

in El Salvador itself was a proxy affair only in a limited sense. It had roots in a domestic insurgency unprovoked from the outside. Thus, internal conditions had to change before settlement could ever be reached. (Hampson, 1996:136)

One of Reagan's key justifications for military support in El Salvador was to prevent the spread of communism, both globally and particularly in Latin America. The Reagan administration perceived that the deterioration of its position in the hemisphere had created serious new vulnerabilities where none previously existed; which implied the possible of threat of defending itself against a ring of Soviet bases on and around its southern and eastern borders. (Downie, 1998:131) Aside from its strategic value, Jeane Kirkpatrick -- the US Ambassador to the United Nations -- also expressed concern over the US's overall dominate economic position in the hemisphere, even though in El Salvador itself, US investments were relatively small-scale. (Fish, 1988:13)

As a result of this attitude, within the span of twelve-year war, the El Salvador received \$4 billion of US aid to help in the counterinsurgency effort against the FMLN, which was sufficient in preventing the government from being overthrown. (Downie, 1998: 129)

Despite the Salvadoran army's horrible record of human rights violations and 'undemocratic' actions, the Reagan Administration believed that this military-based government was preferable to communist rule. Jeane Kirkpatrick, the US Ambassador to the United Nations stated in 1979, stated that "[t]raditional authoritarian governments... are more compatible with US interests." (Fish, 1988:13) Then, in 1989 she wrote:

Although there is no instance of a revolutionary 'socialist' or Communist society being democratized, right-wing autocracies do sometimes evolve into democracies -- given time, propitious economic, social and political circumstances, talented leaders, and a strong indigenous demand for representative government. (Kirkpatrick, 1986:21)

To reiterate, both statements demonstrate the US' support for 'right-wing autocracies' over communism. In the eyes of foreign policy interests, it legitimized intervention. The comments imply that with US 'guidance' and assistance, El Salvador could eventually establish a legitimate, democratized government. Yet, with constant cuts to social services, resulting in increased social unrest, and the use of violence as a 'political solution', how could such a policy be implemented?

Once in office, Reagan initiated a massive aid campaign. It placed great emphasis on Central America as "a political struggle between Communism and the free democratic West, and as a testing ground for East-West competition in the Third World." (Downie, 1998:131)