring in the country. As Euraque states: "...up to October 1963 it seemed that perhaps Villeda Morales's presidency finally could assert that it was a maximum expression of the progressive changing time" (1996, 120). Honduras was poised to finally emerge from their long morass and make strides in their quality of governance and their living standards.

Class, transnational, and state power relations would have strongly favored the emergence of democracy, except for one important caveat. The growth of the military after 1954 and the constitutional powers granted to the institution in 1957 placed the Honduran Armed Forces at the intersection of all three of the power relations which Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) have identified as important for the emergence and durability of democracy. The military negatively effected all three power relations.

Villeda and the Military 1957-1963

After 1957, it soon became apparent to the Liberal Party that the constitutional prerogatives and power provided to the Honduran Armed Forces were incompatible with democracy. The military made constant demands on the civilian government, including requests for changes in the cabinet(El Cronista 7 April 1958). Flagellations and even the shooting of civilians on the part of the security forces occurred, and with the constitutional independence of the military no civilian charges could ever be brought. The press began to question the "constant brutality" committed by soldiers(El Cronista 27 February 1959). The murder of two students at

[28]Honduran labor organizations arrived late, even for Central American standards. The Honduran Workers Union was formed in 1921 (Acuña 1993, 283). Fed largely by labor organizing on the North Coast banana plantations, labor grew rapidly and "Honduras developed a much larger and politically more potent organized work force than other Central American countries" (Booth and Walker 1993, 48-49). For example, data for 1973 reveal that Honduras had more union members than any other Central American country and many more agricultural union members than the rest of the isthmus combined (Euraque 1996, 99). The best study of the labor movement in Honduras is Meza (1991) who argues the expansion and consolidation of the syndicate movement in the country occurred during the Villeda years (chapter V).

the hands of the military in 1959 resulted in a surge of protests (Oquelí 1981, 4). In May of 1959, Francisco Milla Bermúdez, then Magistrate of the Supreme Court, and Designate to the Presidency--and one of the leaders of the Liberal Party who actively participated in the constitutional deal-making that granted near omnipotent powers to the military--declared to the Miami Herald that the best thing for Honduras would be the dissolution of the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces, added Milla, consumed too great a part of the budget and the army was politically aligned with enemies of the government (El Cronista 11 May 1959).

The generals were furious with the Milla statement. The general public was not. In an article entitled "The Popular Opinion Says that we Suppress the Army," the daily reported that the public response to the Milla comments were completely unexpected; the people want the soldiers to abandon the barracks and "seek other more dignified means of daily sustenance" (El Cronista 14 May 1959). The university students also seconded Milla's proposal. The Cronista reproduced a declaration from the UNAH (Universidad Autónoma de Honduras) which "applauds" Milla and adds that the students were neither supporters or adversaries of Villeda's "Government of the Second Republic", but that "yes we are enemies of the military caste, because when this OGRE grows dictatorships result" (15 May 1959). Milla responded that he was not the enemy of the military, but that he did aspire to follow the lead of Costa Rica and replace barracks with schools (Funes 1995, 222).[29] Of course, the genie was already our of the bottle and the United States would never have permitted the demilitarization of Honduras.

On 12 July 1959 Villeda faced his first military coup. Colonel Armando Velásquez Cerrato, who in 1954 wrote so eloquently about the new, non-deliberative and apolitical military, led the rebellion--his second in two years.[30] Velásquez, who was closely associated with the National Party, Somoza in Nicaragua, and the most reactionary forces in the country, was supported above all by the National Police.[31] The coup was violent, leading to many dead and injured. For the first few hours of the coup, the "loyal" members of the Armed Forces stood on the sideline waiting to see if the coup would gain momentum. Students and other members of the civil society rushed to Villeda's defense and fought valiantly against the rebels; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras students saved Villeda. When the coup produced no quick victory, the head of the military stepped in and arranged for an end of the attempt and permitted Velásquez to flee the country (Becerra 1988, 172; Oquelí 1981, 4).

The impunity of the armed forces, the coup against democracy, and the belated defense of the government by the head of the military resulted in a backlash against the Armed Forces. Efforts to curb Armed Forces power emerged on two fronts. One such effort occurred in the National Congress when Liberal Deputy Ildefonso Orellano Bueso introduced a motion to reform

---

[29]In this time period, there are many references to following the Tico example and going *sans armee*. In April of 1958, Costa Rica attempted to push a proposal through the Organization of American States for the disarming of the all of Latin America. The proposal was voted down (El Cronista 18 April 1958).

[30]This is the same Velásquez who attempted a right-wing coup against the "progressive" military junta in May 1957. The most conservative forces in the country did not approve of the progressive rhetoric of the young colonels (Becerra 1990, 168).

[31]The most conservative elements of both the National Party and the Reformist Party gave support and even organized right-wing guerrilla groups to aid Velásquez (Natalini et al. 1985, 117).

Title XIII of the 1957 Constitution.[32] Orellano's perspicacious speech included the following statements:

> This group of individuals clustered with the pompous name of "Armed Forces" wants to convert themselves into a privileged and all-embracing caste, shielding itself to reach its goals in Title XIII of our fundamental law, from whose trench they are preparing to stab the back of the Honduran people, having now been converted not only in the devouring octopus of the national budget, but also in a real social threat, in an imminent danger for our own security, and in an enemy of the functioning democracy in which we have dedicated our faith....When we established Title XIII of the Constitution, we did not have the right to toss the dominion of the bayonets on the patriotic people that loves its institutions and knows how to defend them. A people that knew how to throw themselves on the battlefield in the instant of danger, knowing how to heroically fight for its rights when they were trampled on. It is therefore an obligation for us, as legitimate representatives of the people, to return the peace and tranquillity that they enjoyed before the implantation of the dictators. If we do not make this change, we are leaving open a great crack, an open door, and through this crack or this open door, a caste that longs to perpetuate itself in power can enter....This can be seen even by the blind and by the children. We are on the verge of a military dictatorship. The country has been left to the law of the bayonets....after a series of individual and collective murders....The country breathes blood everywhere. We repeat: Never has a tyrant dared to so challenge the citizenry! Not Tiburcio Carías Andino with his team of delinquents! Not Julio Lozano Díaz with his gang of gunslingers!

Orellano provided a list of 117 soldiers and officers who had committed serious crimes but who were protected by the military tribunal. His motion called for the substitution of the words "Armed Forces" for "Army" and the constitutional elimination of the autonomy of the military which created a "state within a state." The military would, under Orellano's motion, be controlled by elected civilians, soldiers would not be protected from the courts for common crimes, and the army's budget would be administered by the Executive Branch. Finally, all promotions and leadership positions would be determined by the President. El Cronista supported the motion stating that the future of Honduran democracy depended on the approval of the bill (16 December 1959). The Orellano bill ended up generating a great national debate and the bulk of the citizenry supported it, but the Armed Forces were far too powerful for such a law to pass (Funes 1995, 227)

President Villeda knew that he could not at this moment weaken the power of the armed forces, and so he opted to create a neutralizing force. Within a week of the Velásquez coup and the participation of the military-controlled National Police, Villeda began to organize a Civil Guard which would be under complete control of the President. The National Police was disbanded. The Civil Guard and the Armed Forces were constant rivals and violent episodes between the two forces were common. In March 1961, the army killed 9 civil guards after the army had lost a soccer game to civil guards. The soldiers were evidently upset when the goal that tied the game was annulled (Funes 1995, 229). In September of 1961 at Los Laureles, the Civil

[32]The Orellana speech was reproduced in its entirety in El Cronista from December 16-19, 1959.

Guard massacred eleven soldiers and civilians that were caught in a coup attempt against the government (Becerra 1988, 173).

Land Reform

Like Costa Rica, Honduras never faced a problem of the landed dispossessed before the middle of this century. By the 1950s, the agricultural frontier and the escape valve for those seeking land was disappearing. Throughout Central America, the transition to export agriculture with an emphasis on cattle ranching and cotton was adding to tensions as large numbers of peasants were being dislodged from their lands (Williams 1986).

In Honduras the landless problem was compounded by an influx of Salvadoran immigrants and the dismissal of thousands of banana-workers who were now seeking land for subsistence farming. The growth of the coffee industry which was based on small farms was able to ameliorate but not resolve the land problem. Agrarian conflict soon emerged as a national powderkeg and land invasions increased in frequency and violence.

In response, Villeda set up a colonization program which distributed 75,000 acres of national and *ejidal* (communal) land between 1958 and 1960 (Schulz and Schulz 1994, 29). In 1962, the government sponsored a new peasant union, the National Association of Honduran Peasants (ANACH). These measures would not alone solve the nation's land problems. The Liberal Party had, since 1953, supported "the principle of expropriation for reason of public utility and necessity" and was committed to "limit land concentration in the land of hands of the latifundistas" (Liberal Party Platform quoted in Euraque 1996, 103). In 1961, in direct response to the mandatory four-year development program of the Alliance for Progress, the government had targeted land reform as a priority (MacCameron 1983, 112). The 1962 Agrarian Reform Law had three goals. First, a more efficient use of farmland by telling large landowners to put their idle lands to use or that they may be expropriated. Second, to clarify the legal ownership of disputed lands. And third, to provide an escape valve for the growing mass of landless peasants (Schulz and Schulz 1994, 29).

The landed oligarchy, the UFCO, and certain U.S. officials were furious. As had happened since Villeda took office and as would happen for decades when land reform was discussed, his enemies accused him of being a closet communist and an ally of people such as Castro. "Every time that the agricultural question pushes its way to the top of priorities and the government gives indications of being willing to put a land reform law into effect, outside attacks of an imminent 'communist infiltration' in our country intensify. The trick is old, but nevertheless has remained no less effective: to smear as "communist" all intents of social transformation" (Meza 1981, 71). The UFCO was outraged by the fact that they did not receive, as was their custom, an advance copy of the law and an opportunity to veto the points that they did not like. On 7 September 1961, the president of UFCO, Thomas Sunderland, sent a note to Edwin Martin, Assistant Secretary of State:

> The events of today indicate that the situation in Honduras is growing more serious with the passing of time. In spite of the affirmations made by President Villeda Morales in the presence of the American Ambassador that a copy of the proposed low would be shown to us today, Honduran government officials have declined to show the bill....we urgently need action by the State Department

> through the American Ambassador with the goal of obtaining a copy of this proposal before it is too late to take action to defend American interests. (Quoted in Meza 1981, 8).

The State Department and UFCO allies in the U.S. Senate went quickly to work. A debate on the floor of the U.S. Senate quickly devolved into flag-waving and threats against Honduras. Senator Hickenlooper, the author of the Hickenlooper Amendment that punished countries that expropriated or nationalized U.S. properties, was not opposed to using the communist smear: "Last Sunday, yesterday, the Agrarian Reform Law was signed at a large ceremony. There was a large number of speeches with references that the Hondurans were going to confiscate American property and that this belonged to the people of the country. Apparently one of the speakers had recently returned from Castro's Cuba" (Quoted in Meza 1981, 8).

Two months after signing the Agrarian Reform Law, Villeda was summoned to Washington to meet with Kennedy at the White House. After this meeting, Villeda removed the director of the National Agrarian Institute (INA) and "agrarian reform shifted drastically from expropriation of private property to colonization or resettlement projects upon state-owned land" (MacCameron 1983, 113). Villeda had seen what happened to Arbenz when the CIA and the UFCO decided that he was a threat. Land reform continued in a watered-down version and the country headed into the 1963 elections.

The 1963 Elections and the End of Honduran Democracy

The National Party entered the electoral season in crisis. Due tot he support given the Liberals by the peasants, the working class, the emerging middle class, and the North Coast industrialists, the Liberal Party looked strong going into the election. Ramón Cruz defeated Gonzalo Carías Castillo, the son of the old caudillo, by only 3 votes in the National Party Convention. Gonzalo Carías proceeded to form his own party, splitting the Nationalists. The Liberal Party selected Modesto Rodas Alvarado even though Villeda favored another candidate. Villeda and most of the party maintained unity. Roque J. Rivera, a leader of the Tegucigalpa conservative elite who was expulsed from the Liberal Party in 1962 for denouncing the "communist infiltration" in the Villeda government, organized the Orthodox Republican Party but it did not gain many adherents from the Liberal ranks (Becerra 1988, 174).

Rodas was the charismatic and intelligent former president of the Constitutional Assembly that wrote the 1957 Constitution. Some argue that he had fought the provision granting autonomy to the armed forces (MacCameron 1983, 116; Schulz and Schulz 1994, 31). He later supported attempts by Orellano and Bueso to restore civilian control of the Armed Forces. By 1963, he campaigned in front of large and animated crowds largely on the demilitarization platform. The debate on militarization had never really ceased for the entire decade 1954-1963. The demilitarization platform was popular with the Honduran masses and Rodas was the clear favorite. At the height of the campaign season, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Daniel Oduber visited the country with an endorsement for demilitarization: "The communist threat is banished with laws that benefit the peasants. I don't believe that the Armed Forces are even necessary in our countries" (El Cronista 7 September 1963).

In the months leading up to the elections, as in the 1953 election in Costa Rica, the oligarchy and the most conservative forces continued to smear the government with charges of

communism. Monseñor Héctor Enrique Santos, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, gave a series of masses in September asking God and the heavenly hosts to stop the communist infiltration that was gnawing away the foundation of the nation (Funes 1995, 236). Rumors of an impending coup had circulated since the spring(El Cronista 9 & 23 April 1963). The U.S. was well aware of the coup plans and publicly denied the possibility of a military overthrow of Villeda: "Honduras represents a case of significant and true progress towards the stabilization of democracy and institutional maturity. A government democratically elected is getting ready to finish its 6-year term, during which the military forces have been distinguished by its loyalty to the Constitution and the democratic regime" (Secretary of State Dean Rusk on the Voice of America, El Cronista 28 September 1963). Privately, the State Department and the Embassy knew different. Latin America had witnessed a number of coups in 1962 and 1963 and the Kennedy Administration did not want to see one of their favorites--Villeda--be the victim of yet another embarrassment for the Alliance for Progress.[33] Then-Ambassador Burrows actively discouraged the coup, warning López Arellano that President Kennedy would suspend economic aid if the golpe proceeded.

On October 3, 1963, a mere ten days before the election, the military staged a preemptive coup. Cognizant of the support of civil society and students in the previous coup attempt, the military unleashed one of the most violent coups in the history of Latin America. Scores of Civil Guards were killed as they slept and violence against civilians continued for days. Attempts by students and Liberal Party supporters to challenge the overthrow of democracy were met with brutal reactions by *los gloriosos*. One of the first actions of the Armed Forces was to bring the national police functions under complete military control; after 1963 there is virtually no difference between military and police training (Salomón 1995, 42).

In many declarations, the military claimed that the primary reason for the coup was to protect the country from Communism. Oswaldo López, the strong man of the military, declared to Nicaragua's La Noticia that "The North American Embassy in Tegucigalpa informally inspired the coup, frequently complaining that the Villeda Morales government overly tolerated communist activity in Honduras" (19 November 1963). When López went ahead with the coup, his conservative allies scoffed at the threatened suspension of U.S. aid and a break in diplomatic relations: The U.S. "would be back in six months". The U.S. threat was hollow. Numerous democratic presidents were ousted in 1962 and 1963 and all of them were friends of Villeda. Coups in El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador were followed closely in the press and the conservative opposition in Honduras could track the pattern: The U.S. in every case suspended relations, publicly exclaimed support of democracy, and then quickly renewed relations with the generals. The pattern would be no different in Honduras. The U.S. would wait barely two months after the violent and repressive coup to crawl back to the generals and recognize the military regime on 14 December 1963. The embarrassing fact was that the U.S. commitment to democracy was secondary to U.S. commitments to a militarized response to real and imagined communist threats.

---

[33]In March 1963 President Kennedy held a summit in San José, Costa Rica with the presidents of Central America (including Panama). In what must have been a great embarrassment for Kennedy and the Alliance for Progress, of the six countries on the isthmus, only Costa Rica and Honduras had democratic regimes. For a complete transcript of the speeches including that of Villeda, see Combate (Mayo Y Junio 1963).

The U.S. chose poorly when in the early 1950's they staked the future stability of Latin America on increased militarization.[34] The long march towards military responses to social issues received an additional boost after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 (Wright 1991, Chapter 4). Official American action and rhetoric encouraged the strengthening of military institutions and the elimination of progressive regimes with ideologies similar to that of Figueres in Costa Rica. The bilateral military treaties of the 1950s and the introduction of the doctrines of National Security in the early 1960s tilted power relations away from democracy. "Between 1961 and 1966, the military overthrew nine Latin American governments, including Guatemala's and Honduras's in 1963. In many cases, civilian conservatives urged the military to act before elections brought undesirable liberals to power, or before planned Alliance programs threatened the oligarch's interests. The School of the Americas became known as the School of the *Golpes*" (LaFeber 1984, 152). Above all, the strong military served as the great equalizer for the conservative oligarchy which was now threatened by the growth of progressive and democratic social and economic forces.

> In conclusion, the military coup d'état of 3 October 1963 should be understood as a conservative and brutal reaction of the imperialist banana bourgeoisie and their political allies, the traditional landed elite, that view with great concern the transformative political pressure....At this juncture, the army undoubtedly acts as the armed ally of the landed oligarchy and of imperialism. (Posas and del Cid 1983, 193-194.)

The 1963 coup finalizes the assent of the Honduran Armed Forces as the dominant political actor in the country and buries the opportunity for political and social progress in the country. The next three decades of development in Honduras are "a tragedy irredeemably converted into farce" (Meza 1981, 128) which are detailed in the works of Euraque (1996), Funes (1995), Schulz and Schulz (1994), and Salomón (1992).[35] In the 1980s, electoral democracy returns to Honduras in a strange hybrid regime where the military still calls the shots and human rights violations surge. Hundreds of students and labor leaders were "disappeared" by U.S.-trained Honduran soldiers during the "lost decade" (Amnesty International 1988).[36] By 1982, when "democracy" returned to Honduras, the military institution had grown to such a degree that

---

[34]"A more recent lesson, this time from Southeast Asia, was that Washington's tendency to militarize issues--to solve problems by shooting people--is often counterproductive" (Schoultz 1987, 327).

[35]In 1972, a short-lived reformist military regime emerged led by the ever unpredictable Oswaldo López Arellano (see Sieder 1995). "The timid appearance of a reformist military on the national scene was reason enough so that the dumb, in an excessive and condemnable extirpation of enthusiasm and optimism, easily forgot the political past of the army and began to elucidate diverse theoretical interpretations of the new role of the Armed Forces in Latin America"....they pretended to see in the army an ideologically reformed body...This error inevitably led to other more serious errors and thus there emerged a whole chain of erroneous interpretations, divorced from reality and based more in desires than in facts" (Meza 1981, 173).

[36]In 1996, it was confirmed what many observers had long believed: The U.S. was training Latin American military officers to use executions, torture, blackmail, and other forms of coercion against civilians(Washington Post 21 September 1996).

> ...for reasons of "National Security", the Honduran Armed Forces are in charge of the police, the merchant marine, customs, immigration, civil aviation and airports, and also the national telephone company. The military exercises administrative control of extensive regions in the interior of the country. Military officials constitute a power elite, with their own government, their own judicial court, and in a growing manner their own economic sector. Making use of the resources of the Military Pension Institute (IPM)...the military institution has accumulated a large group of holdings: their own bank (that offers a credit card to the public); an insurance company; many factories including the largest cement factory in the country (which was purchased from the civilian government as part of a "privatization"...); a car distributorship; a radio station; a public relations firm; large tracks of coastal properties designed for tourism development; and--in an ironic example of what an economist would call "vertical integration"--a first class funeral parlor. (Comité de Abogados por los Derechos Humanos 1994).

Conclusion

The similarities between Costa Rica 1948-1958 and Honduras 1954-1963 are notable. Figueres and Villeda both serve six years during this time period as moderate and pragmatic social democrats. Figueres's National Liberation Party received two-thirds of the vote in 1953 and Villeda's Liberal Party received two-thirds of the vote in 1957. Both men were supported by an emerging small industrial class, peasants, non-communist labor, and a growing middle class. Both had spent time in the United States, were well read and could be charming and cultured, and had strong allies among the progressive wing of the State Department, among academic circles, and within the Democratic Party. Their list of enemies was also similar. The landed oligarchy, the United Fruit Company, the CIA and the Dulles brothers, and conservatives within the U.S. government mistrusted both leaders and wondered if they were closet communists. The Somozas and Trujillo were willing to give assistance to those who wanted to oust the two social democrats. Figueres and democracy endure in Costa Rica while Villeda and democracy are crushed in Honduras.

The opposition to democracy and progressive reforms in Honduras were able to enlist the support of a powerful internal military caste to oust Villeda and democracy when the oligarchy's interests were threatened. The Honduran case is especially useful as it demonstrates how a near non-existent military institution could grow with U.S. support into the arbiter of national politics in a very short period of time. The same could have occurred in Costa Rica.

Timing, however, is critical. Costa Rica abolished its military in 1948. By the early 1950s, U.S. policy to build up military institutions in Latin America as a bulwark against communism dramatically altered U.S.-Latin American relations and resulted in rapid militarization of the region. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, militaries were further empowered and doctrines of National Security gave those militaries license to torture civilians, harass labor organizers and academics, and overthrow progressive governments. The U.S. commitment to democracy is superficial at best in the face of the military-led anti-communist paradigm. Looking at the legacy of militarization in Honduras and demilitarization in Costa Rica, it is unambiguous that the U.S. chose poorly in designing an anti-communist strategy for Latin America. "The end of the Cold War presented the United States with a new foreign policy opportunity in Latin America. The United States no longer needs to bolster the militaries to stop communism and has

begun focusing more efforts on promoting economic and political freedom" (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1996). Had the United States chosen to promote political freedom, democracy, and social progress instead of massive "militaries to stop communism" during the Cold War, Costa Rica may be the norm and not the exception.

This chapter began with a theoretical framework that militarization negatively impacts the three power relations important for democracy. The comparative historical analysis confirms the expectations. The differing levels of militarization in Costa Rica and Honduras altered class power relations. The oligarchy was empowered by militarization in Honduras and able to enlist the repressive arm of the state to halt progressive reforms. In Costa Rica, Figueres was able to push through reforms such as the nationalization of the banks and other measures--that the oligarchy disdained--and survive. The different levels of militarization also affected transnational power relations. The United States had a different impact in Honduras because of militarization. Indeed, U.S. Ambassador Willauer was a major player in granting the military unequaled constitutional autonomy and independence as insurance against the possibility of another Arbenz regime. U.S. encouragement and support of the military and criticism of Villeda encouraged the 1963 coup. The United Fruit Company also had a powerful ally to help protect their interests. In Costa Rica, in contrast, the U.S. and the United Fruit were forced to deal with civilians as the security forces had no deliberative role. U.S. attempts to build a military in Costa Rica were unsuccessful. Finally, the capacity and autonomy of the state was altered by levels of militarization. In Costa Rica, with no military to arbitrate, civilian institutions were able to develop and mature. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal emerged after the 1958 elections as the independent and autonomous body that would determine who would hold the reigns of power. In Honduras, military power became so dominant that civilian institutions wilted. By 1963 the Armed Forces had erected a state within the state and democracy in the 1980s was under the tutelage of *los gloriosos*.

It is difficult to imagine Figueres surviving the 1953-1958 presidential term with Oswaldo López Arellano and a strong autonomous military in the country. It is equally easy to imagine that Villeda would have finished his term had the U.S. and Hondurans heeded the advice in 1955 of Andrés Alvarado Lozano, the humble school teacher from Copán:

> If there is one thing that Honduras has in common with Costa Rica...it is in the absence of a military caste which weighs on the politics of its people....from this national army, from this military academy that Señor Alonzo asks for, there will emerge an insolent military clique, that over time will become the great headache for Honduras for many years. It is better to be like Costa Rica with an army of teachers than to expose yourself to the creation of a military caste, an institution which has caused bitter tears throughout the Caribbean. (El Cronista 7 July 1955).

References

Acuña, Víctor Hugo. 1993. "Clases Subalternas y Movimientos Sociales en Centroamérica (1870-930). In Historia General de Centroamérica: Las Repúblicas Agroexportadoras, ed. Víctor Hugo Acuña. Madrid. FLACSO.

Amnesty International. 1988. Honduras: Civilian Authority--Military Power, Human Rights Violations in the 1980s. New York: Amnesty International.

Andreski, Stanislav. 1954. Military Organization and Society. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. (revised edition with Postscript 1968).
Argueta, Mario. 1988. Tiburcio Carías: Anatomía de una Época. Tegucigalpa: Guaymuras.
Argueta, Mario. 1990. Diccionario Histórico-Biográfico Hondureño. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria.
Argueta, Mario, and Edgardo Quiñónes. 1983. Historia de Honduras. Tegucigalpa: Escuela Superior de Profesorado Francisco Morazán.
Barahona, Marvin. 1989. La Hegemonia de los Estados Unidos en Honduras (1907-1932). Tegucigalpa: CEDOH.
Barahona, Marvin. 1991. Evolución Histórica de la Identidad Nacional. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guarymuras.
Becerra, Longino. 1988. Evolución Histórica de Honduras. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Baktún.
Bowman, Kirk S. 1996. "Taming the Tiger: Militarization and Democracy in Latin America." Journal of Peace Research 33(3): 289-308.
Bulmer-Thomas, Victor. 1987. The Political Economy of Central America since 1920. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Bulmer-Thomas, Victor. 1993. "La Crisis de la Economía de Agroexportación: 1930-1945." In Historia General de Centroamérica: Las Repúblicas Agroexportadoras, ed. Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega. Madrid, FLACSO.
Burkhart, Ross E. and Michael S. Lewis-Beck. 1994. "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis." American Political Science Review 88(4 December):903-910.
Burton, Michael, Richard Gunther, and John Higley. 1992. "Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes." In Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe, ed. John Higley and Richard Gunther. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Comité de Abogados por los Derechos Humanos. 1994. Análisis del Informe del Departamento de Estado Reporte de Países Acerca de los Derechos Humanos para 1993. New York: Comité de Abogados por los Derechos Humanos.
Cruz, Ramón Ernesto. 1982. La Lucha Política de 1954 y la Raptura del Orden Constitucional. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria.
Dawes, Robyn M. 1996. "Counterfactual Inferences as Instances of Statistical Inferences." In Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics, ed. Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin. Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press. (p. 301-316).
Di Palma, Giusseppe. 1990. To Craft Democracies. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Ellis, Frank. 1983. Las Trasnacionales del Banano en Centroamérica. San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA.
Euraque, Darío A., 1996. Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
Funes, Matías H. 1995. *Los deliberantes: El Poder Militar en Honduras*. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guyamuras.
Hadenius, Axel. 1992. Democracy and Development. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Holden, Robert H. 1993. "The Real Diplomacy of Violence: United States Military Power in Central America, 1950-1990." The International History Review 20(2, May):283-322.
Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. "The Renaissance of Political Culture." American Journal of Political Science 82:1203-1230.

Inglehart, Ronald and María Carballo. 1997. "Does Latin America Exist (And is there a Confucian Culture?): A Global Analysis of Cross-Cultural Differences". PS: Political Science and Politics 30(1):34-46.
Jackman, Robert W. and Ross A. Miller. 1996. "The Poverty of Political Culture". American Journal of Political Science 40(3):697-717.
Johnson, John J. 1964. The Military and Society in Latin America. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Kepner, Charles D. 1949. El Imperio del Banano. Mexico: Ediciones del Caribe.
Kohli, Atul. 1995. "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium". World Politics 48 (October): 1-49.
LaFeber, Walter. 1984. Inevitable Revolutions:The United States in Central America. New York: Norton.
Lieuwin, Edwin. 1965. United States Policy in Latin America. New York: Praeger.
Lijphart, Arend. 1975. "The Comparative-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research". Comparative Political Studies 8 (2 July): 158-177.
Longley, Kyle. 1997. The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States during the Rise of José Figueres. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
MacCameron, Robert. 1983. Bananas, Labor, and Politics in Honduras: 1954-1963. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
Martz, John D. 1959. Central America, the Crisis and the Challenge. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
Meza, Víctor. 1981. Política y Sociedad en Honduras: Comentarios. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Guaymuras.
Meza, Víctor. 1991. Historia del Movimiento Obrero Hondureño. Tegucigalpa: CEDOH.
Minello, Nelson. 1981. "Militarism in Uruguay as a Response to the Hegemonic Crisis." In The Military as an Agent of Social Change, ed. Claude Heller. Mexico City: El Colegio de México. pp. 193-217.
Munro Dana. 1918. The Five Republics of Central America. New York: Oxford University Press.
Muller, Edward N. 1985. "Dependent Economic Development, Aid Dependence on the United States, and Democratic Breakdown in the Third World." International Studies Quarterly. 29(4 December):445-469.
Muller, Edward N. 1988. "Democracy, Economic Development, and Income Inequality." American Sociological Review 53 (February): 50-68.
Muller, Edward N. 1995a. "Economic Determinants of Democracy." American Sociological Review 60 (December):966-982.
Natalini de Castro, Stafanía, María de los Angeles Mendoza Saborro, and Joaquín Pagan Solorzano. 1985. Significado Histórico del Gobierno del Dr. Ramón Villeda Morales. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria
Obregón L., Rafael. 1951. Conflictos Militares y Políticos en Costa Rica. San José, Costa Rica: La Nación.
Oquelí, Ramón. 1981. "Cronología de la Soberanía Militar". Revista Tegucigalpa. 59(October): 3-6.
Oquelí, Ramón. 1983. La Viscera Entrañable. Tegucigalpa: CEDOH.
Oquelí, Ramón. 1995. Gente y Situaciones: Tomo III. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universidad Autónoma de Honduras.
Paige, Jeffrey M. 1987. "Coffee and Politics in Central America." In Crisis in the Caribbean, ed. Richard Tardanico. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Paige, Jeffrey M. 1997. Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Pérez Brignoli, Héctor. 1988. Breve Historia de Centroamerica. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
Posas, Mario. 1993. "La Plantación Bananera en Centroamérica: 1870-1929." In Historia General de Centroamérica: Las Repúblicas Agroexportadoras, ed. Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega. Madrid, FLACSO.
Ropp, Steve C. 1974. "The Honduran Army in the Sociopolitical Evolution of the Honduran State." The Americas. 30(4 April):504-528.
Rouquié, Alain. 1986. "Demilitarization and the Institutionalization of Military-Dominated Polities in Latin America." In Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philipp C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens. 1992. Capitalist Development and Democracy. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Salomón, Leticia. 1992. Política y Militares en Honduras. Tegucigalpa: CEDOH.
Schlesinger, Stephen, and Stephen Kinzer. 1982. Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
Schoultz, Lars. 1987. National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Schulz, Donald, and Deborah Sundloff Schulz. 1994. The United States, Honduras, and the Crisis in Central America. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Seligson, Mitchell A. 1987. "Development, Democratization, and Decay: Central America at the Crossroads." In Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America, ed. James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
Sieder, Rachel. 1995. "Honduras: The Politics of Exception and Military Reformism, 1972-1978." Journal of Latin American Studies 27:99-127.
Smith, Peter H. 1996. Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations. New York: Oxford University Press.
Torres-Rivas, Edelberto. 1975. Interpretación del Desarrollo Social Centroamericano. San José, Costa Rica:EDUCA.
Velásquez Cerrato, Armando. 1954. Las Fuerzas Armadas en una Democracia. Tegucigalpa: Talleres Typográficos Nacionales.
Weaver, Federick Stirton. 1994. Inside the Volcano: The History and Political Economy of Central America. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Williams, Robert G. 1986. Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Williams, Robert G. 1994. States and Social Evolution: Coffee and the Rise of National Governments in Central America. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
Woodward, Ralph Lee, Jr. 1985. Central America: A Nation Divided. New York: Oxford University Press.
Wright, Thomas C. 1991. Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution. New York: Praeger.